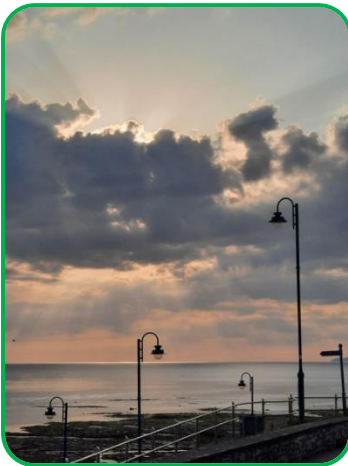




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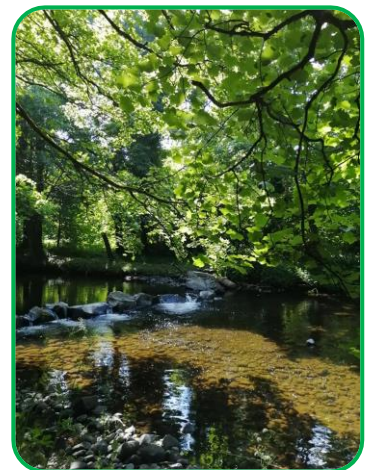
Dear Friends of Eco-Congregation Ireland

Welcome to the Summer 2021 edition of the Eco-Congregation Ireland newsletter! Read on for stories of hope and encouragement! The ECI committee hopes that everyone is enjoying this beautiful summer and getting out and about in God's creation. If you have any information or stories you would like to share in our future newsletters, we would love to hear from you! Send them to info@ecocongregationireland.com. The photo on the left shows a sunset in Bundoran by Fr Hugh O'Donnell.

Resources for Season of Creation/Creation Time 2021

Season of Creation/Creation Time is almost here! There are resources available for all traditions! ECI would like to share the following resources with you:

- **Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference** – <https://www.catholicbishops.ie/2021/07/21/season-of-creation-2021/>. Please share with priests and liturgy committees.
- **Season of Creation 2021** – <https://seasonofcreation.org/>.
- **Climate Sunday Resources** – <https://www.climatesunday.org/>
- **Pray and Fast for the Climate Prayer Vigil for COP26 Resources** – <https://prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk/2021/07/31/prayer-vigil-for-cop26/>
- **Eco-Congregation Scotland** – resources will be launched on August 19th. Keep an eye on their website here <https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/>.



Latest News ...

Church of Ireland makes Climate Sunday video!

Has your church or faith community considered holding a Climate Sunday event or service? You can find out more and register here – <https://www.climatesunday.org/>. There are also resources available on this website for all to use. An inspiring video has been made by the Church of Ireland press office promoting Climate Sunday is available here: <https://youtu.be/mQPeyOCQqJI>. Don't forget – if you hold a Climate Sunday event or service let us know – we would love to receive a report and photo for a future edition of the Eco-Congregation Ireland newsletter. Send your news to info@ecocongregationireland.com.



A Round Up of News from the Church of Ireland

- **St Gall's and St John's walk for water** - www.ireland.anglican.org/news/10778/st-galls-and-st-johns. This follows on from an earlier story from May: www.ireland.anglican.org/news/10652/six-annahilt-mums-walk-for
- **Model pupils of Dunmanway raise funds for charity and awareness of climate change** - www.ireland.anglican.org/news/10784/model-pupils-of-dunmanway-raise
- **County Cork school creates massive mural out of plastic bottle tops to conquer lockdown isolation** - www.ireland.anglican.org/news/10752/county-cork-school-creates-massive

The Church of Ireland's online photo gallery at www.flickr.com/churchofireland features an album on initiatives for caring for Creation, developed by the Church or alongside other Churches and organisations. Forty-two pictures are currently available, with most also featuring stories from around the Church, and further updates will follow over the rest of the year. The link is <https://flic.kr/s/aHsmH9FDzU>



Salesian Cosmology Group Retreat – ‘In Communion with the Sacred Universe’

Teresa Devine sent ECI this report: We experienced this retreat as an inspiring week in June with Niamh Brennan and Colette Kane OP in the wonderful surroundings of An Tairseach. We enjoyed beautiful weather, peace and quiet and space to appreciate nature surrounding us, including Wicklow bay. ‘The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains; everything is, as it were a caress of God.’ L Sí 84 Each session opened new avenues to really appreciate the ‘caress of God’ in the natural world and the pending dangers in our industrialised global community which seem to live out of a limited world view where the natural resources of Planet Earth are just used regardless of the consequences long term. Throughout the past year our Cosmology Group have created links and we are now working with the Limerick Diocesan Outreach Pastoral Team.



