

Vicar's Letter for March 2018

Dear Friends

I wonder how many of you watched Blue Planet II with David Attenborough? What an amazing man he is: someone who has dedicated his life to wildlife, discovering the never ending varieties and wonders of our natural world; someone who has opened up places in our beautiful world to many of us who will never be able to travel to remote islands or tropical rainforests or the ocean depths; someone who tirelessly makes us aware of the fragility of much of life on our planet, how we are to be better stewards if it is to survive and how the way we live has an impact on the survival of many species, and how our misuse and abuse, our negligence and greed has meant it is already too late for some species: they have become extinct because of us.

I think one of the most powerful and heart-rending moments in Blue Planet II was the mother whale unable to leave her dead newly born calf. We were told the calf had died probably due to being poisoned by plastics in the ocean, and how the amount of our human plastic waste dumped in the ocean is causing untold damage to the life of our oceans - sea horses, coral, fish, turtles, whales....

This small part of Blue Planet II seems to have had a huge effect on our nation's realisation of just how much damage we are causing. Only the other day I received a petition calling for companies who make teabags to cease sealing our teabags with plastic that doesn't rot. I didn't know there was any plastics in teabags! but apparently there is. And some companies aren't planning to change this.

Theresa May has quoted that, 'in the UK alone, the amount of single-use plastic wasted every year would fill 1,000 Royal Albert Halls.' She has pledged 'to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste by 2042'. However 2042 is a long way off and I wonder if that is too far into the future. It's a lot of years in which damage can still be done to our planet and its life.

I am grateful to a friend of mine who has drawn me to a particular Lenten challenge and that is to have a plastic-less Lent, as far as is possible (maybe change to loose tea rather than teabags for a start?!). Ruth Valerio challenges us to fast from buying water in plastic bottles - why not take water in a reusable bottle or flask instead? what about fasting from disposable coffee cups at coffee shops?

See <https://ruthvalerio.net/green-living-2/plastic-less-lent-2018/>

She also suggests that even if we try to cut down our use of plastics - we are all going to use plastics somewhere and somehow - and to collect it all up during Lent and see just how much we accumulate - and that's only in 4-6 weeks!!

I'm writing this before Lent starts and so am making it my Lenten resolution that I'm not going to use those little flimsy plastic bags for my loose fruit and veg when I shop in supermarkets. I'm going to try to use the paper bags the supermarkets usually provide for loose mushrooms instead, or take my own paper bags or cloth bags. (I might actually ask supermarkets whether they can't have paper bags rather than plastic ones for customers' use). Once you start noticing what plastic you use, it's quite a shock at how reliant on it we are and how it is just everywhere!

Many of you may well have your own Lenten disciplines already in place but you may wish to take on something else. If you haven't done anything yet for Lent it's not too late to start and there are still 4 weeks to go and you may wish to take on this idea which will benefit our planet and bring to our attention the destructive quality of plastic on God's creation.

With every blessing

Kate