We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.

Preamble – The Earth Charter
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* Central Region refers to MSHR Communities in Ireland and England.

* Laudato Si': Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter, *Care for our Common Home* (May 2015) is referred to as (LS).

Third printing, March 2020.
Foreword

Many people are aware of our collective responsibility for the Care of the Earth, our Common Home. I think we are also becoming increasingly aware of the potential consequences for future generations if we do not attend to our responsibility in this regard.

Young people across the world are very concerned and are organising gatherings and protests around this issue. They are reminding us of the legacy that we, and previous generations, are leaving for them and they are begging us to change. In this they are joined by Pope Francis who, in his Encyclical “Laudato Si” calls us to protect our Earth which is God’s gift to us.

Pope Francis is unambiguous when he reminds us that care for God’s creation “is not an option or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.” Rather, he sees this as fundamental to our vocation as Christians.

The call to care for the earth is an urgent one and that is why these guidelines, prepared by the Mission and Charism Group are such a timely gift for all of us. They also reflect very clearly the call of our General Chapter in 2018 to “study and reflect on Laudato Si, and respond to the call to action.”

If you glance at the contents you will see how comprehensive these guidelines are, and looking through the different chapters I know many of my questions have been answered. I hope yours will be too.

Having read the guidelines I encourage you to share them with our co-workers and with the wider community.

On behalf of all of us in the Region I want to express my heartfelt thanks to the members of the Mission and Charism Group for all the work involved in preparing these guidelines. I know they will prove to be an invaluable resource as we respond to the call of Pope Francis to care for the Earth, our Common Home.

Paula Molloy, MSHR  
*Regional Leader*  
Central Region*  
October 2019
The following words of Pope Francis inspire us:

"Each community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence, but it also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations. (LS 67)"

Ecological responsibility does not pass with time. The urgent challenge to protect our common home has now become a global phenomenon because our planet has reached a crisis point which impacts primarily on the poor and the marginalized. Young people across the world have responded to this challenge and are inviting their parents and other adults to reflect on “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up”? (LS 160). Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and author of Climate Justice (2018), has said that we are the last generation that can do something about protecting our planet. Ecological justice towards our earth and the poor and a call to ecological conversion are at the heart of the Christian message.

“Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s creation is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an option or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience. (LS 217)"
Our General Chapter Documents 2013 and 2018 emphasize the interconnectedness of all creation and invite us to educate ourselves and others on the growing crisis facing our planet.

“We are called to reflect on our daily choices individually, in community and in our ministries and actively participate in the preservation and sustainable use of the world's resources”. (Chapter Document 2013, page 12).

John O'Donohue's words give us great hope:

“Once you start to awaken no one can ever claim you again for the old patterns.”
INTRODUCTION

“Most global warming in recent decades is due to the great concentration of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrogen oxide and others) released mainly as a result of human activity... The problem is aggravated by a model of development based on the intensive use of fossil fuels, which is at the heart of the worldwide energy system”. (LS 23)

“There is an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced, for example, substituting for fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy. Worldwide there is minimal access to clean and renewable energy”. (LS 26)
HOW TO CONSERVE ENERGY?

ENERGY SUPPLIER
Look for a supplier that uses sources of energy that are kind to the planet, invests in solar farms and wind power. Negotiate good contracts for gas and electricity.

HEAT
Room temperature
- Regular temp – 18-20 degrees (do not go below 16 degrees).
- Have room thermostats situated away from fires, radiators, tv, lamps and windows.
- Make sure radiators are not covered by furniture, curtains or clothes.
- Get used to adding another layer of clothing rather than turning up the heat.
- Close curtains when it is getting dark.
- Close doors. Install draft excluders, if necessary, and ensure windows fit tightly.
- Check attic insulation.
- Turn heating off, or to a minimum, overnight and when everyone is away.

COOKING
- Be aware of the heat consumption of your ovens if you have more than one.
- Batch cook when using the oven.
- Use the correct ring for heating pans on the hob – small pans on small ring, large pans on large ring, the flame/plate to just cover the base of the pan.

