

## The First Steps into Parish Ecological Practice

*Each person is morally obliged to refrain from pollution and destruction of the environment.*

- Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

AS ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS WE are called by Scripture, the saints and fathers, and our patriarchs speaking in one voice to live in harmony with God's creation. This will bring an intentionally Christian character to our lives. This also helps us extend the life of the Church into the life of the world. The following guidelines introduce Orthodox creation care principles and practice.

### 1. Recycle all wastes

In Genesis, we are commanded by God to replenish the earth (Gen. 1:28, KJV). This means that when we take materials from the creation, we return them back to the earth. This is replenishment.

### 2. Eliminate trash and excess

As much as possible minimize the purchase of items with excess packaging and things designed to be thrown away after use. Whenever possible, pick up trash and litter.

### 3. Buy green products

Purchase materials that can be recycled. Seek durable goods and quality products. Do not buy items that expose others to harmful chemicals. Buy carefully and with an awakened conscience.

### 4. Serve clean foods

Avoid pesticide-laden foods. As much as possible, eat lower on the food chain. Eliminate junk food. Do not consume fish contaminated by mercury.

### 5. Remove incandescent light fixtures and bulbs

The excess use of electricity results in pollution and contributes to air pollution and serious harm to neighbors. As much as possible, use less polluting, lower cost lighting options.

### 6. Reduce energy use

When possible, use alternative sources of energy. We are to live within the limits of creation and refrain from doing harm. Refrain from the excess use of fossil fuels.

### 7. Minimize possessions

Own less, use less, and enjoy life more. Americans are 4% of the world's people, but use one-quarter of all the world's materials. It would require four additional planets to supply the world's appetite with the American consumption level.

### 8. Respect drinking water

Drink clean water. Avoid bottled water which is often no better than tap water. To ensure clean water, purchase a water filter and serve clean water in glass pitchers. Never pour pollutants down the drain or into water-ways.

### 9. Study the Issues

This list is only a beginning. As a simple code of words, seek to "share, care, spare and repair" the materials of creation. Ecological action is a doorway for building a whole Orthodox way of life.

### 10. Extend Christian attitudes

Teach the Orthodox vision of Christ everywhere present in creation. Help parish members recall that we are continually dealing with the veiled presence of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in creation. Acknowledge God by respecting His Creation. Key themes are renew, reuse, restore and replenish.

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To sustain these goals, strive for an equally important set of spiritual principles. These include a vision of Christ in all things; thankfulness; earth stewardship; regular prayer, simplicity, cleanliness and contentment; practice of the virtues; seeking the beauty of the Lord; respect for creation; and *theosis*

These principles can be woven into sermons and parish talks so that an education takes place on the rationale for Orthodox ecological practice.

For a larger listing of how to "green" your parish, please write the OFT office.



