

BIODEGRADABLE BAGS

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Protecting the environment has become an important issue. Members need to find ways to cut down on pollution and the amount of garbage going into landfills. Using biodegradable bags is one way to minimize the environmental impact of pollution.

Biodegradable bags are made of polymers that decompose when exposed to air, water or sunlight. Some ecologically-friendly plastic bags are stated as being 100 per cent compostable and biodegradable. Although the cost of the biodegradable bags is more than conventional plastic bags, the production uses less energy and produces two-thirds less greenhouse gases.

There are two main types of biodegradable bags: starch-based bags made essentially from corn, wheat or potatoes, and oxobiodegradable bags which are regular film plastic with an additive (derived from natural compounds in mineral salts) that makes them decompose more rapidly. Starch-based bags decompose when exposed to water and other organic material, usually within two to fifteen days. The oxobiodegradable bags take about two years to break down.



Biodegradation will not solve the landfill shortage. Many people believe that landfills are big compost piles and that objects sent to landfills biodegrade rapidly. Research has shown that very little biodegrades in modern sanitary landfills. There is not the proper balance of moisture, nutrients and temperature for decomposition.

The use of biodegradable bags seems like a good solution to exacerbating the landfill shortage, however, there are three downsides: mixing biodegradable bags in recycling systems for conventional plastic bags creates an issue of sorting; littering of bags could increase as people believe the bags will disappear quickly; and, water, soil and crop contamination could result from the use of compost with chemical residues from the biodegradable bags.

Members are encouraged to reuse and recycle. How about that collection of cotton bags you have acquired at various conventions? What are you going to do with them? "REUSE!" They are great for shopping! Every little bit helps. †

ST. JOSEPH BASILICA PARISH COUNCIL EDMONTON, ALBERTA

In November 2007, St. Joseph Basilica Parish Council chose to celebrate the 95th anniversary of the beginning of the CWL in Edmonton. Life members in the Archdiocese of Edmonton have been writing memories of those early days; five of them volunteered to share their stories at the celebration.

Pictured are [l-r]: Life Member Connie McBride, Life Member Mary-Anne Warren, Life Member Natalie Carley, Honorary Life Member Ardis Beaudry, Life Member Rose-Marie McCarthy

