

Gross Catholic Goes Green

By Leah Schwartz, Environmental Science Teacher

This year, the Marianist high schools across the country have committed to developing improvement plans for environmental stewardship in response to Pope Francis's call to care for creation in his encyclical *Laudato Si*. You may have heard that Gross's environmental science class reimplemented a schoolwide plastic and aluminum recycling program earlier this fall. You can read more about Gross's improvement plan and the recycling project [here](#).

In the process of researching plastic recycling, the environmental science students learned that plastic recycling is really not a long-term solution for reducing pollution and waste. Rather than being truly recycled, plastic is "downcycled." This means that it cannot be used to remake the same product over and over. After it is recycled once or twice, it goes to the landfill.

If we truly want to solve the pollution problem, the most progress will be made by switching over from single-use plastics to reusable items. Here are some suggestions for eliminating single-use plastics at school and home:

- Invest in a **reusable water bottle** and do not use disposable plastic water bottles
- Bring reusable silverware in your lunch box instead of using plastic silverware
- Pack sandwiches and snacks in reusable containers or **silicone baggies** instead of plastic baggies
- Keep reusable shopping bags in your car for trips to the grocery store (if you forget them, paper is a more sustainable choice than plastic)
- Use Bees Wrap in place of plastic wrap - you can find Bees Wrap [here](#)
- If you need to use disposable cups, choose these **aluminum cups** instead of plastic cups
- Purchase a **bamboo toothbrush** instead of a plastic one
- When purchasing a snack or drink that comes in a plastic container, ask yourself, "Can I go without this today or choose something else in order to reduce waste?"

It takes all of us to make a difference!