News
EarthBeat



(Brian Yurasits/Unsplash)

by Fr. Emmet Farrell

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March 24, 2021

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Editor's note: *In his Lenten "Reflections on the Care of Creation," Fr. Emmet Farrell examines our impact on the planet and our responsibility, as people of faith, for our common home. You can sign up here to receive Fr. Farrell's reflections in your inbox every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from Feb. 17 to April 2, and you can view the entire series here.*

See:

Studies project that by 2050, there could be more plastic in our oceans than fish. Researchers estimate that on average, 8 million metric tons of plastic trash enter the ocean every year, an amount that keeps increasing. This pollution is ravaging our marine ecosystems, entangling and choking wildlife, such as seabirds, dolphins, fish and turtles, and even displacing plankton at the base of the food chain.

Scientists warn that pollution harms not only marine life, but also human health, and that as climate change warms surface waters, health threats like algal blooms and outbreaks of water-borne diseases, such as cholera, are likely to become more frequent.

"Facing intensifying global efforts to curtail the use of oil and gas for transportation and energy — and at the same time seeking markets for the torrent of oil and gas from the U.S. fracking boom — the fossil fuel industry is looking to plastics as a lifeline," writes Antonia Juhasz in Sierra Magazine.

"Today, 14 percent of oil and 8 percent of gas is used for the manufacture of petrochemicals, the essential feedstock of plastic production. The International Energy Agency predicts that by 2050, 50 percent of the growth in oil demand will be related to petrochemicals, overtaking the oil-demand growth related to automobile transportation," she adds.

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Judge:

> [Y]ou must keep my decrees and my laws. … And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you. (Leviticus 18:26,28)
>
> You shall not pollute the land in which you live. … You shall not defile the land in which you live, in which I also dwell; for I the Lord dwell among the Israelites. (Numbers 35:33-34)
>
> I brought you into a plentiful land to eat its fruits and its good things. But when you entered you defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination. (Jeremiah 2:7)
>
> You have polluted the land with your whoring and wickedness. Therefore the showers have been withheld, and the spring rain has not come. (Jeremiah 3:2-3)

Act:

- Imagine what your house or patio would be like if you discarded all items made of plastic, Styrofoam-like plastic foam and other petroleum-based materials.
- Organize and plan a coastal or inland gorge clean-up (only about 9% of plastics are recycled).
- Refuse to use plastic straws in restaurants or plastic or plastic foam "beads" as packing filler.

This story appears in the **Reflections on the Care of Creation** feature series. View the full series.