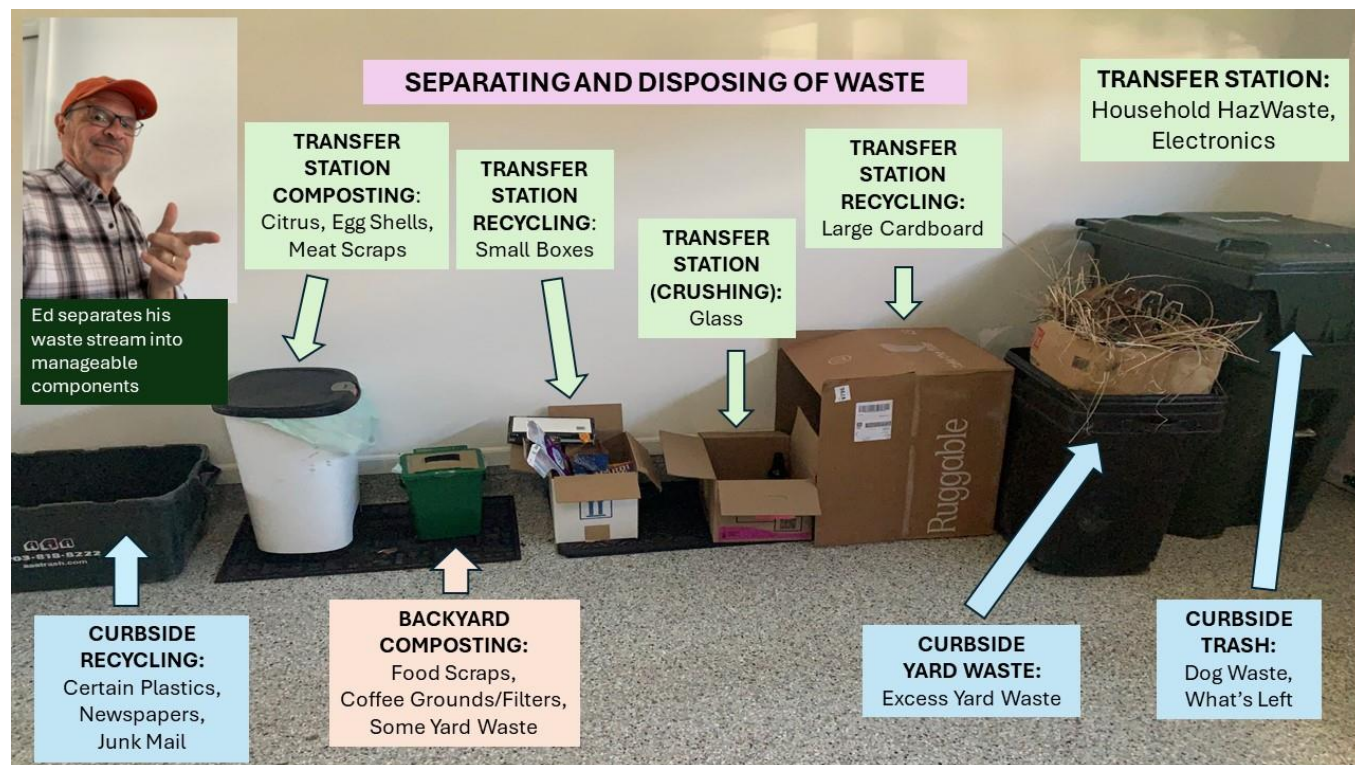


See what fellow parishioners are doing at St. John Neumann to live more sustainably. Add your new habit and a photo if you have one. Be inspired by others and consider adding one new habit at a time.

Separating Recycled, Composted, and Trashed Materials

Waste is a massive problem, but a large portion of waste is not managed in an environmentally sound manner. The importance of waste segregation is something that we can no longer afford to ignore. And it takes very little effort to separate the waste and dispose of it in an economical and sound manner. Ed uses a simple organized system to segregate and dispose of waste - curbside, backyard, or transfer station (formerly called “the dump”) It’s simple and takes only 1 hour every two weeks.