LIGHT
Use low consumption light bulbs that deliver the same amount of light for less energy. LEDs are recommended. These come in cool and warm formats depending on whether you want a really bright light for a hall or softer light for a bedroom. A 9 watt LED gives equivalent light to a 60 watt normal bulb.
The **life** of these bulbs is not affected by the number of times they are turned on and off. However, **in general the more energy efficient a light bulb is the longer you can leave it on before it is cost-effective to turn it off**. These long life (guaranteed) bulbs, with their low consumption, more than compensate for their initial cost. Buying in quantity reduces the **cost** considerably.

**WASHING MACHINE**
Choose energy saving programmes; have the machine full. This may mean asking someone to share the wash with you. Avoid using the drier where possible.

**DISHWASHER**
Dishwashers use **FAR LESS WATER** than hand washing as well as being more hygienic. Some machines have a half programme which can be helpful in small houses.

Scrape or wipe plates rather than pre-rinsing them in hot or running water.

**FREEZER**
Keep the freezer full – empty space uses up energy. Stuff the gaps with newspaper if you have not enough food.

**BOILER and other Appliances** – check that they are energy efficient.
You can get a check on the whole HOUSE to see if it is energy efficient.
INTRODUCTION

Cleaning materials are necessary for keeping our homes fresh, attractive and healthy. However, not all cleaning materials are *benign* as they are chemical formulations and can cause health and environmental concerns. Our modern lives are bombarded by chemicals which claim to work faster, clean better and get rid of all known germs but at a cost to our health and to our environment.

Let us look at the cleaning products we have under our sinks and in our stores.
All these chemicals are very harmful to the environment. They kill almost all germs (bacteria) but they also affect the ecosystem by damaging normal plants and animals. Humans can also be affected if their water supply is not treated correctly.

Read the warning labels on the various cleaning products.

It is important to note that some manufacturers are currently researching how to improve the composition of these cleaning products.
WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES?
In the stores today we find new products which are safe and nontoxic to use for home cleaning tasks, **without sacrificing effectiveness.**

The following brands are available now in most supermarkets and stores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ECOVER</td>
<td>Belgian product</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LILLY ECO+</td>
<td>DUBLIN Park West Industrial Estate, Dublin 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WINNIE</td>
<td>Italian product</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Toilet, Bathroom, Shower and Floor Cleaners are available in all these products also multi-action sprays which are excellent for grease and grime in ovens and cookers.

- Most of these brands are more expensive than the harmful products but we are asked to make choices. When more people buy eco friendly products the price will come down. These products are also available in Dublin Co-Op Store in Kilmainham. You can get refills here and buy other eco friendly products.

- Within the coming year additional brands will become available.

**ACTION:**

1. Be aware of the brands you are using in your community/home. Are they eco friendly?

2. Check your super markets and if you cannot locate “Non Harmful” products ask customer service personnel if they can supply them.

3. Notice WARNING labels for chemical products which are harmful.

4. Decide on a plan of action using a realistic time frame.

5. If you have a supply of non eco friendly products in the store, discuss what can be done. Perhaps they can be returned? Exchanged? If you decide to
6. Estimate your expenditure on cleaning materials over a specified period.

7. If you are somewhat sceptical of changing from the brands you are currently using, purchase alternatives gradually and see for yourself.

8. Caring for our environment is an essential part of our mission today, so it is important that we explain the changes we are making to our staff. Hopefully they in turn will share the information with their families.

9. REMEMBER: “Purchasing is always a moral – and not simply economic – act”. (LS 206)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A. The role of germs/bacteria. Bacteria are natural organisms which may be good or bad for us. We have lots of good bacteria in our bodies but bad ones may cause serious diseases. When we allow dangerours chemicals to enter our septic tanks we destroy the bacteria necessary to break down the waste. Consequently the waste builds up, untreated, and then must be diluted and pumped out. **Bacteria are necessary to work on the waste in a septic tank, and many of the cleaning materials we use kill good bacteria.**

B. How do household cleaning products affect the environment? Even after passing through water treatment plants, small quantities of chemical compounds from cleaning products can find their way into rivers, ponds and lakes and have adverse effects on aquatic life. Phosphates in laundry...
and dishwasher detergents and phosphates and nitrates from artificial fertiliser have a nutrient effect when they enter our rivers and lakes. They trigger the widespread growth of algae which sap away the nutrients necessary for other organisms thus reducing biodiversity. By reducing surface tensions in water, surfactants allow other pollutants to be absorbed more easily by plants and animals. Many other compounds can be toxic to wildlife, or affect growth and reproduction, for instance by mimicking the effect of hormones in mammals and fish.

