

10 Things You Can do to Care for the Earth



Catholic Social teaching calls us to take responsibility for our use and care of the earth. The decisions we make can make a positive difference by heeding the call to be better stewards and care about our impact on the earth. Global climate change has been a major topic in the public spotlight these days. While everyone from scientists to politicians are joining forces to address this reality, there are numerous simple things each one of us can do to make a difference.

1. Plan car trips ahead of time

If you are like most people who live in their car, take stock of the number of unnecessary trips you make in a given week. Plan your errands, meetings, pick-ups and routes ahead of time in order to cut back on your contribution to CO₂ car emissions and gas use.

2. Use Earth-friendly cleaners

The products that you use to clean your home may actually be harmful for the earth, containing damaging chemicals and upsetting the ecological balance. Seek “green” cleaning products that are biodegradable and designed with the earth in mind.

3. Use your bike

More and more cities are jumping on the bandwagon of cutting gas emissions by promoting bike paths for commuters. Consider using your bike to get to or from work, or if that is impractical, consider increasing bike use on the weekends to make those shorter trips to the store. The earth will benefit and so will your overall health.

4. Look for the Energy Star

When making purchases of new appliances, check to see that they are carrying the *Energy Star* symbol indicating that they are designed to be more energy efficient than other models. Appliances with this label not only use less power but can also greatly reduce your energy bill.

5. Plant extra veggies

As the gardening season gets underway, consider adding an extra plot of vegetables to provide fresh produce for a local soup kitchen or homeless shelter. The garden will be bountiful and others will reap what you sow.

6. Conserve Water

Water tends to be something we take for granted, but it is quickly becoming one of the precious resources of the earth that needs our care and conservation. Be more mindful of unnecessary water use and don't leave the faucet running.

7. Change your light bulbs

One significant place to curb energy use is in the light bulb socket. Compact florescent light bulbs (CFL) are the newest way a small purchase can make a big change. These spiral shaped bulbs may cost more, but they use one-fourth the energy and can be found anywhere light bulbs are sold.

8. Hang a Clothes line

This may sound like a return to the 1950's but using a clothes line instead of your heated dryer can cut back drastically on energy use. Additional benefits include that fresh clothesline scent and a smaller electric bill.

9. Consume less, Share more

Unbridled consumption is part of the dynamic putting an increased demand on the need for energy and fuels. Assess your own buying habits and consumerist tendencies cut back where you can, sharing unused or unneeded items with others. As the saying goes, “Have less, be more.”

10. Support a local farmer

Most of the food we eat travels hundreds and sometimes even thousands of miles to reach our grocery stores and markets. Do your part to reduce our dependency on oil and fossil fuels and buy locally from a farmer in your region. Find a farmers market in your area through the internet or yellow pages.