*Ask the beasts and they will teach you;
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;
ask the plants of the earth and they will teach you;
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.” Book of Job (12, 7-8)*

A Splendid Summer at Bonnybrook Eco Parish

Margo Delaney sent ECI this update: As we gather to write this short account of our eco aware activities, we are rejoicing in nature’s bounty! Our wildflower garden is resplendent with myriads of colourful, pollinator friendly flowers and an odd shrub. We welcome the red-tailed bumbles bees and their bigger yellow and black striped cousins. A few solitary bees and other random pollinators have graciously visited also. Our fledgling sensory garden has become a rich meadow of waving green-beige grasses, interspersed

with wild vetch, red clover, flowering “shamrock” trefoils, and on the rocky ground, silver weed, blue-eyed speedwell, scarlet pimpernel, poppies ... Along the wall, the reclaimed roses are blooming in magnificent colours; some of them sending out sweet perfume on the summer air and providing food for even the tiny pollinators.

Along the fence, the many plants and flowers contributed by the community are making a gorgeous display. It is a joy to walk along and recall who carried their excess seedlings, cuttings, and shrubs to add to the edges of the meadow – red campion, white lilies, montbretia, ox-eyed daisies ,the remnants of the timid forget-me- nots, wall flowers, “fried egg” daisies, alstroemeria lilies, lavender, oleander, penstemon, cornflowers. and the emerging green dahlia shoots— all contributions from neighbours and friends. We are still waiting in hope that our small “wood” of trees will put forth some green buds, though that hope is fading. Only the holly tree and the small privet shrub seems to be surviving. [Read more of Margo’s update on the ECI website here.](#)



360° Carbon

360° carbon is a collaborative, web-based tool which enables churches to measure their carbon footprint from different activities – energy, travel, food, waste, water and other expenditure. It was commissioned by A Rocha UK and the Church of England. The new site is free to use and is designed to work for all church denominations. Check it out and measure your church’s carbon footprint! <https://www.climatestewards.org/resources/360carbon/>



Partnership between Hugh’s Meadow Nature Reserve (NI) and Arocha UK

Bertie Stirling shared this news with us: On the 19th July we met as a small but significant group to celebrate the Partnership between Hugh’s Meadow Nature Reserve and Arocha UK. We gathered in a large barn to share and experience a small part of the wonderful creation God has made us part of. After some refreshments and introductions, Bertie Stirling read some words from scripture and Rev. Canon David Humphries lead us in some prayers. Mr. Frank Ellison (Owner) Told us the story of Hugh’s Meadow and Mr. Andy Lester (Conservation Officer for Arocha UK) and Miss Regina Ebner



(Partners in Action Manager for A Rocha UK) gave some thoughts on Arocha UK and the ‘Partners in Action’

scheme. We all then enjoyed a walk in Hugh's Meadow marvelling in the amazing diversity of plant and animal life around us. The Ellison family have cared for the land for many years and particularly for the wildlife in Hugh's Meadow over the last 20+ years. This is the beginning of another phase of sharing that plot with others in the local community and further afield.

Westport Eco-Congregation supports Plastic Free July

Caroline Goucher send ECI this report: Westport Eco-Congregation is supporting the 'Plastic Free July' again this year, and we are promoting #WeChooseReuse Campaign. As you know packaging/plastic waste is a huge problem here in Ireland. Our recycling rates are extremely low (31%) and we are seeing more plastic and unnecessary packaging on our shop shelves more than ever.



