

ADOPTION OF SUSTAINABLE* LIFESTYLES

**Your guide for practical, environmental, and
cheaper ways of living responsibly in this
complex world.**



*Sustainable Development: meeting the needs of current generations without
compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

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01 ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

When I was a freshman in high school, my environmental education teacher back in Colombia assigned our class a project to create a booklet with 100 things to do to save water and protect the environment. I poured my heart and soul in that little booklet. Many years later, here I am again, writing what I hope is an improved version of that with the same love and an elevated sense of urgency.

This booklet is born out of the recognition that living responsibly in this world is no longer so simple, and with the overload of information that surrounds us we need help navigating through the noise. The intent is to give you not only a starters checklist of things you can do to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle, but - more importantly - it looks to equip you with the data behind why those apparently simple actions are so needed. It is easier to make changes when we have a cognitive reason to support them than just our mere desire to "be better."

As I was putting all this information together and updating some of the data I learned years ago, I must admit I felt at times discouraged. We have truly trashed this planet, and we don't seem to be acting quickly or effectively enough to reverse that trend. But this pocket guide kept showing me that our individual choices - if combined with others aligned in the same sacred intention - matter, and matter to the point of creating meaningful change and restoring invaluable practices we have lost.

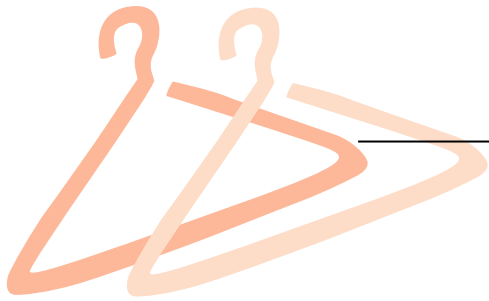
I don't want to give the wrong impression that the sole responsibility for redesigning our current system falls on us individuals. In fact, it is on policy makers and corporations to make the changes that are so needed to respond appropriately to the crisis in which we find ourselves. But I hope that in between the lines you become aware of the power that you hold in your hands and realize that one of the biggest things you can do as a citizen of this world is to demand and support policies that protect our natural environment.

One of the most reaffirming aspects of the Laudato Si encyclical is the call to Christians to "realize that their responsibility within creation, and their duty toward nature and Creator, are an essential part of their faith." (LS 64). Caring for Creation is deeply embedded in our spiritual identity, and we are called to be stewards of nature, not its predators. Laudato Si invites us to a continuous dialogue where Science, Policy, and Faith intersect, and we must be active participants of that dialogue.

I hope the information provided here serves to initiate a reflection on what it means to have enough, to question whether the system into which we were born makes sense, and to look for tools and actions we can collectively activate to fight the broken components of that very system.

Onward.

Liliana Sierra - Laudato Si Advocate.



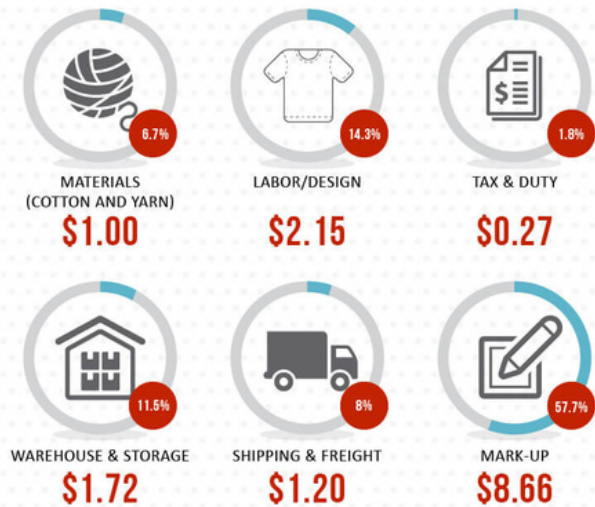
02 THE CLOTHES WE WEAR

"There is no beauty in the finest cloth if it makes hunger and unhappiness."
~ Mahatma Gandhi

THE NUMBERS

- 92 million tons of textile waste are produced every year.
- The average person only wears 20% of their clothes 80% of the time. (1)
- Fast Fashion companies generate more pollution than international aviation and shipping combined. (2)
- 60% of clothes are made with plastic-based materials (a huge source of micro-plastics).
- Over 1/3 of all primary micro-plastic pollution in our oceans comes from washing textiles. (2)
- Textile dyeing is also the second largest polluter of water globally: it takes around 2,000 gallons of water to make a typical pair of jeans. (3)
- The average US return rate of clothing purchased online is 30%, polluting the atmosphere with 16 million metric tons of carbon dioxide every year; around 5.8 billion pounds of returned inventory – deemed unsuitable for restocking – ends up in landfill.
- 80% of apparel is made by young women between the ages of 18 and 24. (4)
- 98% of the clothes bought in the US are manufactured abroad.
- Garment workers are often forced to work long hours in dire conditions.
- On average, wages paid are 25 times less than the amount a worker and her family need to live in dignity; an average worker in Bangladesh makes about \$67 per month.