C. How does BLEACH affect the environment? Bleach can have harmful effects on a much larger scale than just in our houses. Chlorine-based bleach is often used in industrial processes and released into the environment in massive quantities. The impact of this pollution has spurred many to argue for the restriction of bleach as an effort to protect health and the environment.

Often, manufacturers release bleach-containing waste into bodies of water. Once in the water, bleach reacts with other chemicals to form, among other products, dioxins. Dioxins are known to be highly dangerous toxins that can have a serious impact on health. Bleach also puts wildlife at risk. Environmental toxins created by bleach have harmed several species of birds and fish.

Bleach is especially damaging to the environment because it lingers for many years. Even small amounts of the toxic chemical can accumulate in air and water over time, which can eventually result in adverse health effects.
INTRODUCTION

The first plastic was created by Alexander Parkes who publicly demonstrated it at the 1862 Great International Exhibition in London.

But the big breakthrough – arguably the birth of the modern plastics era – came in 1907. It was the first synthetic plastic – the first to be derived not from plants or animals, but from fossil fuels. This opened the floodgates to a torrent of now familiar synthetic plastics – polystyrene in 1929, polyester in 1930, polyvinylchloride (PVC) and polythene in 1933, nylon in 1935.

These brand new materials were considered the very height of glamour in the fashion and industry worlds. Records show that the amount of plastic made in the first 10 years of 21st century is equal to the amount of plastic made in the whole 20th century.
Plastic has been seen as cheap light material, not easily breakable, able to be produced in many colours, and can be discarded after one use.

In 2017 research revealed the negative effects of high usage of plastic on our planet and exposed large quantities of polystyrene found in our oceans. Many studies have revealed the growth of plastic garbage and its negative effects on our health, wildlife, beaches, quality of water and fishlife. Plastic is loading up the planet with toxic chemicals, and we are only beginning to understand the serious consequences these substances have on health.

- https://youtu.be/qt7Nt7o68sc
- https://youtu.be/YcLS_FF6wfs
- https://youtu.be/uAiIGd_JqZc
- https://youtu.be/uAiIGd_JqZc

It is widely known that plastics from food packaging can leach into food and enter the body.

Synthetic clothes laundered in our washing machines result in billions of microplastics entering our oceans through our waste water streams. Large varieties of marine species are capable of ingesting such plastics and the substances can cause significant internal damage to them.

The danger is not only confined to the species themselves but can transfer up the food chain and has been found in the food supplies for animal and human consumption.

Many varieties of plastics are extremely toxic because of additives included in the manufacturing process.

**WHAT ARE PLASTIC MICROBEADS?**

Microbeads are tiny plastic particles. The composition of microbeads can vary and often include polyethylene (PE) or polypropylene (PP), polyethylene terephthalate (PET), polymethyl methacrylate (PMMA) or nylon. Bottom line, it is all plastic!
WHAT PRODUCTS CONTAIN PLASTIC MICROBEADS?

Plastic microbeads are in liquid soaps, shower gels, shampoos, and toothpastes. Most wastewater treatment does not filter out microbeads, and they get discharged into waterways. As a result, microplastic particles are found in oceans worldwide, as well as inland waterways.

Fish species that humans harvest for food have been known to eat micro-plastic particles at an alarming rate and the toxins absorbed in these plastics transfer to the fish tissue.

