

AN ENVIRONMENTAL TIP FROM THE GREEN FRANCISCAN

By Sister Janet Corcoran, OSF

In 2007, approximately 130 million bicycles were produced throughout the world, which was about twice the 52 million cars manufactured. Bicycle production has noted an increase in the last six years. However, according to the latest United States Census figures from 2006, people in this country commute only one half of one percent by bike.

Due to the rising cost of gas, traveling by bicycle means saving money. For example, operating a car for a year is costly compared to using a bicycle. If approximately one out of ten commuters switched to walking or riding a bike, about 2 billion gallons of gas would be saved yearly.

A large percentage of gas usage occurs during commutes to the office/work when rush hour traffic is taking place, and the stopping, idling, and starting of the vehicle uses more fuel. When the environment is congested, i.e. as in rush hour traffic, it is often quicker to travel by bike when it is within a five-mile range, as usually one can travel on secondary roads and paths often arriving in less time. When reviewing one's weekly errands, consider the ones you can do by bike instead of by car. A bike trailer or a basket will encourage you to use the bike for chores as well as exercise.

Bicycling is a healthy activity, which is therapeutic for the body, mind, and spirit and is known to improve cardio-vascular health. Bicycling is a great fitness activity that can burn approximately 350 to 700 calories per hour.

Bicycling is also an environmentally friendly activity. For example, carbon dioxide emissions would be reduced by 25.4 million tons a year if one out of ten car commuters switched to bicycling or walking, therefore reducing air pollution and enhancing our air quality. In addition, bicycling reduces water pollution, as bikes do not drip transmission fluids, anti-freeze, brake fluids, etc. Bicycling is a healthy, environmentally friendly activity to consider in one's daily life. St. Francis, one of the first environmentalists, would applaud such an action.