\$15 SHIRT COST BREAKDOWN BY PERCENTAGE



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Care for your clothes better so they last longer: wash them with care, look at the labels recommendations and wash only as needed (it's okay to wear your clothes twice before washing).
- Buy second hand, a very cost-effective, sustainable, and socially conscious way to spend your money.
- Re-examine your need to renew your wardrobe often. A good deal is not a reason to buy one more piece of clothing.
- When you buy, choose clothes you really love so you will make greater efforts to preserve them.
- Choose organic (pesticide-free) and fair trade (farmer is paid fairly) cotton fabrics. Still, the best choice of all is to cherish the clothes you already have.
- Avoid buying clothes online.
- Do not throw your undesired clothes in the trash. Instead try to fix, gift, sell, or recycle them.
- Wash your clothes in a cold cycle: they will stay brighter and keep their size and shape longer.
- Swap clothes with friends and family. It is so fun!

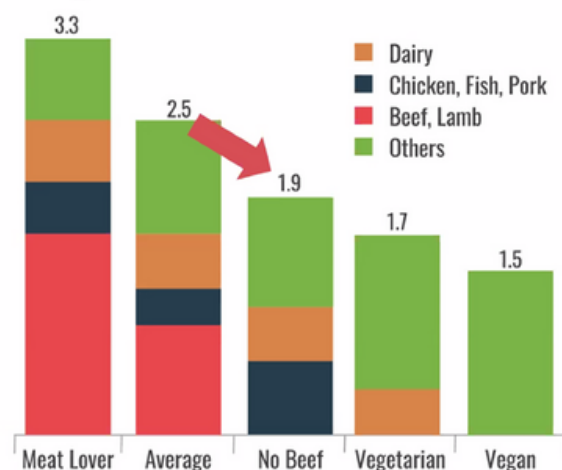
03 THE FOOD WE EAT

“Throwing away food is like stealing from the table of those who are poor and hungry.”
~ Pope Francis

THE NUMBERS

- Industrial meat is the single biggest cause of deforestation globally, as forests are cleared for cattle ranching and growing animal feed.
- Livestock are typically fed corn and soybean which must be grown using substantial amounts of fertilizer, fuel, pesticides, water, and land. Growing livestock feed in the U.S. alone requires 167 million pounds of pesticides and 17 billion pounds of nitrogen fertilizer each year across some 149 million acres of cropland. (5)
- Cattle manure is estimated to generate some 20 percent of overall U.S. methane emissions.
- The total amount of water needed to produce one pound of beef is 6,809 liters of water; one pound of pork takes 2,180 liters of water and one pound of poultry takes 1,771 liters. (6)
- Globally, there is a projected “food animal” population of over 20 billion, more than twice that of the current seven billion humans the planet carries, with the animal count expected to rise along with human population growth. (6)
- In the United States, food waste is estimated at between 30–40% of the food supply. (7)
- All the world’s 1+ billion hungry people could be fed on less than a quarter of the food that is wasted in the US, UK, and Europe alone. (8)

t CO₂e/person



Source: ERS/USDA, various LCA and EIO-LCA data

- Reduce your meat servings per week to 1 or 2.
- Switch to a vegetarian/vegan diet.
- Plan your meals and love your leftovers.
- Look for the USDA Organic, Non GMO Project, and Naturally Grown labels in foods.
- Consider growing some of your own foods (tomatoes, peppers, & herbs are good starters).
- Reduce your eating out and takeout foods.
- Cook your own meals: it takes more than double the amount of energy to process food than it does to grow it, plus it is a lot healthier. Not inspired? Borrow cookbooks from the local library - they will help.
- Avoid food products with excessive packaging.
- At the restaurant, order only the food you can eat. Skip appetizers and filler food. Ask about menu portions and don't be ashamed to share a meal.
- Carry reusable coffee mugs and water bottles.
- Misinterpreting “sell by” or “best if used by” dates on food packaging is a huge driver of food waste. It's a manufacturer's quality, not safety recommendation. FoodKeeper, a USDA app, provides guidance on safe handling, preparation, and storage of foods.