Plastic microbeads absorb persistent organic pollutants (long-lasting toxic chemicals like pesticides, flame retardants, motor oil and more) and other industrial chemicals that move up the food chain when the toxic-coated beads are consumed by fish and other marine organisms.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM WASHING MY FACE OR BRUSHING MY TEETH WITH PLASTIC?

Most people have no idea that those little beads are actually bits of plastic! If you see any of the following ingredients: polyethylene, polypropylene, polyethylene terephthalate or polymethyl methacrylate you are cleaning yourself with plastic and being duped into contributing to plastic pollution in the environment!

USA (2015) and UK (2018) have enacted legislation to ban microbeads. A Bill was introduced before Dail Eireann (June 2019) to ban the manufacture of products containing microbeads and to impose restrictions in relation to the disposal of substances containing microbeads.

PLASTIC WASTE IN IRELAND

1 million tonnes of packaging waste is generated in Ireland every year.

95% of Irish recyclable plastics went to China in 2016.

Since the beginning of 2018, China has stopped taking recyclable plastics from Ireland and other states because large amounts of dirty or even hazardous wastes were mixed in with the plastics. These polluted China’s environment seriously, the country’s environment ministry explained in a notice to the World Trade Organisation.

Most plastics do not biodegrade, so the plastic generated by humans could be with us for thousands of years.
REFUSE, REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

- Avoid using single-use plastics: cling film, cellophane, food packaging.
- Use bee’s wax wrap, lunch boxes, etc.
- Avoid buying plastic bottled water. Carry a reusable glass bottle.
- Buy a reusable tea/coffee cup.
- Avoid cans – those used for food are often lined with plastic. Choose glass jars instead.
- Buy washing powder in cardboard boxes, rather than liquid in plastic bottles, alternatively use Eco Egg or Soap Nuts homecare and cleaning products.
- Swap plastic storage containers for glass jars. Reuse coffee and jam jars.
- Carry a fabric shopping bag with you. Plastic bags are a major cause of ocean pollution.
- Say no to disposable cutlery, polystyrene cups and packaging.
- Avoid liquid soaps, shower gels, shampoos that contain microbeads – use bars of soap instead of liquid soap or shower gel. Use shampoo bars instead of bottles.
- Bamboo toothbrushes are available in health food stores.
- Buy natural fibre clothes.

COMMUNITY/PARISH ACTION

Become involved in litter pick-up days
Explore alternatives to use of plastic at community/parish level
Imagine a plastic-free future!
INTRODUCTION

Purchasing is always a MORAL act, and not simply an ECONOMIC one. (cf: LS 206)

80% of the world's resources are consumed by 20% of the world's population. The majority of people on the earth have very little purchasing power, often not enough to buy food for their children.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation calculates that 1.3 billion tonnes of food is wasted each year. (The Environmental Impact of Food Waste)

Ireland, per head of population, is among the highest waste producers in Europe (Climate Action Plan 2019, page 112).
SUGGESTIONS FOR SHOPPING:

- Think before buying, (clothes, food, etc. etc.) Ask do I really need it?
- Think of the circular economy….use the least amount of stuff possible.
- Make a list of what is needed before going shopping.
- Shop Locally, and buy what is produced locally. Buy Irish, if living in Ireland. Try to buy fewer products that were flown in from around the world. This long-distance transport of food causes much air pollution. Buy seasonal food if possible; tomatoes in winter have a higher footprint than in summer.
- Buy free-range: eggs, chicken, pork, etc. (safer and healthier for the buyer, and for the animals concerned).
- Buy organic food, if possible. (no toxic chemicals or pesticides used in growing organic food).
- If farmers' markets or country markets are in your area, consider supporting them.
- Reduce use of plastic wrappings, e.g. bring a bag for loose fruit and vegetables. If buying a cup of coffee ask for a regular cup and not a disposable one. Buy bars of soap and not plastic bottles of liquid soap.
- If it is necessary to buy table serviettes, white ones cause less pollution than dark-coloured ones.
- Reduce the buying of bottled water – drink from the tap, or buy a water filter.
- Buy energy-saving light bulbs, e.g. LED long-life bulbs. Check energy efficient labels on goods such as dishwashers and washing machines. Rating A+++.
- For larger items buy good quality, long-lasting items.
- Buy second hand as much as possible – clothes, furniture, etc.
- Buy recycled paper for printing and notebooks.
- Buy Fairtrade goods such as tea, coffee, bananas, chocolate etc. Most supermarkets stock these. Many coffee shops sell Fairtrade coffee, e.g. Marks and Spencer, Insomnia, etc. (Farmers and workers are treated fairly by Fairtrade (www.fairtrade.ie).
• Buy eco friendly cleaning materials if you can. Most supermarkets such as Dunnes, Tesco, Aldi, stock them. They have all that is required for laundry and house cleaning, and using them greatly reduces water pollution.