Ed's staging area in his garage.

Waste that can be economically recycled or composted is separated from other waste. Commonly recycled waste is put in curbside recycling, while materials which are more efficient/economical to recycle are separated and taken to the Fairfax County transfer station (for free!) where they are sent to certified recycling companies. Readily compostable materials are put in a backyard composting barrel, or those that decay more slowly are taken to the transfer station (for free!) where they are further transferred to an industrial composting facility. While yard waste can be composted in the backyard, at times the volume of organic material is too large and we dispose of this waste in a weekly curbside pickup. From time to time, we also dispose of hazardous chemicals and electronics at the transfer station. This leaves our traditional “garbage”, mostly single-use plastic that can’t be economically recycled and dog waste, which is picked up curbside and sent to an incinerator.

Composting

Nationally, about 40% of food that is grown ends up in the trash, and here in Fairfax County that means it gets burned in the incinerator. That’s a lot of nutrients and associated energy lost along the way. Be conscientious about buying only what you’ll use and using the food that you buy. Collect food scraps, egg shells and coffee grinds and compost them so the nutrients will be returned to the soil.

Did you know you can bring any food waste to the (free!) residential compost collection bins at the I-66 Fairfax Transfer Station? This

is a great service for anyone who doesn't have room to compost. See [here](#) for details.



We collect food scraps and compost them in the backyard. Then we use the new soil in garden spots around the yard. *Tom*



Stephanie, Ed and Karen collect and drop off their food scraps at the I-66 Transfer Station in Fairfax.



I put my food scraps in containers (see attached photo) and then stick them in the freezer. On the weekend when I am out running errands, I swing by the composter at the Reston Association garden plot or I-66 transfer station to empty out the containers. One day, I plan to get a composter for my backyard, but until I do, I conduct my composting this way. *Karen*



I've been very pleased with my countertop composter (Lomi.) It takes all my uncooked food scraps and turns it into dry soil additives overnight. *Martha*

Wasting Less Energy

An effective way to save energy and money is by fixing the leaks in your home where the air that you've paid to be cooled or warmed is escaping. A home energy audit helps pinpoint just where your house is losing energy. Whether you own or rent a home or apartment, an audit will also suggest ways to reduce the loss and

save money on your heating and cooling bill. Many fixes are low-cost, low-tech solutions that will immediately reduce your monthly energy bill.

[See here for facts about Energy Audits.](#) Consider scheduling an energy audit this Lent. It is an interesting way to learn how your home functions through the eyes of an expert and how to make it function more efficiently. Save energy and money!



Tom sealing windows to prevent loss of conditioned air.

Using Less Energy

The best way to conserve energy is **by not using it in the first place**. Consider turning down the thermostat a degree or two and putting on an additional sweater. Or turning the water heater down to 120. Or washing clothes in cold water and skipping the electric dryer.

Another way to save energy and money is by taking advantage of **clean energy tax credits** under the Inflation Reduction Act. Many energy-efficiency improvements including heating and cooling equipment, windows, doors, heat pumps, insulation and air sealing materials, and home energy audits are covered.

And if you are thinking big, the Residential Clean Energy Installation Credit provides a 30% tax credit towards the purchase of solar panels, wind, and geothermal power generation, solar water heaters, fuel cells, and battery storage.

See IRS Form 5695 (<https://www.irs.gov/instructions/i5695>) for details.

Here's a quick way to calculate your savings and learn more: <https://www.rewiringamerica.org/app/ira-calculator>.