WHAT YOU CAN DO



04 THE TRIPS WE MAKE

*"In every walk with nature,
one receives far more than
he seeks"*

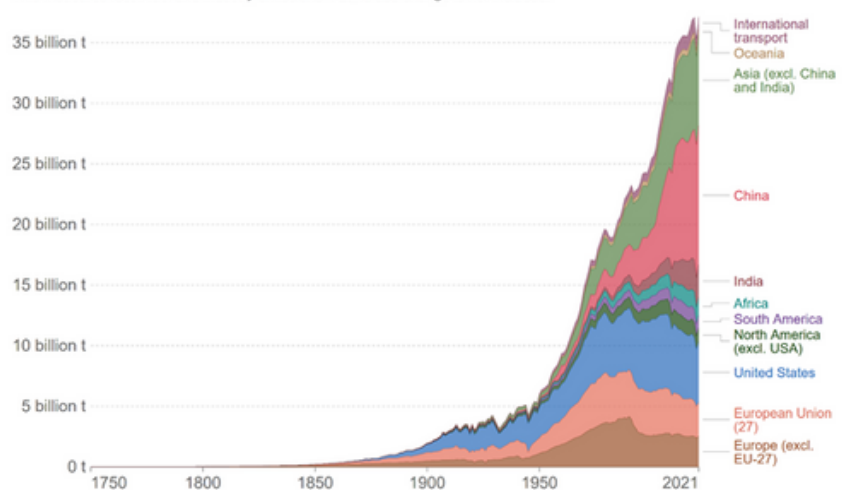
~ John Muir

THE NUMBERS

- Currently, the world emits over 34 billion tons of CO₂ each year. Since 1751, the world has emitted over 1.5 trillion tons of CO₂ cumulatively. (11)
- A typical passenger vehicle emits about 4.6 metric tons of carbon dioxide per year.
- Every gallon of gasoline burned produces about 8,887 grams (about 19.59 lb) of CO₂.
- In addition to carbon dioxide (CO₂), gas-fueled automobiles produce methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O) from the tailpipe and hydro-fluorocarbon emissions from leaking air conditioners.
- In many of the poorest countries in sub-Saharan Africa the average footprint is around 0.1 tons per year. That is more than 160 times lower than the USA, Australia, and Canada. In just 2.3 days the average American or Australian emits as much CO₂ as the average Malian or Nigerian in a year. (12)
- A flight from London to San Francisco emits around 5.5 tons of CO₂ equivalent (CO₂e) per person – more than twice the emissions produced by a family car in a year.

Annual CO₂ emissions by world region

This measures fossil fuel and industry emissions¹. Land use change is not included.



Source: Our World in Data based on the Global Carbon Project (2022)

OurWorldinData.org/co2-and-greenhouse-gas-emissions • CC BY

1. Fossil emissions: Fossil emissions measure the quantity of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emitted from the burning of fossil fuels, and directly from industrial processes such as cement and steel production. Fossil CO₂ includes emissions from coal, oil, gas, flaring, cement, steel, and other industrial processes. Fossil emissions do not include land use change, deforestation, soils, or vegetation.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Drive slower and smarter: hard accelerations and slamming on the breaks emits more greenhouse gases.
- Keep up with your car regular maintenance: your car will run smoother and more efficiently.
- Check your tires regularly. If not properly inflated, they reduce your car's mileage and cause it to release more pollutants. Keep a pressure gauge in your car.
- Give your car an occasional break and travel by bus; also consider walking or biking when possible.
- Limit AC usage. Your car's AC doesn't always have to be on high. Put down the windows on a nice day.
- Remove extra weight by clearing out your trunk and back seat. 20% less weight provides an 8.4% mileage boost.
- In the winter time, park your car in a warmer place to increase the initial temperature of your engine and cabin. In the summer, use a windshield sunshade.
- Minimize idling your car to warm it up. Most manufacturers recommend driving off gently after about 30 seconds. The engine will warm up faster being driven which will allow the heat to turn on sooner, decrease your fuel costs, and reduce emissions.
- Visit www.fueleconomy.gov to find and compare CO₂ emission rates for specific vehicles.
- Consider riding the train instead of flying when possible.