• Buy goods that are made by companies that act ethically. Try to find out which ones they are. Also when investing money consider ethical choices. Divest from fossil fuels. See: Global Catholic Climate Movement.

A place worth visiting: Dublin Food Co-operative, Kilmainham. The co-op aims to encourage customers to buy locally, reduce plastic use and try to reach zero waste. e.g. empty bottles can be returned, and refills of some items can be obtained.

ENJOY YOUR SHOPPING!
INTRODUCTION
The whole concept of recycling challenges us deeply on how we use the resources of the earth gifted to us. If we begin to reflect on what is embraced by the process, we quickly realise that what we are called to is a radical ecological conversion.

“……we come to realise that a healthy relationship with creation is one dimension of overall personal conversion …….leading to heartfelt repentance and desire to change” (LS 218)

“Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and be unbridled in your creativity”
(Marian O Sullivan OP)

“The earth does not belong to us. We belong to the earth”
(Chief Seattle)
Recycling is an imperative if we want to leave this Planet for future generations. It begins at home as we make new products from old ones and only discard when no longer of practical use. We are invited to make a shift in attitude and in practice. All this calls for creativity with which each person is endowed and also for “fire in the belly” without which we will never engage.

Whenever we share ideas on our habits of waste the word consumerism comes to mind. This is a deep malaise in our present society and begs for much reflection. The poet and writer John Moriarty invites us to reflect on this in the following words:

“What a poverty to so mortgage ourselves to the economic imperatives of our economic world, that we die as a caterpillar …”

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS
Each community is called to have a system for sorting recyclables.

1. General Recycling Bin: All items are to be CLEAN, EMPTY, DRY and LOOSE
   - Reuse wrapping paper e.g. that used for Christmas gifts. Is wrapping always necessary?
   - Reuse Birthday and Christmas cards etc …original creations called for …
   - When printing, print on both sides of sheet: reuse back of paper already printed.
   - Instead of printing off articles or periodicals from the computer, read on computer e.g. Happenings (our Congregational newsletter).
   - Do we need to buy the Daily Paper? T.V, Radio, Computers, Smart Phones can keep us in touch with World News.
   - Cardboard and cardboard packaging.
   - When recycling cartons (milk, juices etc.) wash, allow to dry and flatten. Place with clean paper for recycling.
   - Tins and certain plastics e.g. fish tins, vegetable tins etc. butter tubs, yogurt tubs, soap and shampoo containers, all washed, dried and added to bin.
   - Hard plastics only: egg boxes.
It is the conviction that ‘less is more’. A constant flow of new consumer goods can baffle the heart and prevent us from cherishing each thing and each moment.” (LS 222).

3. Glass
All glass bottles and containers are carefully washed, dried and disposed of in the bottle bank.

4. Food
● Cooked food when no longer edible should be disposed of in the composting bin for collection.
● Organic waste e.g. banana/orange/potato peels, egg shells and teabags can be designated for garden composting.

5. Clothing
● All reusable clothing, skirts, jumpers etc. can be recycled in “Good as New” and Charity Shops when no longer needed. It is often suggested that we, as we embrace a simpler way of life, avail of purchasing in same category of store. We could also renew our sometimes forgotten skills in sewing, renovating and knitting, perhaps even mending?

6. Electrical and Technological Equipment
● When no longer of use these should be disposed of in the local Recycling Centre. Old batteries and bulbs are disposed of in a similar way.

