



**Holy Cross Province Passionist  
SUSTAINABLE PURCHASING GUIDE  
November 11, 2023**

*Purchasing is always a moral – and not simply economic – act.”*

~Pope Benedict XVI, Caritas Veritate, 2009

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## **I. Introduction**

On May 25, 2021, Pope Francis launched the Laudato Si' Action Platform, a call to all Catholic entities to achieve a sustainable integral ecology over the next seven years. The Passionist congregation responded with a commitment to implement the Laudato Si' Action Platform.

One of the seven goals in the Laudato Si' Action Platform is Ecological Economics, which acknowledges that the economy is a sub-system of human society, which itself is embedded within the biosphere—our common home. Actions under the umbrella of Ecological Economics include sustainable production and consumption, ethical investments, divestment from fossil fuels and any activity harmful to the planet and its creatures and ecosystems, including human beings. Also included are supporting circular economies and prioritizing protecting the dignity of workers and all God's gifts of Creation.

This Sustainable Purchasing Guide is our commitment as a Province in the Congregation of the Passionists to live out Ecological Economics through our participation in the economy as consumers. Ethical purchasing is an investment in a Christ-centered world.

## **II. Purpose and Background**

This document is intended for internal use by the retreat centers, parishes, schools, communities, and other facilities of the Holy Cross Province of the Congregation of the Passionists.

Adopting sustainable purchasing habits supports our commitment to the Laudato Si' Action Platform and is also a living out of our Passionist charism to stand with the Crucified of Today. The pollution of Earth is the cause of suffering for many of God's people. We believe, along with Pope Francis, that the suffering of Earth and the suffering of people are interrelated, and so are the solutions: *We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.* (Laudato Si' #139) We understand the interconnectedness of all creation and that we are part of Creation; we commit ourselves to a sustainable relationship with Earth and other humans in an integral ecology.

The intent is to use this guide to direct our purchasing behaviors in our facilities. The concepts presented in this guide are for the good of all living things and embody the Catholic Social Teaching of “the common good”. The common good concerns all life.

Holy Cross Province pledges to support environmentally sustainable products and vendors that minimize destructive impacts on Earth and the health of people.

### III. Definition of Terms

**Sustainability** – the capacity of something to be maintained indefinitely. It involves methods that do not harm or destroy the ecosystems on which we depend. It is about purchasing what we need to live now, without jeopardizing the potential for people or other species in the future to meet their needs. It must include environmental, economic, and social sustainability.

**Sustainable purchasing** is the practice of purchasing products and services that have a beneficial impact on the intertwined health of our planet and the health of humans, as compared to competing products or services with similar functions that are harmful. Sustainable products benefit the local and global ecosystems, improve human health, and often save money immediately or in the long-term.

**Circular Economy** - an economic system that generates value by reusing, repairing, sharing, lending, and promoting all activities that give goods and resources a new life or extend the useful life of an item versus a linear economy which makes waste. In a linear economy, items are produced, sold, used, and thrown away. Building a circular economy means rediscovering a culture of reclaiming products and materials, following the model of many cultures that prize conservation and creative reuse of material resources.

**Pre-consumer recycled content** – Material diverted from the waste stream during or after the manufacturing process, but before it reaches the consumer.

**Post-consumer recycled content** - Once a material or finished product has served its intended use and has been diverted or recovered from waste destined for disposal, it is then considered "post-consumer." Having completed its life as a consumer item, it can then be recycled as such.

**Recycled content** – A catchall phrase to mean that a product is made from pre-consumer waste, post-consumer waste, or a combination of the two. While both pre- and post-consumer materials would otherwise be landfilled, post-consumer content is most important environmentally because it creates a market for the items that we recycle. (Note: not all recyclables are accepted in every area)

**Services** – Services can save electricity, costs and maintenance overhead by outsourcing functions previously maintained internally. e.g., IT services, social media, web, phone services, etc. Some services such as energy audits and establishment of water absorbing landscapes will lead to savings on energy and sewage bills.

#### IV. Teachings that Support this Guide.

The teachings on which we base this guide can be summed up in quotes:

- *“Purchasing is always a moral – and not simply economic – act. Hence the consumer has a specific social responsibility, which goes hand-in-hand with the social responsibility of the enterprise.”-Pope Benedict XVI, Caritas Veritate, 2009*
- *“The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet’s capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes.” (Laudato Si’ #161).*
- *“The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth. In many parts of the planet, the elderly lament that once beautiful landscapes are now covered with rubbish. Industrial waste and chemical products utilized in cities and agricultural areas can lead to bioaccumulation in the organisms of the local population, even when levels of toxins in those places are low. Frequently no measures are taken until after people’s health has been irreversibly affected. (Laudato Si’ #21)*
- *“An economic system that is completely detached from ethical concerns does not create a more just social order but leads instead to a 'throwaway' culture of consumption and waste. An economic system that is fair, trustworthy, and capable of addressing the most profound challenges facing humanity and our planet is urgently needed.” (Pope Francis’ address to members of the Council for Inclusive Capitalism at the Vatican Nov. 11, 2019)*
- *“In a spirit of faith and brotherly love, we seek to discern the signs of the times, following the example of Saint Paul of the Cross, who saw ‘the name of Jesus written on the foreheads of the poor.’ Guided by the teaching of the Church and our own consecration to the Passion of Christ, we strive to make our lives and apostolate an authentic and credible witness on behalf of justice and human dignity. Accordingly, our lifestyle must stand out as a prophetic condemnation of the injustices among which we live; it should be a continual witness against the abuses of a consumer society. The hardships entailed by such an attitude demand that we embrace the Cross in a spirit of faithfulness to our mission.” (Passionist Constitution # 72)*