We see refill/reuse as the solution. That will help us to achieve our plastic and packaging recycling goals of 55% by 2030 (as part of the EU Directive). VOICE Ireland are joining forces with international partner Break Free from Plastic and we are supporting the #WeChooseReuse campaign by:

- Celebrating small businesses in Ireland who are already offering reuse solutions
- Asking individuals to sign the #WeChooseReuse Pledge
- Asking our political leaders to sign the open letter calling for more support for truly robust reuse systems to be put in place
- Asking our business owners to sign an open letter asking for more support

Our members have visited local businesses that are supporting the Refill Ireland initiative, and using the images as content for social media and continue to raise awareness. To find out more connect with [Westport Eco-Congregation on social media](#) or email us at westportecocongregation@gmail.com to find out more about our work.

Rathfarnham Church of Ireland Parish – Latest News

Andrew Shorten sent us this report: one of our parishioners recently installed solar panels so it is a real live example. Individual experiences may vary. I don't think the feed-in tariff has been announced yet, although it is now August. So I think there is a general health warning that you need to research your options. For instance, using the spare electricity to run a heat pump system or charge an electric vehicle is ideal because it saves more fossil fuel. Selling to the national grid may give a disappointing income.



It is said that a quarter of Ireland's total carbon dioxide emissions originate from the energy we use in our homes. A number of Rathfarnham parishioners have taken the initiative to improve their energy efficiency by measures such as improved attic insulation, wall and underfloor insulation, and fixing the sources of draughts.

Before you sell or rent out a house, you must employ a Building Energy Rating (BER) assessor to do a survey and rate the house on a scale from A1 (best) to G (worst). Similarly, the BER is part of the process when you apply for a grant from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) under the Better Energy Homes programme. A home with a high rating is likely to increase the value of your home. SEAI grants are available

for insulation, solar panels (for either water heating or electricity), heat pump systems, heating controls, the BER, as well as bonuses for extra measures.

The photo above right shows eight photovoltaic (PV) panels installed on a south-facing roof. The work was carried out by an approved installer who also managed the grant application. The electricity generated in this example is used during daylight to power household appliances, showers, immersion water heating, and can potentially be used to recharge an electric car. It saved the householders 1,260 kilowatt hours (kWh) in the first year of operation, worth €264. The surplus electricity on sunny days is fed into the national grid, monitored by a smart meter. At present this attracts an annual “interim payment” of €150, but the Government has announced that a “fair price” per kWh will be introduced from July 2021. The solar panel system cost €8,600 and SEAI grants of €1,400 were obtained. Other energy savings to the existing gas condensing boiler system were made by improved insulation and pipework. So you can have a mini power plant on your own roof! Simple and relatively inexpensive steps like lagging your hot water tank and draught proofing a problem door can save a lot of energy. Although investment is required, making your home cosy and affordable to heat is surely desirable – for comfort, saving money long-term, and saving the planet.

The Beauty of Creation in the Blackrock Road SMA Garden, Cork

Gerard Forde from the SMA Justice Office sent ECI this news: In the cold days of late winter and early spring an effort was made in the SMA garden in Blackrock Road, Cork to prepare the ground, plant wild flower seeds and to do things in a way that cares more for creation. We present the result of this work here as one example of the many things that have begun to happen in SMA Communities all around Ireland, in Dublin, Claregalway, Dromantine, Wilton and Blackrock Road. There is a growing consciousness of the need to do more in order to care more. There is also a growing awareness that this caring needs to be planned, sustained and become an active part of Christian living and of living more justly.



The efforts made in Blackrock Rd have, as you will see, had a beautiful result but all the other efforts in SMA Houses around Ireland are, although less visible equally important, the recycling, not mowing all the grass, growing vegetables, not using weed killer, reducing waste, composting, saving energy and so on. All are ways of caring for creation and for all who depend on it, ourselves, those living far away and those yet to be born. All of us can do more to care more. We hope you enjoy this three minute video which was filmed one afternoon in July. We also hope it will be for you a meditation, a prayer on the beauty of God’s Creation entrusted to our active care. [Click to view the video filmed and edited by Paul O’Flynn.](#)

An Tairseach 10 Week Sabbatical Programme – Applications Open!