We've switched to using cold water for laundry and air drying most of our clothes. It was a sacrifice at first because it takes more time, but it has quickly become a habit. *Janet*

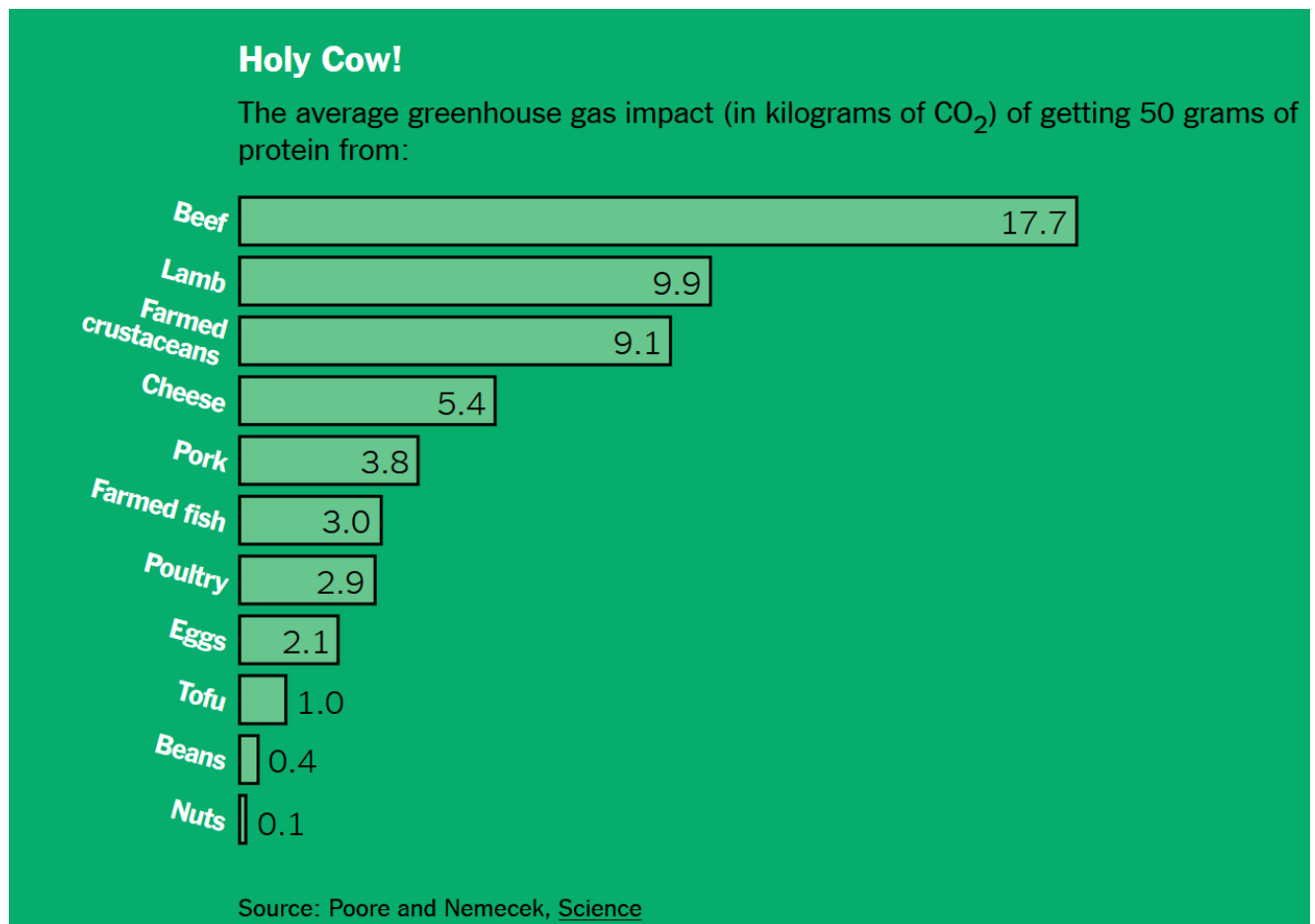


I set up a laundry line in my backyard and use it practically year-round. Instead of using electrical energy to dry my clothes, I let nature do the work through sun and wind. It takes a bit more time and effort on my part, but I feel good making this sustainable choice - plus it saves me \$\$ on my energy bill and I don't have to worry about my dryer breaking down. *Karen*