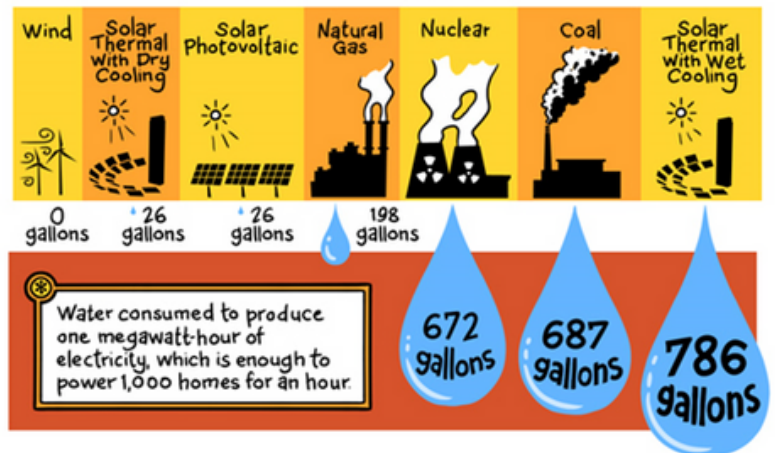
05 THE HOUSES WE INHABIT

*"The earth is the Lord's."
~ Ps 24:1*

THE NUMBERS

- Americans spend \$350 billion a year on electricity – with three quarters of the energy going to waste. (9)
- In the U.S., natural gas compounded mostly from methane is one of the most commonly used fuels for electricity. (9)
- Oil and gas companies in the U.S. emit at least 9.8 million metric tons of methane pollution per year. Half of all the industry's methane emissions come from leaks. (9)
- It takes massive amounts of water to convert fossil fuels to electricity. Coal and gas fired power plants use water for cooling. During hydraulic fracturing or "fracking" – a process for extracting oil and natural gas – massive quantities of water are mixed with chemicals and sand and injected underground to help draw out the minerals. (9)
- Every year, people spend around 10 hours looking at an open fridge or freezer, accounting for 7 percent of the appliance's total energy use. (10)
- Almost 90 percent of a washing machine's energy is spent heating water. (10)
- Heating and cooling consume half of a home's energy.
- The average shower in America is 8 minutes long and the standard shower heads use 2.5 gallons of water per minute.

WATER USE BY POWER PLANTS*



WHAT YOU CAN DO



- Choose Energy Star certified appliances.
- Turn off the lights and disconnect appliances you are not using.
- Replace your bulbs with Energy Star Certified bulbs. They use 80% less energy and last up to 25 times longer.
- Be mindful of the time browsing your fridge. Open only as necessary. Teach children to do the same.
- Run your dishwasher only if it's full and switch from heat to air dry your dishes.
- Wash your clothes in a tap cold cycle.
- Don't set your water heater thermostat too high. When it's time to replace it, switch to a tank-less water heater.
- Program your home's thermostat for when you are not home.
- Change your HVAC filters regularly (set up a recurrent reminder on your phone). Once the air filter clogs, the HVAC expends more energy pulling in air.
- Get a clothes hanger and air dry some of your clothes.
- Understand your gas and electricity bills - they detail the price you pay per unit of Kw/CF.