An Tairseach has opened its doors again! They are currently planning for their ten week Sabbatical Programme due to begin in September entitled: Exploring Spirituality in the context of an evolving universe, an endangered earth, in the Christian tradition. Dates for the next Sabbatical course: 5th September to 12th November 2021. Applications are open. All participation is subject to government guidelines for both national and international travel at the time of the programme. Applications are welcome from anyone with an interest and commitment to the content of the programme. Visit here >> <https://antairseach.ie/sabbaticals/> for all information



Iona Community: Faith, Hope + Climate Change – FREE 7 Week Countdown to COP26 Course

Trinity College Glasgow invites Church Groups across the UK and Ireland to join their FREE 7 Week Countdown to COP26 Course,



“Faith, Hope + Climate Change”. Use part of your 2021 home group, youth group, or Bible study group programme to join with others in listening for God’s call as we face up to the Climate Emergency. Each evening, you can learn from high-profile scholars and speakers, and get involved through three innovative action tracks, which will inspire and support you over the 7 weeks to take creative and prophetic action in your church and community. [More information at this link.](#)

Latest News from JPIC Diocese of Kerry and St John’s, Tralee



Sylvia Thompson sent ECI this update: A ‘zoom’ meeting of Care of Creation contact people in parishes was held at the beginning of July and 18 parishes were represented. This gave the opportunity to welcome, meet and hear of existing initiatives in parishes and discuss this role. The details of the upcoming Season of Creation theme was shared and participation invited. As expected, parishes are at different stages but it was a most encouraging gathering. Copies of the Season of Creation leaflet (in both English and Irish for the relevant parishes) will be sent to all parishes in the diocese by the end of August and the liturgical resources will also be emailed. The entire set of Season of Creation resources are now available on www.catholicbishops.ie. In addition, podcasts will be available from September 1st. The JPIC Committee will also host a webinar on September 16th @ 8pm. ‘Caring for God’s Creatures’. This is open to all and will feature speakers on exciting local projects involving the Curlew, Pearl Mussel & more. For registration see www.dioceseofkerry.ie.

Parish of St John the Baptist, “St John’s”, Castle Street, Tralee

The parish ARK (www.weartheark.org) now has a small pond ‘Linn Eoin’ thanks to the Care of Creation Group and the group also continues to change the displays in its Hub window. This group hosts the diocesan event for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation on September 1st, in Tralee Town Park. This year the plans include setting up the Cosmic or Creation Walk. The spiral tells the evolutionary story of the cosmos, from 13.8 billion years ago to today, from when the universe flared forth out of creative energy and love of God. Be sure to visit if in Tralee! Hoping there will be wonderful celebrations during the Season of Creation across the entire Island of Ireland!

Orlagh-in-the-City – Latest News

Lorcan McDermott sent ECI this update: One of our most recent walks, our first outing after lockdown, was on the Carrigolligan forest trail between Kiltiernan and Enniskerry. A nineteenth century leadmining and smelting centre was located in Ballycorus near Kiltiernan. We had a leisurely walk of two kilometres, on a sunny morning, through the forest leading to the now disused eighty-foot-high granite chimney, originally built to remove fumes from the smelter. It is a very striking feature on the landscape and can be seen from miles around. From here there are great views across Dublin Bay to Howth and west to Glencullen.



After we finished reading Donal Dorr’s A Creed for Today, the book club wrote to him saying how informative we found his book. By way of response, we were introduced to a very interesting discussion of the relationship between science and theology, a further insight. We’ve been very lucky with the recent weather for our garden Masses in Benildus Pastoral Centre Kilmacud, courtesy of the De La Salle brothers. It would be a very suitable choice of location, close to nature, for Mass on Climate Sunday. This should help to prepare us for the forthcoming UN COP 26 (Conference of the Parties) discussions on climate change in Glasgow this coming November. Ongoing participation by some community members at the Fridays for Future events outside the Dail is a further contribution to raising awareness in the run up to COP26.

