

Disposable plastic bags

Over a billion single-use plastic bags are given out for "free" each day across the globe. The actual costs paid by our environment and society for the fleeting convenience of unlimited, free, single-use plastic bags are astounding. Each year, an estimated 500 billion to one trillion plastic bags are consumed worldwide. That is over one million per minute.

Plastic bags cause the deaths of thousands of animals and fish each year through ingestion and contamination. In addition to the environmental costs associated with production, consumption and disposal, "free" plastic bags cost U.S. retailers four billion dollars yearly, which is passed on to consumers.

According to The Wall Street Journal, the U.S. uses 100 billion plastic shopping bags annually. An estimated 12 million barrels of oil are required to make that many plastic bags, increasing America's dependency on fossil fuels.

Eight billion pounds of plastic bags, wraps and sacks enter the waste stream yearly in the U.S. alone and each bag takes over 1,000 years to break down. Only one to three percent of plastic bags ends up getting recycled and it is very costly. Most bags that are collected for "recycling" are shipped to Third World countries and burned.

The solution is easy.

Use durable, re-usable bags that you take to the store yourself or ask your store to offer them. **Franciscans for Earth** promotes the elimination of disposable bags and encourages others to use durable, re-usable bags.

Sr. Ann Wiesen (below), who lives and ministers in Florida, shares, "Sr. Pam and I use greenbags to decrease the use of plastic bags from grocery stores. If we do end up with plastic bags, we do recycle them through Publix grocery store."