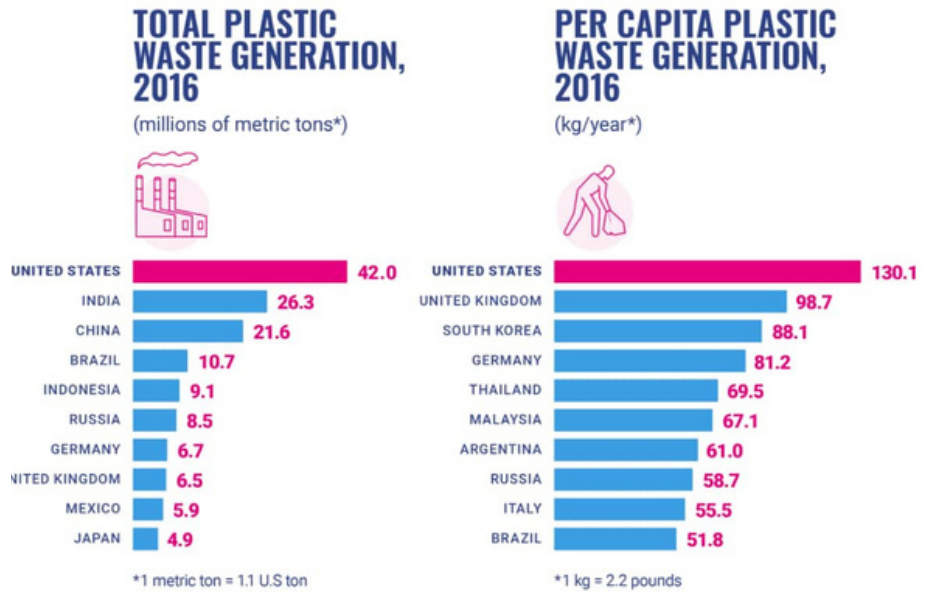
06 THE PLASTIC THAT WRAPS US

"You shall not pollute the land where you are."

~ Numbers 35:33

THE NUMBERS

- Half of all plastics ever manufactured have been made in the last 15 years. (13)
- Every year, about 8 million tons of plastic waste escape into the oceans from coastal nations. (13)
- Most of the plastic trash is in the oceans. (13)
- Nearly every species of seabird ingests plastics. (13)
- 36% of plastic produced is used in packaging. Of that, 85% ends up in the landfill or as unregulated waste. (14)
- Over 7 billion tons of plastic waste have been generated globally so far.
- Food wrappers, plastic bottles, plastic bottle caps, plastic grocery bags, plastic straws, and stirrers are the most common type of plastic waste.
- More than 74% of the litter catalogued along the Mississippi River is plastic.
- In countries with poor solid waste management systems, plastic waste — especially single-use plastic bags — can be found clogging sewers and providing breeding grounds for mosquitoes and pests, and as a result, increasing the transmission of vector borne diseases such as malaria. (14)
- It can take up to 1,000 years for a plastic bag to decompose (15). Most plastic bags are used for an average of 20 minutes before they are discarded.
- Americans use 100 billion plastic bags a year, which require 12 million barrels of oil to manufacture. (16)
- Americans use an average of 365 plastic bags per person per year. People in Denmark use an average of four plastic bags per year. (17)
- The plastic typically used in bottles, bags, and food containers contains chemical additives such as endocrine disruptors, which are associated with negative health effects including cancers, birth defects, and immune system suppression in humans and wildlife. (18)
- Every year, around 50 billion coffee cups are discarded in the US alone. (19)
- The US alone discards about 12 billion sanitary pads and an estimated 20 billion disposable diapers per year. (20), (21)



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Ask for no extras/silverware with take out.
- Carry a reusable coffee cup and dinnerware.
- Switch to reusable grocery bags and keep them in your car.
- Ditch the straws - buy reusable straws.
- Eliminate plastic balloons from celebrations.
- Use wooden/metal utensils for birthday parties and other celebrations.
- Switch to an electrical or metal razor.
- Switch to a bamboo or electrical toothbrush.
- Switch to toothpaste powder or make your own toothpaste.
- Switch to bar soap and shampoo bars.
- Switch to laundry strips.
- Use dryer balls. (They save energy by drying your clothes faster, but also replace your fabric softener, another plastic container you don't need)
- Change your menstrual routine. Sanitary pads are either made of plastic or lined with it and come individually wrapped. Consider a menstrual cup instead.
- Avoid wet wipes: they are made from a mix of plastics.
- Make your own bags out of old clothes, be creative!
- Support the Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act, which would phase out throwaway plastics, hold the industry responsible for its waste, and pause construction on new plastic making plants.
- At the grocery store, pay attention to foods with excessive plastic packaging and avoid them.
- Get a water filter to substitute water bottles (a lot cheaper too).
- Educate Yourself. We can no longer pretend this is not ours to solve.