Goodbye from Loving Sister Earth

The Loving Sister Earth Team have shared the following news: **National Holy Wells Day:** We celebrated this year on June 13. As last year, Covid -19 inhibited gatherings around local wells, but LSE and Solas Bhríde combined to present a 45-minute virtual celebration and ritual, with text, history, prayer, image and story. Viewers were invited to participate creatively at home, using water, ribbons, stones, and a globe or atlas. RTE's Leap of Faith pre-viewed the programme by interview, which encouraged interest in the actual event.



LSE Website Wind-down: We regret to inform you that the LSE site will shortly be closing down, but we want to thank you for your visits and support over the years. Together we formed a lively Internet Community, with which we believe both God and Pope Francis must have been happy! We discerned that it was time to terminate the site for several reasons:

MISSION: The LSE site has now fulfilled its intended mission, and other sites can better provide the resources needed to maintain and develop the spirituality behind Laudato Si. Such sites include the Laudato Si Movement (formerly GCCM and now re-named as of July 29). **FUTURE:** We hope to identify another group which will develop National Holy Wells Day with new energy and vision.

In addition we should add that the site itself has passed its retirement date, according to the technicians, and we do not have the resources to build anew. And of course our small LSE team has also been clocking up the years! While we regret having to close down we believe that nothing done in love is ever wasted: God values the small things and gathers them into eternal care. May God bless your own labours, and ours, into the future!

Greetings from Carrigaline Parish Care of the Earth Group

Fran Deasy sent ECI this latest update: Our group consists of people from the St. John & Carrigaline Union of Parishes and Our Lady & St. John, sister parishes in Carrigaline, Co. Cork. We work and meet together, hopefully in person again before the Autumn. In the springtime areas of both of our sister church grounds were dedicated to 'No Mow May' and that has evolved into 'Don't Mow, Let it Grow' throughout the summer. Graveyards, church grounds and parish house gardens are thriving with new wildflowers and in the Rectory garden can you spot the rabbit in the photo on the right?



On both of our Parish Facebook pages we encouraged everyone to sign up for pledging their gardens for pollinators as part of the 'All Ireland Pollinator Plan', and we encourage parishioner's feedback and views on a variety of local and national environmental issues including Ireland's Marine Protected Area Network, and the Carrigaline Transportation and Public Realm Enhancement Plan. Carrigaline and the surrounding townlands are undergoing enormous and rapid development. Currently 800+ new houses are being built, new infrastructure and roads developed, a new motorway nearby planned and three new schools are opening in the Autumn.

As a local faith community committed to concern for others and the natural environment we had submitted our own group feedback in February 2021 on the proposed Carrigaline Transportation and Public Realm Enhancement Plan to the Senior Engineer of Cork County Council. A draft plan for Carrigaline was

published in May, and in June again as a group we gave feedback on our concerns about there being no mention of biodiversity or environmental protection or enhancement of the public spaces with native Irish trees and pollinator planting and also a lack of safety measures for pedestrians and for cyclists in the draft. We also suggested the development of a Carrigaline Community orchard. We are now waiting to see if our concerns have been acted on. The value of giving feedback in planning processes was highlighted when a new supermarket planning to open shortly in Carrigaline has agreed to double the number of electric car charging points provided in response to an email from one of our members. It's very worthwhile to keep an eye out for local planning and development and as a group to communicate our concerns for others and for the environment.

Clogher Diocese JPIC Webinar: Saturday 4 September 2021

This webinar will mark the beginning of Season of Creation on Saturday 4 September 11.00am-12.30pm. *Implementing Laudato Si -The Urgent need for Action on Climate Change & Bio-diversity in our Parishes.* Guest Speakers: Rev Canon Andrew Orr, Church of Ireland; Lorna Gold tbc; Vivek da Silva tbc; Jane Mellett; Chair: Nellie McLaughlin/Liam Murtagh. Please register by contacting Eventbrite.



