

Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation News

Congregation of the Sisters of Bon Secours

Advent: A Call to Simplicity



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Be committed to simplicity and sobriety in order to truly appreciate life. Simplicity allows us to stop and taste the little things without attaching ourselves to what we have or saddening ourselves with what we do not have".

Pope Francis

Advent is a time of hope and waiting for the second coming of Jesus, who came to give us abundant life. In this Advent season, we invite you to reflect on the difference between the "abundant life" offered by Jesus and the "good life" promoted by advertising which says in order to be happy, we must always have more and consume more: money, possessions and power.

Living life abundantly often corresponds to living gently on Earth by simplifying our lifestyle – one of the goals of the Laudato Si' Action Platform that we have committed ourselves to address. This issue of JPIC News invites us to live more simply and sustainably during these sacred days of Advent and Christmas. Consider how you might embrace Pope Francis' invitation to "Live wisely, think deeply and love generously (LS#47)" as a gift to Earth and all her creatures during these days of anticipating and celebrating the Feast of Christmas.

Practice the Advent Pause

Our habits to consume are very strong. They are reinforced by a culture that tells us that our happiness is dependent on owning the latest gadget, product, or experience. To break this consumerist habit, we need to become aware of this internal energy to consume so that we don't blindly follow it. This is a contemplative practice – to begin to see how the market and cultural forces shape our interior world – especially at Christmas.

- ♥ Notice your internal impulse to buy more, to eat more, to do more things that are not essential. This can be owning the latest electronic gadgets and buying the trendiest clothes. It can also be over-consuming more information or social media than is necessary, eating too much food, or trying to pack in too many activities.
- ♥ Pause and take a breath. Then find a phrase to ground you such as "Less is more", "Jesus is the reason" or even "Do I need to get/do this?" in order to remind you of your commitment to not over-consume and to keep your eyes on Jesus.
- ♥ Make a choice based on your commitment to live simply, in order to create space and time to focus on what is essential: God, relationships, service, and caring for our Earth community.

Source: Laudato Si Movement

"Sobriety, when lived freely and consciously, is liberating... happiness means knowing how to limit some needs... and being open to the many different possibilities which life can offer."

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #223

Reflection

What can you do this Advent to prepare for a simpler celebration of Christmas?

Is there one new contemplative practice you can adopt each day to keep you centered in the moment and on God's love for you?



December JPIC Days of Remembrance



December 1
World AIDS Day

December 2
Anniversary of the Deaths of
Maura Clark, Ita Ford, Dorothy
Kazel and Jean Donovan

International Day
for the Abolition of Slavery

December 10
Human Rights Day

December 18
International Migrants' Day

December 20
International Human Solidarity
Day

Guide to Sustainable Gift-Giving

As you consider your Christmas giving this year, use this guide to sustainable gift giving to help you leave a lighter footprint on our planet.



Charitable subscriptions: Consider an online gift to a charity that responds to the cry of Earth or the cry of the poor.

Helping Hand: The most expensive gift of all is the gift of time. Give coupons to help friends and family in some way (e.g. going food shopping, shoveling snow, etc.).

Experiences: Give tickets to an event or a membership to a museum or outdoor venue.

Make: A homemade gift is so personal. Share your cooking, sewing and creativity this Christmas.

Upcycle: Regift something that would be meaningful to the recipient because it was meaningful to you.

Buy Second Hand: Books, clothing, sporting goods, etc.

Shop ethically: If you must buy, do a little research to be sure the product was ethically sourced and the people who made it were given fair wages and working conditions. Shop fair trade.

Buy New: If you must buy something new as a last resort, ask yourself how this purchase will contribute to the good of the environment. Where will this gift end up at the end of its lifecycle?
Source: Ecological Conversion Group Magazine

Reflection



One of the goals of the Laudato Si' Action Platform is to live more simply by adopting a more sustainable lifestyle. Most of us are so conditioned to going shopping for Christmas gifts that it's often hard to consider alternatives in our consumerist culture.

What are the challenges for you as you reflect on these sustainable gift-giving suggestions?

Are there any practices that you could adopt this holiday season – at least for a few people on your Christmas list?

What other ideas do you have for sustainable gift-giving?

Some Not so Holly, Jolly Christmas Facts

A publication from the UK offers some eye-opening facts about waste at Christmas time. Congrats to our friends in the UK for raising such awareness for all of us.

- One billion Christmas cards end up in the trash each year.
- The amount of wrapping paper used to wrap Christmas presents is enough to go around the globe nine times. Almost no wrapping paper can be recycled.
- 500 tons of lights get thrown away each year.
- One in ten unwanted Christmas gifts ends up in a landfill.
- We waste around 250 tons of food each Christmas.
- 81 million unwanted Christmas gifts are received each year.
- Only 1% of consumer goods are still in use six months after purchase.
- The UK generates the weight of 3.3 million emperor penguins in plastic waste each Christmas.

Source: www.asustainablelife.co.uk

Reflection

In Laudato Si' Pope Francis challenges us to avoid being part of the "throwaway culture" yet the Christmas season produces the greatest amount of waste than at any other time during the year.

Do any of these statistics on Christmas waste surprise you?

Do any motivate you to change? How?

While a zero-waste Christmas may not be possible, what one thing can you do this Christmas to intentionally decrease waste?



A Gift to Earth: Gift Wrapping Tips

- Instead of buying gift wrapping rolls, use what you already have at home: old newspaper, holiday catalogs, magazines and brown bags from the grocery store – even fabric.
- Send electronic E-cards. E-cards can be enhanced with sound and animation, and they create no physical waste.
- Skip the tape and tie with twine. A lot of tape brands are petroleum-based and are not recyclable.
- Reuse gift bags.



Artificial Christmas trees

have a carbon footprint equivalent to around 40kg of greenhouse gas emissions.

The main material in artificial trees is plastic; they contribute to the plastic pollution problem around the world.

Real Christmas trees are biodegradable. Not only do they benefit the environment by having a lower carbon footprint due to shorter travel, but they help protect and stabilize the soil.

Reflection for December 24

As you end the season of Advent, consider how your contemplative practice has blessed you and how your actions to care for creation have been a gift to Earth?

Laudato Si' Action Platform Survey

During the month of November members of the Bon Secours Family were invited to participate in a reflection tool/survey to gather data on how we are personally addressing the seven goals of the Laudato Si' Action Platform. We are grateful to ALL those who spent time reflecting on these questions and responding to them. We will share the data we collected with the Bon Secours Family in early January. If you haven't yet responded, there is still time to complete the online survey.

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