

## Christmas Gift Giving with a Purpose and Considering Creation

The Christmas season has become a time of frenzied shopping and spending fueled by excessive commercialism. We want to have it all! But this consumerist lifestyle seems at odds with the true meaning of Christmas. So, when we buy gifts, are we doing the right thing and what is the environmental and social impact?



As Catholics, we are called to celebrate the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day, not material things. Yet our consumption during this season creates over 25 million extra tons of trash. When we produce unmanageable waste, we are impacting the most vulnerable on earth: the poor communities and those suffering injustices. Many who cannot afford clean water or sanitation are impacted, and indigenous lands are lost to development and progress. Pope Francis writes “The emptier a person’s heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own, and consume,” in his encyclical: [Laudato Si’: On Care of Our Common Home](#). His words urging us to better understand how our daily actions impact the world around us, and to open our eyes to how our excessive consumption burdens Earth: our air, water, and life within it. It may take courage to implement this realization in a meaningful way, but below are some ways to honor the birth of Christ and consider others and the earth during this special season.

### Gifts with a Purpose

#### Charity Gift Catalogs

Catholic Relief Services provides a ‘Gift of Hope’ Catalog to help change lives. Choose a gift that will help save, protect and transform the lives of our most vulnerable brothers and sisters, and then, choose a special card to personalize and let your loved one know you’ve given a Gift of Hope in their name. You can buy a uniform for a child in need or a flock of chickens to help a family generate income. To see the whole catalog, go to <https://gifts.crs.org/>. Heifer International also has a gift catalog that offers items ranging from baby chicks to a freshwater well. Visit their gift catalog here at <https://www.heifer.org>.

**Adventure Gifts** Give an experience that will offer exposure to nature, science or family time. Horseback riding lessons, flight lessons, museum or park membership, zip-lining and music lessons can be memory-making gifts!

**Consumable Gifts** Provide a homemade dish or treat wrapped in a reusable container. Avoid plastic containers and packaging and instead wrap in a reusable tea towel and top with a twig of evergreen or for an organic touch. Natural elements are attractive and naturally biodegradable and can be found on our daily walks through nature or in our back yard. Take only what you need, and be aware not to disturb natural habitats or harm endangered species.



**Eco-friendly Gifts** As you shop year-round, avoid single-use items, avoid plastic, shop local, buy package-free and choose organically made, ethically sourced products. For deliveries, make sure the shipping material is recyclable and eco-friendly.

**Buy Ethically Sourced or Fair Trade** In the race to produce goods cheaply and quickly, companies may sacrifice ethical and environmental measures. Forced labor conditions, including child labor, may exist in the supply chains of many of these products. Fair Trade represents an employment or trade relationship based on the treatment of workers, artisans and farmers, providing fair wages, safer working conditions and consideration of the environment. Read product labels to help guide you in seeking ethically sourced products that support the people and the environment. SERRV is a nonprofit fair trade organization benefiting impoverished craftsman around the world by helping them out of poverty by providing sustainable trade opportunities. To learn more about purchasing fair trade items or hosting a fair-trade sale, visit <https://www.serrv.org>

**Made by Survivors** Search for companies that support victims of violence and trafficking. Many rescued victims of trafficking must find work and build skills to survive and to avoid falling back into the hands of abuse and forced labor. They often do this by selling handcrafted goods. Here is an organization that trains and employs survivors to design and create beautiful jewelry and clothes. <https://www.fashionandcompassion.com>

**Remember**, we have the power to support greater causes through our purchases. So, live a bit more simply, consume to aid others and the environment, and give gifts that make a difference. Learn more or join our Care for Creation Ministry by visiting: [St. Matthew Care for Creation Webpage](https://stmatthewcatholic.org/creation)

Or go to <https://stmatthewcatholic.org/creation>

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