



OUR SOCIAL MISSION

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Climate justice and YOU

This final article in a series on climate justice looks at what each of us can do to preserve the environment.

THE Church teaches that “God intended the earth with everything contained in it for the use of all human beings and peoples” (Gaudium et Spes, 69). The Catholic Social Teachings tell us that each of us should fairly take and use what we need but not over-consume. Each of us therefore has a part to play in the stewardship of God’s creation.

How can we, as individuals, ensure climate justice?

The first step is to conserve our use of resources and minimise our carbon footprint.

With every action that we take – driving a car, using electricity to light up and cool down our homes – carbon of some form is released. These carbon emissions form part of the “carbon footprint” which is a rough gauge of how much carbon dioxide is pumped into our atmosphere.

Carbon emissions can be reduced when less fuel is consumed. On this page we highlight easy ways to conserve energy and reduce your carbon footprint.

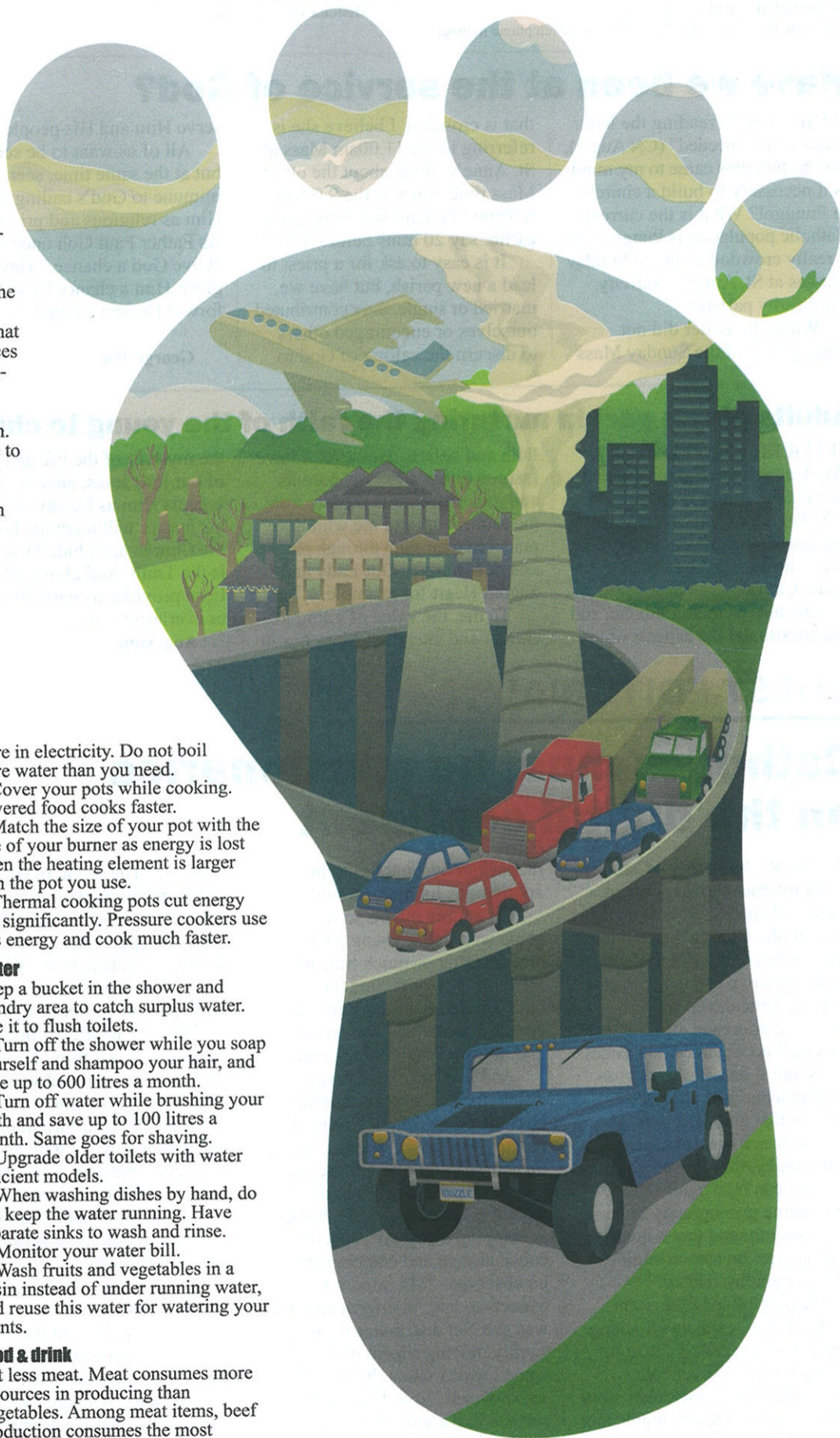
The 2009 documentary, No Impact Man, describes a year-long

experiment in New York by Colin Beavan and his family to have zero impact on the environment. The experiment included producing no trash save for compost, purchasing no goods except food grown within a 400-km radius, using no carbon-based transportation, and using no paper products, including toilet paper.