Let’s be inspired and challenged by Pope Francis’ words:

“Reusing, something, instead of immediately discarding when done for the right reasons, can be an act of love which expresses our own dignity” (LS 211).
INTRODUCTION

On 26 November 2016, at the first ever Global Sustainable Transport Conference, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told delegations gathered in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, that the world has the resolve, commitment, imagination and creativity “to transform our transport systems in a sustainable manner that will improve human wellbeing, enhance social progress and protect our planet”. This sentiment that environmental action must also address human well-being and social inequality had been emphasised by Pope Francis in 2015 *Laudato Si’, ‘The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation’ (LS 48).

Transport accounts for approx. 20% of Green House Emissions. Private cars make up a large proportion of these. As well as contributing to climate change, transport emissions contribute to air pollution that has a significant impact on human health.
Our current transport system is also leading to significant congestion in urban areas and can negatively impact both mental and physical health. “The quality of life in cities has much to do with systems of transport, which are often a source of much suffering for those who use them. Many cars, used by one or more people, circulate in cities, causing traffic congestion, raising the level of pollution, and consuming enormous quantities of non-renewable energy” (LS 153). The lack of public transport in rural areas also leads to an over reliance on private transport. This can lead to isolation where people do not have access to cars or are unable to drive.

In Ireland there is a push to replace combustible engine cars with electric vehicles (EVs). While EVs will undoubtedly play a part in our sustainable transport system we need to look at alternatives such as a shift towards more public transport.

**STEPS TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT**

- Reduce, as much as possible, the number of flights taken.
- Walk or cycle short distances. This has the added benefit of better overall health and fitness as well as air quality.
- Use public transport if more active modes of travelling are not feasible (e.g. walking, cycling).
  - Buses, trains and light rail etc not only reduce emissions, air pollution and congestion/travel times, but also support a vital service for people who, for whatever reason, cannot drive. The more people use the service the more likely it will be to be improved and maintained.
- Choose destinations that are accessible via public transport e.g. shops, holiday destinations, services.
- Reduce unnecessary journeys.
- Sign up to a car sharing service. If there is not a service available in your area consider car-sharing projects with your community.
- Car share where possible.
- If investing in a new car aim to get the most efficient one possible such as an electric car or hybrid fuel-cell car.

Cf: World Economic Forum’s *Global Battery Alliance*
If you *do* need to drive, drive as efficiently as possible.
- Slow-down in good time.
- Travel at lower speeds.
- Use higher gears as soon as traffic conditions allow.
- Do not carry unnecessary weight in the car.
- Ensure tyre pressure is correct.
- Use air vents instead of open windows.
- Use air conditioning sparingly.
- Avoid leaving the engine running when stationary.
- Park vehicle so that the front is facing outwards for the next journey.
- Get car serviced regularly.

- Shop locally and purchase Irish produce to reduce food miles.
- Reduce the amount of waste to limit the transportation of refuse.

**CAMPAIGNING FOR SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT**

As well as changing transport behaviour it is also necessary to campaign for a more sustainable transport system. There are many barriers to sustainable transport including, but not limited to, bad development planning and urban sprawl, lack of safe cycling and walking infrastructure, lack of efficient public transport especially in rural areas. It is also necessary to change the perceptions and social norms that prevent us from making more sustainable transport choices.

- There are campaigns that aim to pedestrianize parts of our towns and cities in order to make more space available for people and less for cars.
- Support campaigns that are calling for better cycling and public infrastructure. Until the infrastructure is available, help create a safe environment for cyclists and walkers using the road.
INTRODUCTION

“All praise be yours my Lord, through Sister Water, so useful, precious and pure.” (St. Francis) “Come to the water you who are thirsty. Though you have no money, come.” (Isaiah 55:1)

“You care for the land and water it”. (Psalm 65:9)

People have always known that water is a wonderful gift, and is in fact one of the most valuable of all earth’s natural resources, as without it, there would be no life on earth. Both the U.N. and Pope Francis have said that “access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right.” (LS 30) See also LS 27-31

THE IMPORTANCE OF CLEAN WATER

Water is essential for all life on earth and for supporting terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, but water continues to be wasted. The issue of water is an
educational and cultural one, since there seems to be little awareness of the seriousness of wasting it. We in Ireland and the U.K. have been blessed by an abundance of water, so may not realise that one in every six people in the world does not have access to clean water. Without water we would die, and there is no substitute for water. The Koran 21:30 says that by means of water we give life to everything. The control of water by large multinationals may become a major source of conflict this century. It has been said that the next war will be fought over water. Water must remain a public resource.

