

FASTING from packaging and waste

God's creativity produces abundance without waste. St. Francis forbade his followers to cut down a whole tree so that it might grow up again; today, less than 20% of Earth's original forests remain, with the greatest losses occurring within the past four decades. With attentive eyes, we begin to see our wastefulness everywhere. There are innumerable opportunities to reduce, reuse, and recycle the waste with which we burden and poison "Sister Mother Earth," as Francis called our home.

We can avoid waste by reducing what we buy. By repairing existing items and saving our money for products built to last, we can offer an alternative to a culture of endless consumption driven by products intended to wear out quickly. We can choose cloth over paper for napkins, towels, and bags. We can abstain from shopping bags by bringing our own. We can buy loose rather than packaged fruits and vegetables, and look for bulk bin options (such as grains and nuts).

We can prevent waste by reusing as much as possible. We can compost from our kitchen and gardens, thereby turning what some consider garbage into nourishment for the earth. We can even reuse bags for loose produce and bulk bin items.

We can turn waste into something new by recycling. Recycling reduces landfill space, demand for raw materials, energy consumption, air and water pollution, and waste-disposal bills. Recycling one metric ton of paper saves 17 trees. It takes 40 - 95% less energy to produce goods with recycled aluminum, glass, plastic, or paper than it does to manufacture them with raw materials. We can participate in our local recycling programs and encourage our town or city to expand the range of recyclable materials. We can buy recycled products, especially those with more than 50% post-consumer content.

Like Paul, let us leave our wasteful behaviors behind and strain forward to what lies ahead, the new order of God's abundance. May our repentant embrace of responsibility for creation encourage others to seek such reconciliation.

(from FAN - Franciscan Action Network, www.franciscanaction.org)

