

A little while ago, we stopped at a drive through for a drink. We received paper straws, and my kids were thrilled. I posted that on social media as I thought it was both funny but also intriguing. My kids are all over changing habits – I who NEVER remembers one of his many reusable cups is in a car with seventeen cup holders and four people who will not need to stop for a drink because they *always* have a water bottle and probably a travel mug with an exotic fair trade and earth friendly tea. This is the point that some responses will occur about snowflakes, tree huggers, millennials and how changing straws will not change anything or the world. This was before Greta Thunberg and Australia.

Too often I hear people defect small changes because others do not, or the change is so small, or the better choice still has issues. Yes, if we do not use paper towels in the church washroom, we still generate electricity to blow hands dry, but we use more water and hydro and ship trees directly to the landfill by the way of our washroom, to the detriment of the planet and the cost of the church, roll after roll. I still do not remember my mug. Pathetically simple and would remove a number of non-recyclable one-use cups. In fact, I fail miserably at the things I should be doing (Right Paul?) and I eschew my duty to God as one created, “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.” I realize that God gave me the gift of guilt. When I don’t do the right things, I know it, and sometimes I don’t do the wrong things when I remember. God remembers - how many times have you read in the Bible that God remembered? It took some time, but I do not use the paper towels anymore. I discovered it was my own laziness, I wanted to get moving and it takes ‘so long.’ Is my time so important and so precious I cannot take the thirty seconds?

And so my guilt is changing habits. I should not be in the car as much as I am. I can walk to work, but I take the car because I’ll be driving later – that seven-minute walk home.... The size of my family and other factors means I need a larger vehicle, and I cannot carry a small car to scoot about town. But I can ride my bike, something I loved at one time. Something I need to get back to for my body, my world, my kids and my God. Yes, there will be times I should not show up sweaty, but I am blessed to live in a small, flat town. Normally, the furthest point will be four kilometers. The Holy Spirit has changed my guilt into action, and I have made the commitment internally to make this change. I am not helpless before Great or fire or the evil-one that says I am a failure. Of course I am a failure! And God loves me and leads me to change. We didn’t get here because of straws, but by each choice that saved a little money, added a little laziness and took another small piece of the planet and our collective future away.

The house I grew up in had many copies of the “Serenity prayer.” There is a longer version, it was written by Reinhold Niebuhr around 1934. What other changes will we make together for the betterment of Creation?

God, give me grace to accept with serenity
the things that cannot be changed,
Courage to change the things
which should be changed,
and the Wisdom to distinguish
the one from the other.

Living one day at a time,
Enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,
Taking, as Jesus did,
This sinful world as it is,
Not as I would have it,
Trusting that You will make all things right,
If I surrender to Your will,
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with You forever in the next.

Amen.