Blessington, Lacken, Valleymount – Latest News

Carmel O'Neill sent ECI this latest report: During the last lockdown members of the Tidy Village groups for Blessington, Lacken and Valleymount did a biodiversity course online. Each participant was given a pack with posters outlining the seasonal flowers and bulbs that will provide food for our pollinators. It was decided to display these in the porch of our churches to highlight the role of Eco-Congregation and to promote Climate Justice. We included a message from the newsletter of Cardinal Napier, Archbishop of Durban "Pray for rain in Africa" as they fear that they are approaching day zero when all of the water supplies will have depleted. The display shows families pumping water for their vegetables from a water pump.



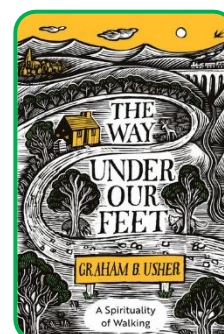
The recent fires, flooding and drought across the world has motivated us to include more prayer for all whose lives have been devastated by these disasters in our weekly masses and Holy Hour of adoration. In 2018, Lacken Tidy Village group received funding to clear the Mass path used by the people living in the townlands of Blackrock and Lugnagun to go to mass, school and the local shop. Today the pathway takes leisure walkers from the centre of the village to the top of Lacken hill where they can access the many walks of the Wicklow Way. The Mass path project won 1st prize in the Wicklow County Council Sustainable tourism award for 2020.

The gravel pathways of Lacken Church were difficult to maintain during the summer months as the weeds gained control despite regular hoeing. We have adopted a zero pesticide policy since 2018. Recently with the help of our caretaker we have cleared the gravel and placed a layer of membrane on the soil which is then covered by the gravel. This will make it much easier to pull the weeds by hand in the future.

Publications of Interest ...

'The Way Under Our Feet: A Spirituality of Walking' by Graham B Usher

Rev Andrew Orr, Chair of ECI shared a reading from this book at the latest Eco-Congregation Ireland committee meeting. We are all walking in nature a lot more



these days – checkout this wonderful book for inspiration! In a time of uncertainty and upheaval, Graham Usher urges us to walk ourselves back into life. [Learn more here.](#)

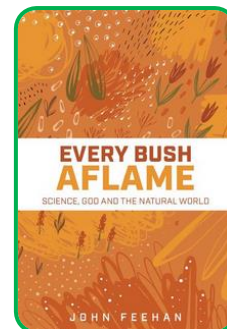


BBC Radio Ulster Thought for the Day

Rev Cheryl Meban from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland recently did a 'Thought for the Day' on BBC Radio Ulster called 'Lets respond to the 'pinging' of our biosphere'. You can listen to it here >> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p09q4f8y>.

'Every Bush Aflame: Science, God and the Natural World' by John Feehan

John Feehan's most recent book 'Every Bush Aflame: Science, God and the Natural World' is now available. It is the third in a triage of books which explores the great mystery of the relationship between God and the natural world through the advances of science. [Learn more and purchase it here.](#)



Eco Challenge!

Fran Brady, Quaker Representative on the ECI committee shares these thoughts with us - Plastic Persists Forever and Comes Back to Haunt Us

There is a lot of emphasis on what we can recycle in our green bins. From time to time there are new guidelines as to what can and cannot be placed in the green bin. An important question we might dwell on is how to reduce waste at source rather than seeing recycling as a prime way to be environmentally friendly. The hierarchy is REDUCE: REUSE: RECYCLE. Let's see how we can starve both our landfill and recycle bins especially from plastics.



Plastics are known to be one of the most detrimental components of our modern waste. They are never-ending and when they leave us they do not biodegrade but persist in our oceans or wherever they may be. Their assiduous presence in our oceans is lethal to marine life whether through ingestion or through entanglement which leads to suffering and starvation.

What can we do to avoid plastics?