Because of climate change more countries than ever are suffering from drought which causes famine. We know too that the struggle to survive in any country can result in violence. As climate change becomes more extreme, drought may occur in Ireland in summertime. Conservation of water is therefore an important consideration. One of the biggest problems caused by climate change is uncertainty regarding the production of food, which can result in widespread starvation. If there is no water, biodiversity is threatened and scientists tell us that one million species are at risk now, and ultimately all life on earth is threatened. (Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services 2019: IPBES)

WATER POLLUTANTS
A serious problem for the world to tackle is the pollution of water. Polluted water causes diseases which kill, such as cholera, malaria, typhoid and gastroenteritis. Small children are especially susceptible, and we know 2000 children die daily from drinking dirty water. Remember the water cycle: all water has to go somewhere and polluted water ends up contaminating rivers, lakes and seas, and ultimately ends up in the food chain.

Common Pollutants:

- Sewage due to bad sanitation
- Discharge from factories
- Slurry and fertilisers used in agriculture
- Salinisation from industry etc.
- Phosphates in detergents/cleaning agents
- Pesticides which are toxic
- Garbage from litter
Illegal dumping and landfill.

Plastics

**NORMAL WATER USAGE**

The average household uses 119 litres of water per day, which is 70% more than we used 30 years ago. This is made worse by the increase in population. It takes 250 gallons of water to produce 1 ream of paper, and 39,000 gallons to manufacture 1 car. 150 gallons are used in the production of 1 loaf of bread. Water is needed to make cloth, and we know that we dump tons of clothes annually. The increased consumption is destroying the water’s natural system of recycling, which means the quality of our water is deteriorating every year. It makes us aware how important it is to **refuse, repair, reuse, recycle**. Cutting consumption cuts down the invisible water footprint.

Research shows how much water is used for everyday tasks:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Water Usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brushing teeth with tap on</td>
<td>9 litres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brushing teeth with tap off</td>
<td>1 litre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 minute power shower</td>
<td>90 litres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Minute shower</td>
<td>32 litres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Bath</td>
<td>80 litres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Water Use</td>
<td>25 litres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet flush</td>
<td>8 litres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing machine</td>
<td>60 litres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dishwasher</td>
<td>40 litres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing car with hosepipe</td>
<td>540 litres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing car with bucket</td>
<td>10 litres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Resource: Africa Europe Faith & Justice Network*
TO USE WATER RESPONSIBLY:

- Report leaks in public places.
- Save rain water in a water barrel.
- Plug the sink when washing face, hands, teeth.
- Use a small basin in the sink.
- Take a shower instead of a bath.
- Fill the kettle with only the amount of water needed.
- Fill the dishwasher or washing machine before using.
- Use eco friendly detergents to keep water pure.
- Find out about your local water supply/policies/practices.
- Educate yourself about the shortage of water in other countries.

TO AVOID WASTING WATER:

- Never let a tap run, or let leaks go unattended.
- Do not use a hosepipe when you can use a bucket.
- Do not water the garden on windy days or during the hottest hours.

*Water is the living blood stream of our Common Home, where there is only one water system. Let us do all we can to guard it. As Greta Thunberg said:*

“We can all do something – let us do it now”
The Mission and Charism Group was formed in May 2010 during a strategic planning process in the Region. Its purpose is to be a support and a resource in the living out of MSHR mission and charism in the Central Region.

This booklet has been prepared by the Sisters of the Mission and Charism Group 2019:

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