

The logo for 'MERCY EARTH CHALLENGE' features the words 'MERCY', 'EARTH', and 'CHALLENGE' stacked vertically in a bold, green, sans-serif font. To the right of the word 'EARTH' is a colorful, stylized flower-like icon composed of several overlapping petals in shades of green, yellow, orange, red, purple, and blue, with a small globe of the Earth at its center. The entire logo is set against a white background with green triangular accents in the top-left and bottom-right corners.

# MERCY EARTH CHALLENGE

## Electronics Everywhere?

*“Account must also be taken of the pollution produced by residue, including dangerous waste present in different areas. Each year hundreds of millions of tons of waste are generated, much of it non-biodegradable, highly toxic and radioactive, from homes and businesses, from construction and demolition sites, from clinical, electronic and industrial sources. The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth.” (Laudato Si #21)*

During this time of the pandemic, our electronic devices have been beneficial in keeping contact with family and friends and in working remotely. But the production of electronic devices and the accompanying batteries, chargers, modems and other equipment use minerals and fossil fuels that often damage the environment. The electronic devices use electricity that is produced by fossil fuels, nuclear energy or renewable energy. Even the production of energy from renewable sources requires the use of minerals and fossil fuels, for example in the manufacturing of solar panels and wind turbines.

When the electronic device is outdated or broken, even if recycled, the disposal can further damage the environment. E-waste become a global concern since much of our electronic waste has been shipped to developing nations in Asia and Africa for ‘recycling’ or disposal, where often poor children and families must work to sort and scavenge in order to make a living. If left in landfills, electronic components can leach into the environment lead, cadmium, mercury, arsenic, flame retardants and other materials. These harmful materials pose serious environmental risks and

exposure can lead to health effects including cancers, miscarriages, and neurological damage.

Our electronic devices are not environmentally friendly. But, for most of us, avoiding electronics in our daily lives is impossible. So how can we act on our Critical Concern “to reverence Earth and work more effectively toward the sustainability of life...?”

Information about the environment impact of our technology is the first step. Watch the 8-minute [Story of Electronics video](#). Then use the reflection sheet to personally look at your ownership, use and disposal of electronic waste.

### **Reflection Sheet:**

*“Furthermore when the media and the digital world become omnipresent, their influence can stop people from learning how to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously. ... Today’s media do enable us to communicate and to share our knowledge and affections. Yet at times they also shield us from direct contact with the pain, the fears and the joys of others and the complexity of their personal experiences. For this reason, we should be concerned that, alongside the exciting possibilities offered by these media, a deep and melancholic dissatisfaction with interpersonal relations, or a harmful sense of isolation, can also arise. (Laudato Si #47)*

### **Questions for Reflection:**

- 1) One of the conclusions that this information is leading to is that it is better to own fewer devices. In addition to putting a greater demand on our time, fewer devices in our possession means fewer resources used and a reduced impact on the environment.  
How many electronic devices do I have both personally and shared?  
Why were these purchased? What do I need vs. what do I want?  
What happened to the used or broken electronic devices?
- 2) How has the electronic age affected my relationships?

Reflective Music: [Change Our Hearts](#)