- Buy products which are unwrapped or are in bio-degradable packaging.
- Buy food from local farmers markets. As well as saving food miles and strengthening local food enterprises packaging can be eliminated.
- Bring your own shopping bags.
- Look out for places where you can fill your own containers of dry food, such as Small Changes, Drumcondra Road (opposite Clonliffe Road) or Dublin Food Coop in Newmarket Square Dublin 8. This type of outlet is gaining popularity, albeit slowly
- Bring your own reusable cup instead of accepting one-use cups. This particular practice was simpler pre-COVID. Hopefully with people preference it might become widespread again.
- Make Your Own Fabric Bags for vegetables – this also recycles old fabrics.
- The government is developing a Deposit Return System (DRS). VOICE is involved with the Departmental working group to ensure DRS is successfully implemented. DRS places a levy on each plastic bottle and can sold, which the purchaser can redeem when they return their empty container to a shop. Experience in other countries demonstrated that DRS guarantees over 90% collection rate of recyclable materials, thus negating the need for virgin materials to produce new containers.

- Plastic bags, plastic bottles and plastic cups are obvious but what of the hidden plastics in the microbeads in cosmetics and toiletries. Fauna & Flora International raised the alarm about microbeads in 2012. It has been working with the cosmetics industry ever since to persuade them to phase out these ingredients. <https://www.fauna-flora.org/news/>
- Many cosmetic and beauty products still contain microplastic ingredients, such as polyethylene, which make their way into waterways. An app called Beat the Microbead 3.0 can scan products. <http://www.beatthemicrobead.org/>
- Microfibres from synthetic clothes such as acrylic, nylon and polyester are among the “invisible” sources of ocean pollution is. Microfibres escape during laundry sessions and make their way to the sea.
- For ways to stop microfibre pollution see <http://www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org/pft/2017/3/2/15-ways-to-stop-microfiber-pollution-now> which include:
 - Washing synthetic clothes less frequently and for a shorter duration.
 - Filling washing machine. Washing a full load results in less friction between the clothes and fewer fibres released.
 - Switching to liquid laundry soap. Laundry powder “scrubs” and loosens more microfibers.
 - Using a colder wash setting. Higher temperature can damage clothes and release more fibres.
 - Avoid buying synthetic clothes

Avoiding plastics can be challenge but each action performed to avoid plastic is helping to change the mindset that we cannot get it eliminated from our everyday.

Prayers/Reflections for the Earth

A Reflection by Fr Hugh O’Donnell – ‘Buzzing in the Kitchen’

There is something special about a day you can open up doors and windows and allow the outside in; usually in the form of a cooling draught or the buzzing sound of half a dozen flying insects with news from elsewhere. That’s before someone reaches for a can of fly repellent to extinguish them!



Too seldom we think of other creatures living godly lives, especially those we don’t want in our house or in our backyard! And Jesus’ parable about the tenants who take over the property entrusted to them still applies; those who refuse to recognise the owner, denying him his share of the produce, who beat up those he sends to protect it and then murder his own son.

More and more it seems clear that we are those tenants who, having bought out the owner and claimed the place for ourselves, show little respect for all the other children of life with a divine right to be here – in some cases whole families we won’t ever see again.

Our neighbours are leaving today, going back to Lithuania to raise their two boys. We will miss them as they leave us with that niggling sense of ‘could we have got to know them better?’ and a silence once filled by the sound of a different accent, child’s play, laughter, the buzzing of garden tools.

The insects that fly in and out of the house are briefly calling by. Forgive them. They are not good on boundaries!

An Unwieldy Weed, or a Plant with a Purpose? by Rev Andrew Kingston, Donnybrook, Dublin

My father used to say that God made everything for a purpose. It led to inevitable “what abouts” but he always had an answer. One of those could be the teasel. It is prickly and it takes up a lot of space crowding out other plants. There doesn’t seem to be any certainty that the teasel is even a native weed. It may have been



introduced from the Mediterranean by the woollen guilds who displayed it on their coats of arms. They used the teasel heads to raise the nap on garments, teasing out the woollen fibres. Those in the industry would hold that it did so more effectively than the metal successors as the naturally occurring hooks on the teasel heads have more “give” and don’t damage the fibres.