Moving to a Plant Based Diet:

Reducing or eliminating consumption of meat and other animal products is one of the most effective things you can do to cut your carbon footprint. You can start where you are and take modest steps at first. We're already abstaining from meat on Fridays in Lent; why not add meatless Mondays as an easy next step? On the remaining days, substitute chicken or sustainable fish for beef, pork, and lamb. Ready to make a bigger impact? Go vegetarian or, better yet, vegan.

Moving to a plant-based diet goes a long way toward helping the environment and can also improve your health. For tips and information, go to <https://www.forksoverknives.com>.





Here are the basic directions for Vegetable Medley. Use whatever you have leftover in the refrigerator. The hash turns out different every time. Save some vegetables throughout the week so you can make a meal out of them at the end of the week.

Pull out all the leftover vegetables from your refrigerator and chop into bite-size pieces. In a large skillet or dutch oven sauté the onion, carrot, celery (peppers if you have them) over medium heat adding 1-2 tablespoons water or vegetable broth to keep them from sticking. There is no need to add oil. When vegetables are just starting to get tender add 1/2 - 1 cup broth and potatoes (turnips, parsnips, mushrooms, etc). Cover and simmer til potatoes are just

getting tender – another 6-10 minutes. Add zucchini and any leafy vegetables you might have such as kale or spinach. Then add herbs and seasoning such as smoked paprika, basil, parsley. Heat through without covering on medium/high until liquid evaporates and greens are bright and almost tender. You can add beans or cooked grains if you have them and the dish will taste great. Serve with salsa for a Mexican taste, or a bit of marinara sauce for an Italian taste, or serve just plain with a good slice of bread.

You'll be eating healthy food, protecting our planet, and you'll avoid wasting the leftover veggies from the week!

Reducing Lawn Area

While lawns offer a pastoral space for playing outdoors, they also require a lot of maintenance. Many homeowners look for alternative solutions to the regimen of “plant, feed, water and mow” or paying for these services. Reducing the size of your lawn saves time and energy and water. And it's a great way to introduce beautiful native flowers and shrubs, making a more interesting landscape that adds value to your property. The more natural areas then offer shelter and feeding opportunities for bees, birds, and butterflies! This spring, consider reducing a portion of grassed area and increasing the variety of plants in your lawn to support the natural ecosystem.

The [Plant NOVA Natives website](#) provides several ideas for reducing lawn size. And the [Saint Kateri Conservation Center](#) is a great resource for managing your lawn in ways that praise God and foster a deeper connection between God, people, and nature.



Carol with grandchildren in her garden that was once grassy lawn.

Reducing purchases of new consumer products

Recycling helps the environment by keeping used products out of landfills. But even better is avoiding unnecessary purchases in the first place, saving the energy and materials required to make the products. Practice all 6 Rs, starting with *rethink* and *refuse*. Do I really need this thing? Can I do without it or get it without wasteful packaging? Can I do with less of it (*reduce*)? *Reusing* can take different forms: substituting reusable shopping bags, mugs, and napkins for single-use items; shopping at thrift stores for used clothing and household items; and donating things you no longer need to organizations that can repurpose them. *Repair* broken or torn items before discarding them for something new. Visit <https://bit.ly/6-Rs>.





Ann having fun thrift shopping

Reducing Plastic Bags

We are able to use double paper grocery bags in our kitchen trash can. Any wet items we put in bags from some of our purchased produce or containers with lids that aren't recyclable. The paper bags when full are taped up and placed in our trash can outdoors for pickup. We only have one bag or two bags a week so this method works for us.

This is easy for us to do based on the food items we purchase and grow. We also have a compost pile. I understand this wouldn't work for everyone. (Anonymous)