07 THE CHILDREN WE RAISE

“What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.”
– Jane Goodall



THE NUMBERS

- One baby will need around 6,000 diapers and 6,000 wipes during the first two years of life. 95% of mothers in the U.S. only use disposable diapers for their children. (25)
- Disposable diapers take at least 500 years to decompose and constitute the third-largest single consumer item in landfills.
- The single-use plastic containers many baby care products come in, contribute to the more than 120 billion units of packaging (produced globally) from the beauty industry. Most of this packaging ends up in landfills. (26)
- The toy industry is the most plastic-intensive industry in the world. 90% of the toys on the market are made of plastic.
- Plastic toys can contain heavy metals such as lead or cadmium. (27)
- Plastic toys are harmful to the environment both in their production as well as at their disposal as they create large amounts of greenhouse gases and other toxic emissions and often end up in landfills or the ocean after being disposed of. (28)
- The average concentration of micro-plastics in baby stools is 10x higher than in adult stools. (29)



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Switch to cloth diapers, at least partially while at home: they are free from chemicals (chlorine, perfumes or polyacrylate), allow for more breathability, lead to earlier potty training, cost a lot less and produce no waste.
- Start potty training your child as soon as he/she turns 2 or even before (mine was fully trained by then). The earlier they learn, the less waste, work and costs implied.
- Make your own baby food. It is much healthier, delicious, cheap, and friendly with the environment.
- Aim for wooden toys or toys made from recycled plastic, bio-plastic, or other sustainable materials. Avoid toys with Recycling Codes: #3 (PVC), #6 (Polystyrene), and #7 (Bisphenol –not all-).
- Donate, gift or sell used toys, never throw them away. Buy secondhand toys.
- Homemade toys usually bring more spark and enjoyment than store-bought toys. They nurture creativity and create bonds with your child.
- Discover the power of cardboard to create unforgettable toys and moments with your child.
- Avoid gifting plastic toys and don't be afraid to voice your preferences for your own child's celebrations.
- Start healthy discussions in the school about ways to celebrate without plastic souvenirs.
- Donate (on FB marketplace, at your local thrift store, at church) or sell your child's outgrown clothes.
- Avoid individually packaged sugary drinks often designed to get kids' attention. Choose a reusable water bottle instead and talk to your child about why that is a better option.
- Read age-appropriate books about taking care of earth together.
- Live my example and share your thoughts about caring for creation with your child.

08 THE TECHNOLOGY WE LOVE

"There is no such a thing as 'away'. When we throw away, it must go somewhere"
~ Annie Leonard



THE NUMBERS

- In 2020, people worldwide bought 1.4 billion smartphones—200 million of them from Apple. More than 80 percent of iPhones sold last year went to "upgraders," not first-time buyers. (22)
- In 2018, more than 50M tons of e-waste were generated globally, with only around 20% of it officially recycled. 50% represented large household appliances and heating and cooling equipment. The remainder was TVs, computers, smartphones, and tablets.
- Electronics are filled with chemicals and substances that are harmful to human health and the environment, including toxic metals, flame retardants, and persistent organic pollutants. (23)
- The United States produces more e-waste than any country in the world. Americans send about 50,000 dump trucks worth of electronics to recyclers each year. (24)
- The chemicals in e-waste contaminate landfills and enter the water supply through leachate; when incinerated or warmed up, these chemicals are released into the air, damaging the atmosphere, and causing serious health issues to e-waste workers and surrounding communities.
- 80% of e-waste in the US and most other countries is transported to Asian and African landfills.
- There is no federal law in the U.S. that mandates the recycling of e-waste or forbids e-waste from being exported to developing countries.

WHAT YOU CAN DO



- Reconsider the need to change your electronic gadgets often.
- Protect your phone with a high-quality case and screen protector.
- Before discarding a broken appliance, look on the internet for ways to repair it or have it repaired.
- Pass stuff on. Remember, one man's garbage is another man's treasure.
- Do not discard electronic waste in the trash; take it to a certified e-waste recycler.
- Join Right to Repair, a global movement to secure our access to parts and tools to fix our stuff, manual and diagnostics manufacturers use, and software to reset security locks and pair parts.
- Support legislation that demands serious and specific action for responsible e-waste management.
- Buy from companies that are making serious attempts to track and recycle their own e-waste.
- Learn about programmed obsolescence to fight this throwaway culture.

09 INSPIRING PEOPLE



LISTEN

- **Outrage and Optimism:** Listen to episodes featuring British broadcaster David Attenborough, youth leader Greta Thunberg, and a live session with screenwriter Richard Curtis for London Climate Action Week.
- **Sustainababble** (no, it's not a typo): in depth yet entertaining interviews with interesting people to untangle confusing environmental concepts and policies.
- **Mothers of Invention:** Women driving powerful solutions to climate change, from the grassroots to the courtroom, from the front lines to the boardroom.
- **The Slow Home Podcast:** focuses on slowing down, simplifying your life, and focusing on the truly important things.
- **Low Tox Life:** a variety of informative and intriguing topics from sleeping habits, the food we eat, psychological wellness, and toilet paper changing the world (seriously).
- **The Minimalists:** honest and compelling episodes about living a minimalist life in relationships, home, self-care, the workplace, and more.