Teasel is a biannual. One unique characteristic is the line thorns along the spine of the back of the leaves. An app on my phone (PictureThis) identified this little weed as a teasel and I allowed a weed to grow last year, and it kept growing. Another interesting characteristic are the natural basins that grow in the base of the stems. These are called Venus basins, and some would claim that the water gathered here has cures. I’m not sure about that, but they do provide water for insects and presumably small birds, and may be there to attract pollinators. The plant is now over eight feet tall (my wife is not a fan – it is cramping an acacia tree, a vine, flax and a mallow) and has a diameter of seven feet, and over 100 teasel heads. The largest egg shaped head, of which there is only one is called the ‘king’. He is surrounded by a number of slightly smaller ‘queens’, and the little ones are called ‘buttons’, or ‘princes’. The bees love the flowers, and later charms of goldfinches gather for the seeds. Flower arrangers like the old seed heads, and I have identified another in a better place that will, I hope, perform equally well next year.

The Twenty Percent: An African Story by Fr Michael O’Shea SMA, Mpima Seminary, Zambia

[The story so far: Abbess Bess of the simian monastery in Mpima Forest, Zambia, scored heavily over fellow simian Chief Kolbe when she declared that the sentences ‘The Word became flesh’ or that God ‘became one of us’ should be emphasized rather than that ‘God became man’. Feminist philosopher, Phil O’Sophy, added weight to the argument by saying that the essence of creation and salvation is Love, and has nothing essentially to do with ‘gender’. By now all the males of the monkey troop were awake, their hackles rising at what their lady folks were saying.]



Abbot Capo pulling a forelock searched his memory for something masculine-ly uplifting to say. He bopped his wizened grey head a few times and declared, “Certainly love is central, all our efforts should be directed to becoming more loving irrespective of species, gender, inclination but, but ... As he faltered Ruby Rub jumped in, “Our tendency is to love our own kind only and even within that our own family or group. I think we in the higher echelons of species (monkeys who never degenerated into standing on two legs, shedding tails and becoming greedy predators like the hominits) must give a stronger lead in loving others of all species.”

The Abbess concurred, she’d seen visions at times in her mystical prayer, of Isaian harmony between lamb and lion, vipers and all other creatures. “But” she continued, “how can we and all creatures move towards this situation, how can we evolve towards universal love? If only we had precedents and models”.

Phil O’Sophy came to her aid, “Roughly 20% of creatures, especially, hominits, are reasonably well off and look out for one another, and even love one another. The 20% are the ‘haves’, but the vast majority of creatures, the 80%, and especially hominits themselves, are deprived; they’re the ‘have nots’”. Ada asked, “What do the ‘haves’ have?” Phil responded: “Motor cars, brick houses, three square meals a day, coffee and cakes, jobs, education, holidays and so on.” “And the ‘Have Nots’” asked Dizzy Dale, who had to have everything explained twice to her, “what have they not got?” Phil with a wry smile responded, “Apart from not having the things just mentioned they’ve little or no money, no security, and no real hopes for themselves or their children”.

One of the male monks who dabbled in science, Tail Hard de Shardy, spoke up, “I’ve always been interested in stones; how hard and beautiful they are, and still they can and do change, be smoothed by water, carved

by wind, and broken by fire. True, their changing does take time, struggle and pain, but if stone can change, surely so can we.”

“You have a point,” said Capo, “in the monastery we’ve always known the need for change, for forgiveness, repentance and reconciliation; but it is hard.”

Ruby burst in addressing the Abbess with an excited, “Reverend Mater, we do have a model, Jesus! Remember the movie, ‘Jesus Christ Superstar’, and she began to sing, “I don’t know why I love him ...” All the ladies present enjoyed the lyric especially the words, “He’s a man, he’s just a man ...”

“Good Ruby dear, you’re right” Abbess Bess beamed at her favourite supporter, “though a hominit, sorry a human, Jesus lived for love, and pronounced it the greatest of all the commandments”.

Even the males nodded and felt no desire to contradict.

With kindest regards,

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