The experiment inspired the setup of the No Impact Project, an international, environmental, non-profit organisation that seeks to empower citizens to make choices which better their lives and their environmental impact.

There is no need to take the extreme measures adopted by the No Impact Man. But there are small efforts you can make to change your habits. And after that, try to influence those around you.

Finally, we can say a little prayer, such as the Prayer for the Environmental Common Good.



Easy ways to save the Earth

Keeping cool

The air-conditioner probably consumes the most electricity in a home. Use a fan instead if you can. A fan uses less than one-tenth the electricity!

If you must turn on the air-conditioner, set the temperature at 25°C or higher. The lower the temperature, the more energy is used.

Draw curtains over windows during the hottest part of the day, or use solar window film, especially for windows that get direct sunlight.

Turn off your air-conditioner half an hour earlier using a timer.

Check your air-conditioner air filter once a month and clean or replace it as necessary so that it runs efficiently. Service your air-conditioning units regularly.

Your fridge

Buy the smallest refrigerator that meets your needs as larger models consume more energy. Do you really need additional features such as automatic ice-makers and through-the-door dispensers? They use more energy.

Adjust the thermostat to the recommended setting. Overcooling your refrigerator wastes electricity.

Allow hot food to cool before putting it in the fridge. Cover liquids and wrap food stored in the refrigerator. Make sure the door shuts tightly.

Keep the fridge away from heat sources such as direct sunlight, cookers and the oven.

Lighting

Make the most of available natural light in your home.

Use light dimmers whenever possible. Switch off the lights when you leave the room.

Keep the light low when watching television, to save electricity and cut the glare from the screen.

Choose energy efficient light bulbs (eg compact fluorescent lamps). Use a compact fluorescent lamp (9W)

instead of an incandescent bulb (40W).

Computer, TV & hi fi

When buying a computer or electrical equipment, pick those with green features.

Note that a laptop uses less than half the energy of desktop computers.

Switch off your computer completely when not in use for more than 30 minutes. Enable its energy-saving features, such as switching to hibernation mode after a certain amount of time. Try to avoid making printouts.

Switch off the TV and hi fi system when no one is using it.

Water Heaters

Choose an instantaneous water heater instead of a storage water heater. Consider a solar water heater if you have access to rooftops.

If you are buying a storage water heater, a capacity of 23-27 litres is suitable for a family of 4-6 persons.

If you have an instantaneous water heater, switch it on before you shower and turn it off after use. If you have a storage water heater, switch it on about 10 minutes before taking a bath, and switch it off after use. Don't leave it on too long.

Washing Machines

Wash with a full load. Use cold water. It is not necessary to use hot water as Singapore tap water is warm enough.

Fabric conditioner reduces creases which means less ironing time.

Air-dry your clothes rather than use a clothes dryer.

Ironing

Start with items which need lower temperatures and avoid heating and re-heating your iron.

Turn off your iron and use its residual heat for delicate items.

Cooking

Boil water only when needed or consider using a thermos flask to keep water hot. Electric air-pots can cost

more in electricity. Do not boil more water than you need.

Cover your pots while cooking. Covered food cooks faster.

Match the size of your pot with the size of your burner as energy is lost when the heating element is larger than the pot you use.

Thermal cooking pots cut energy use significantly. Pressure cookers use less energy and cook much faster.

Water

Keep a bucket in the shower and laundry area to catch surplus water. Use it to flush toilets.

Turn off the shower while you soap yourself and shampoo your hair, and save up to 600 litres a month.

Turn off water while brushing your teeth and save up to 100 litres a month. Same goes for shaving.

Upgrade older toilets with water efficient models.

When washing dishes by hand, do not keep the water running. Have separate sinks to wash and rinse.

Monitor your water bill.

Wash fruits and vegetables in a basin instead of under running water, and reuse this water for watering your plants.

Food & drink

Eat less meat. Meat consumes more resources in producing than vegetables. Among meat items, beef production consumes the most resources.

Drink tap water. It is just as good, if not better than bottled mineral water and a lot cheaper too.

Getting about

Drive less. Walk, ride a bicycle, car-pool or use the bus and MRT.

Plan your journeys, using more teleconferencing, and consider working from home.

Keep tyres inflated properly and you can improve gas mileage by more than 3 per cent.

Consider switching to a green vehicle.

Prayer for the Environmental Common Good

As we breathe the very air which sustains us, We remember your love, God, which gives us life.

Breathe into us solidarity with all who suffer now and the future generations who will suffer because of our environmental irresponsibility.

Fill us with your compassion for Creation. Empty us of apathy, selfishness and fear, of all pessimism and hesitation.

Move us into action to save our earth and to build your sustainable Kingdom. Amen.

Source: Education for Justice, www.educationforjustice.org