JOIN

- Reddit/MeetUp groups around Zero Waste, plastic free and other related topics
- Urban Farming/Gardening workshops
- National Park + other Volunteer Opportunities

READ WITH YOUR CHILD

- **A Child's Book of Blessings and Prayers.** Eliza Blanchard
- **Rainbow Weaver/Tejedora del Arcoiris.** Linda E. Marshall
- **The Great Paper Caper** by Oliver Jeffers
- **One Earth** by Eileen Spinelli.

WATCH

- **The Letter: A Message for Our Earth** (2022)
- **David Attenborough: A Life on Our Planet** (2020)
- **RiverBlue** (2017)
- **Artifishal** (2019)
- **Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret** (2014)
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- **Sustainable** (2016)
- **Food, Inc.** (2008)
- **Catching the Sun** (2015)
- **Dark Waters** (2019): A global issue exposed in Cincinnati
- **Chasing Coral** (2017)
- **Eyes of the Orangutan** (2021)
- **An Inconvenient Truth** (2006)
- **My Octopus Teacher** (2020)
- **Exporting Harm: The HighTech trashing of Asia** (2013)



READ

- **The Story of Stuff:** How our obsession with Stuff is trashing the planet, our communities, and our health and a vision for change. Annie Leonard
- **How to give up plastic:** A guide to changing the world, one plastic bottle at a time. Will McCallum
- **Goodbye Things:** The new Japanese minimalism. Fumio Sasaki.
- **Stuffication:** Why we've had enough of stuff and need experience more than ever. James Wallman
- **The Overstory: A Novel.** Richard Powers.
- **Silent Spring.** Rachel Carson
- **The End of Ice:** Bearing witness and finding meaning in the path of climate disruption. Dahr Jamail
- **On Fire:** The case for the Green New Deal. Naomi Klein.
- **Storming the Wall:** Climate change, migration, and homeland security. Todd Miller
- **Where the Water Goes:** Life and death along the Colorado River. David Owen
- **Losing Earth, A Recent History.** Nathaniel Rich.
- **The Conscious Closet:** The revolutionary guide to looking good while doing good. Elizabeth Cline.

10 OTHER RESOURCES



LOCAL RESOURCES

- Enroll in the Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist (OCVN) Program
<https://senr.osu.edu/extension-outreach/ohio-certified-volunteer-naturalist>
- Check out the Marianist Environmental Education Center MEEC <https://meec.center/>
- Recycle at the HUB
<https://www.cincinnati recyclingandreusehub.org/>
- Check out <https://www.birdcount.org/> and <https://www.audubon.org/>



Scan this QR code to visit our Archdiocesan LSAP page

USEFUL APPS

- **EWG's Healthy Living App:** A database of more than 120,000 food and personal care products, now at your finger tips. Scan, Review rating, Pick the better choice.
- **Buycott, Vote with your Wallet:** Launched to encourage Corporate Social Responsibility, prior to the point of purchase, and raise awareness that consumer purchases have real-world consequences.
- **JouleBug:** Offers you tips to make your everyday habits more sustainable at home, work, and play. It's an easy way to make fresh, easy, and impactful sustainable choices.
- **FoodKeeper:** a USDA app that provides guidance on safe handling, preparation, and storage of foods.
- Use **Ecosia**, a search engine (like Google) that donates a portion of its profits to non-profit organizations that focus on reforestation.

MAKE YOUR OWN MATH



- Calculate your Carbon footprint and work on a plan to lower it:
<https://www.carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx>
- Calculate your water footprint: includes your tap water use and the “virtual water” used to produce your food, electricity, gas, and home goods.
<https://www.watercalculator.org/>

11 THE AUTHOR

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LILIANA SIERRA | Laudato Si Advocate



Photo by Texture Photo

I grew up in a remote town in the mountains of Colombia. Because of that upbringing I developed a somewhat frugal approach to the use of resources and was blessed to have my teacher Ernesto Roa plant in my heart the seed of environmental awareness. The Laudato Si Advocates Program has been an incredible opportunity to grow in my understanding that the voice of Nature is the Voice of God and that being a person of faith entails being a steward of our sacred natural resources.

I want to do everything within my power to leave my son the world he and all children deserve.

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