

See/Witness:

I, and a number of staff have 'observed' the ever increasing use of single use coffee cups within our office. We witness a significant number of disposable coffee cups being used throughout our office and creeping into the incorrect bins. It seems only fitting then that as a staff we reflect upon and reconsider our use of these finite resources.

I must acknowledge that while many of us respect and endorse the waste hierarchy and that means reusable products always trump single-use products, our actions as a whole do not always reflect this. In the perfect world, everyone would carry reusable coffee cups and there would be no need for single-use cups at all. But the fact remains, while more Australians continue to convert to reusable coffee cups (and we say bring it on!), you only need to walk out to our visiting coffee van or look inside a bin (sometimes, unfortunately, the recycling bin!) to know that many of us continue to rely on single-use coffee cups and the need for a single-use option can be expected to remain, at least into the near future.

Judge: *Analyse*

This Lenten season, we are called to reduce our consumption of plastic and disposable items. Why? Because it never goes away. All of the plastic that's ever been made is still on this Earth somewhere, and will be for at least 2,000 years.

In Australia, it is estimated that over 1.8 billion single use hot drink cups are used every year! Coffee cups and other paper cups such as ice-cream cups and hot chocolate cups cannot be recycled in kerbside recycling because of their waterproof lining.

Disposable coffee cups are a staple in coffee shops around the world. They are affordable for businesses and convenient for customers. But with only 1 in every 400 coffee cups being recycled in major consuming countries, they pose a significant problem for increasing levels of waste. They are also difficult to recycle due to their plastic lining.

They can be recycled with Simply Cups, through the 7-Eleven Cup Rescue Program.

DISPOSABLE COFFEE CUPS FAST FACTS



500 BILLION DISPOSABLE COFFEE CUPS

are produced globally each year, that's enough to wrap around the earth 1,360 times.

4 BILLION VIRGIN TREES

are felled each year for the production of disposable coffee cups. It has to be virgin trees, because the cups come in contact with food and recycled paper might pose a health risk.



COFFEE CUPS ARE NOT 100% PAPER

Their inside is coated with a polyethylene layer that prevents the cup from leaking. It is fused so well to the paper that it cannot be separated again.

LESS THAN 1% IS RECYCLED

Because of that plastic layer, the cups are not recyclable. If a normal paper processing plant tried to recycle this cup, the plastic layer would contaminate the whole production batch. So they sort them out and send them to landfill. 100 billion disposable cups end up in landfills each year, which makes them the second largest contributor to waste after plastic bottles.



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Judge: *Theological Reflection*

“There is a nobility to care for creation in little daily actions . . . ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us,” and these need not be large, financial and onerous tasks, but rather things we can possibly do.

One may ask in the face of the massive changes in industrial practice that are needed, and in the face of the political challenges working against change, what do these little works of environmental mercy towards “our brothers and sister and Mother earth” matter? And then, Pope Francis to the rescue: “*Reusing something instead of immediately discarding it, when done for the right reasons, can be an act of love which expresses our own dignity*” (Laudato Si’ 211). And, he continues, “*We must not think that these efforts are not going to change the world. They benefit society, often unbeknownst to us, for they call forth a goodness which, albeit unseen, inevitably tends to spread.*” (Laudato Si’ 212)