



MERCY EARTH CHALLENGE

Have a Green Friday

Black Friday and the Christmas season are almost upon us. The stores have had Christmas decorations up and sales on for many weeks. But let's try a thought experiment. Can you remember what you got for Christmas last year? Thinking back over birthdays and Christmas gifts, what are some gifts (given or received) that stand out in your memory and why? Can you even remember what you gave or received? Sometimes the gift is remembered because of the person who gave it to you. Parents keep the homemade Christmas ornament or card for years. A friend keeps the worn-out hand-knitted scarf.

Relationships with family and friends inspire the desire to give. Gratitude or recognition of the service given during the year to people such as the postal delivery person will call forth a gift. Finally, in gratitude and recognition of the blessings we have received, gifts are made to those less fortunate and to charitable organizations that directly assist the less fortunate or that work to alleviate large societal problems such as environmental degradation.

What are some alternative gift-giving ideas? When giving a material gift, consider Fair Trade organizations. Fair trade is an arrangement designed to help producers in developing countries achieve sustainable and equitable trade relationships as well as improved social and environmental standards. Organizations such as SERRV, Ten Thousand Villages, and Equal Exchange, Marketplace India have a wide variety of gift items including food and clothing. Alternative gift giving could also be doing a service for another or offering to do something with the other person. [This video](#) and the list below offer many suggestions.

For your continued reflection:

Pope Francis states that “disinterested concern for others, and the rejection of every form of self-centeredness and self-absorption, are essential if we truly wish to care for our brothers and sisters and for the natural environment. These attitudes also attune us to the moral imperative of assessing the impact of our every action and personal decision

on the world around us. If we can overcome individualism, we will truly be able to develop an alternative lifestyle and bring about significant changes in society.”

In the Eucharistic Celebration, we hear: “Blessed are you, Lord God of all Creation, for through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you: fruit of the earth and the work of human hands, it will become for us the bread of life.”

As you consider these quotations, reflect on your gift giving and receiving. What are the gifts, given and received, that you remember? Why do you remember these?

In the first book of the Harry Potter Series, Harry’s cousin counts the gifts he receives. The number of the gifts is important, not what they are or why they are given. Instead, let us count the gifts we give and receive as blessings.

Make your gift-giving list. Can these gifts be blessings given?

In this time when the pandemic increases, uncertainty is a part of life, listen to [this musical video](#). What is really important?

Green Shopping: Tips to Diminish Your Footprint on the Earth



It is the cumulative effect of the smallest behaviors that leave the biggest imprint on the earth, negative or positive. What small changes can you make that help preserve the environment and its diminishing resources when you shop?

- ❖ **Ask yourself** - “Is this item really necessary?” We tend to purchase items that seem so necessary at the moment. But are they really?
- ❖ **Buy second hand or borrow** – Most likely that item you intend to purchase is available used (even on Amazon), in second hand shops, nextdoor.com for sale, Facebook marketplaces, or even a neighbor. Don’t do one day shipping.
- ❖ **Buy fair or ethically Traded Goods** - Ethical or Fair Trade represents an employment relationship based on the treatment of workers, artisans and farmers, providing fair wages, safer working conditions and consideration to the community and environment. When consumers choose fair trade or ethically sourced products, they create demand for more products that do not involve child labor and instead support the workers while providing safe and sustainable employment.
- ❖ **Buy organic** – Organic labeling certifies that the item is produced or involving production without the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, or other artificial agents. Organic means better conditions for the animals.

- ❖ **Shop local** - The average food product travels about 1500 miles before it ends up on your plate. Support your local community businesses and farmers. There is usually less packaging and fewer preservatives.
- ❖ **Purchase products with botanical ingredients** or ingredients that are safe for the environment. These are now found more frequently in cleaning agents, pesticides and even oil. There are many chemical-free products on the market now, including inexpensive home ingredients that clean just as well, without the toxic odor, like lemon, vinegar and salt.
- ❖ **Support green with your purchasing power** - Buy products made of recyclable, reusable or biodegradable containers or packaging, and avoid Styrofoam that contains non-biodegradable and carcinogenic elements. When buying items, check product labels to determine an item's recyclability and whether it is made from recycled materials.
- ❖ **Buy supplies that compost naturally** - Many party facilities, picnic and park areas don't have recycle bins nearby so use plant-based or FSC paper products that are compostable.
- ❖ **Shop with sustainable businesses** - Support companies that minimize their footprint by using non-toxic ingredients and materials, energy efficient practices, and water conservation in the manufacturing of their goods. Check your favorite company's 'Sustainability Report'.
- ❖ **Avoid green washing** - Many products boast "natural" ingredients, however the term 'natural' is not regulated and even harmful ingredients can be labeled natural or green. Be aware of misleading information and always read the ingredient list for the actual contents.

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