

Laudato Si in Action

This or that?

You want to do the right thing for the environment. You care about the climate crisis but sometimes the right choice isn't clear. You know the benefits of using a reusable water bottle and your own coffee mug, but should you hand wash those dishes or run the dishwasher, use paper grocery bags or reusable ones?

Pope Francis reminds us:

to replace consumption with sacrifice, greed with generosity, wastefulness with a spirit of sharing, an asceticism which "entails learning to give, and not simply to give up. It is a way of loving, of moving gradually away from what I want to what God's world needs.

Here are some practical ways to care for our common home. Dishes: you may want to hand wash those dishes in the sink figuring that it's not enough to run the dishwasher, that would be wasteful right? Well, yes, however, is it better to put that small number of dishes in the dishwasher, then run it when full. Why? Scientists at the University of Bonn in Germany who studied the issue found that the dishwasher uses only half the energy, one-sixth of the water, and less soap than hand-washing an identical set of dirty dishes.

When shopping for beverages, you can choose glass or aluminum. Which is better? Both are recyclable right? Recycling aluminum is difficult and the process can emit toxic chemicals. Glass is almost infinitely recyclable. It is made from natural resources, and, overall, it is a better choice for your health and the environment. Both are much better choices than that plastic bottle.

When you go to the grocery store, in the produce aisle, you face a decision; paper or plastic. Plastic bags, which can take centuries to decompose, can create a dreadful waste problem. On the other hand, paper bags typically require more energy and greenhouse gas emissions to produce, which isn't great from a global warming standpoint. The best choice is neither. Reusable bags are the best compromise, but you have to hold onto them and use them often to make them worth their manufacturing carbon footprint.

There are pros and cons to all of the choices highlighted above. We can do our part by making the best choices possible.

Working together, we can help take care of our common home.

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