



“What kind of world do we want to leave for those who come after us, to children, who are now growing up...Leaving an inhabitable planet is first and foremost up to us.”
(Laudato Sí, 160)

The United States, along with most other developed countries, has a serious waste problem. Natural resources are continually extracted to produce goods that are used in the U.S., often only briefly, before they are thrown into landfills, incinerators, or the natural environment. This system of consumption and disposal results in the waste of valuable resources and creates pollution that threatens our health, the environment, and the global climate.

Think of the astronomical number of cardboard boxes used to deliver things or the number of disposable plastic water bottles that are used/purchased daily as just an example of waste that is generated. Certainly, our challenge is to produce less waste: The average American produces 1,704 pounds of garbage per year, which is roughly three times the global average. In fact, the U.S. represents just 4% of the world’s population, but produces 12% of global municipal solid waste.

Throwing something “away” has been part of our culture for generations, and it’s easy to think of things as actually going “away.” But the unfortunate reality is that there is no “away.”. Trash sits in a landfill and does not decompose; trash that is burned becomes ash, produces fumes and harms our air; and trash that ends up in waterways unleashes a whole host of environmental problems. None of this is sustainable.

It’s easy to become overwhelmed at the sheer volume of what gets thrown away daily in this country. However, a way to begin to make a difference is to “think global, but act local.” We can recognize the huge worldwide problem of excessive waste production, but take steps in our own homes to reduce the trash that we as an individual or a family produce daily. Those small steps/efforts add up, especially when more and more people start making the effort. Recycling, composting, buying things with less packaging, and simply buying less to begin with are all actions that can have a significant impact on our waste reduction. You’d be surprised at the number of things we can do that will not only help the environment, but will also save you money!

Pray/Learn:

Print this copy of the [Prayer for an End to Waste](#) to pray during Lent.

The [Ohio EPA](#) provides variety of resources about waste and carbon footprint reduction, zero waste, and other related topics

This [LA Times story](#) gives information on how waste impacts poorer, less developed countries.

[Do biodegradable items degrade in landfills?](#) These are some things you should know about the landfill process.

The Coastal Care website has information about [ocean plastic pollution](#).

Fast/Change

Some things you can do:

- Make an effort to re-use. Challenge yourself to go one full week without buying anything new. Buy at goodwill or other outlets for used goods/items.
- Donate still-usable items that you no longer need, or have room for rather than throwing things out.
- Take reusable shopping bags with you to the grocery store.
- Buy items/food with less disposable packaging and resolve to serve meals on real plates, using real silverware and glasses/cups. Take a “no disposables” pledge for a week; bring your own coffee cup to coffee hour.
- Go “thrift shopping” instead of buying new.
- Start a compost bin to reduce your food waste.
- Resolve not to use or buy water in single serve/disposable plastic bottles; use a water filter pitcher instead.

Give/Volunteer

Many organizations sponsor litter/trash/waterway cleanups in April as part of “Earth Day” activities. Some examples are [Partners for Clean Streams](#) and the [Western Lake Erie chapter of the Sierra Club](#).

The [BGSU Office of Campus Sustainability](#) can also help make connections to active environmental-related service projects in the community.