#### V. Suggested readings.

- “Making Room, Soul Deep Satisfaction Through Simple Living”, by Kyle Kramer, executive director of the Passionist Earth and Spirit Center, Kentucky
- The seven [Laudato Si’ Action Platform Goals](#)
- University of Queensland, Australia provides a list of principles regarding choices when purchasing: [Purchasing Guidelines](#)

## VI. When to Purchase

Purchasing practices are not just about buying something but comprise a process of considering whether an item is needed, where it was made, who made it, what it is made of, and what will happen to it when it is no longer useful. When purchasing something, go through the process of asking yourself the following series of questions:

- A. Do I have to have this item? Can I get by without it or make do with something we already have? *[Ex: If your desktop printer has failed, could you use a shared printer instead of buying a new one?]*
- B. Is there something already on our campus that I could use instead of purchasing something new? Does another department have this item that I could borrow or have? *[Ex: The Purchasing Department has started coordinating an office supply exchange, whereby departments who have surplus office supplies can offer them to other departments.]*
- C. If this item is replacing something used, could I fix what I have rather than purchase new? Or would a new item use significantly less energy and thus reduce the impact on the planet by lowering fuel needs? *[Ex: If a refrigerator breaks, could we fix it? If it is more than ten years old, we would save more resources by purchasing a new Energy Star refrigerator. If less than ten years old, then try and fix it.]*
- D. If I must purchase new, is what I am purchasing recyclable? What will happen to it after its usefulness has ended? *[Ex: We determined that the plastic straws used in the dining room were not recyclable, so we ordered paper straws.]*
- E. Can I purchase this item made from post-consumer recycled materials? Or can I purchase this item made of natural materials that are compostable? *[Ex: Staples carries several brands of ink pens made from post-consumer recycled plastic bottles and electronic equipment. In addition, the pens are refillable, so they can be used for years. There are also pens on the market that are made with recycled paper and can be recycled or composted when no longer useful.]*
- F. Some sustainable products are more expensive than non-sustainable alternatives. If this is the case, can you plan for increases in the budget by providing a narrative of these items to offset their added expense? *[Ex: Treeless paper is more expensive than conventional paper. To offset the cost, increase the use of electronic documents.]*
- G. If an item has served its usefulness and needs to be disposed of, can it be recycled? Paper, cardboard, aluminum cans, steel cans, glass, newspaper, and #1-7 plastics can be recycled by taking them to the local recycling center.  
If the item is made of 100% organic materials, can it be composted?
- H. Does the product come encased in excessive packaging? Are there bulk or other sources for the needed product that do not come with excessive packaging?

## VII. Best Practice Guidelines

Holy Cross Province of the Congregation of the Passionists supports the mission to care for Earth and Care for the Poor through sustainable purchasing habits. Preferred products and services should support the following criteria:

- Contain high percentages ( $\geq 30\%$ ) of post-/pre-consumer recycled content.
- Durable and/or reusable, as opposed to single use or disposable items.
- Non-toxic, preferably biodegradable.
- Highly energy efficient.
- Recyclable or compostable at time of disposal.
- Made from raw materials that have been obtained in an environmentally sound, sustainable manner.
- Manufactured in an environmentally sound manner by companies with good environmental and labor track records.
- Causing minimal or no environmental damage during normal use or maintenance.
- Shipped with minimal packaging (consistent with care of the product), preferably made of recycled and or recyclable materials.
- Purchase goods from local retailers, not global or online retailers to minimize transportation distances (produced locally).
- Purchase goods from environmentally and socially responsible businesses that are committed to sustainability, clean supply chains, and ethical wages and employment practices.
- Buy in bulk to reduce packaging waste.
- Eliminate toxic cleaning products. Many cleaning products contain chemicals which cause allergies, diseases, and even genetic impact. They can also seep into waterways and soil, polluting streams, fouling drinking water and food crops, and destroying delicate ecosystems.
- Make your own cleaning products. (For simple recipes for nontoxic all-purpose general clearers, disinfectants, and window cleaners [click here](#).)
- Purchase products that have been certified by third parties, such as:
  - Paper- FSC (Forest Stewardship Council)
  - Appliances- Energy Star and UL
  - Cleaners- Green Seal, UL Ecologo
  - Food- USDA Organic, Fair Trade
- Eliminate purchase of products that contain anything listed in the International Agency for Research on Cancer's list of known human carcinogens: [Cancer Causing Substances and Products](#)

## VIII. Ecological Savings and Services

- Consider switching to solar power wherever possible (i.e., outdoor lighting like solar lights on flags) to offset electrical costs and lower your carbon footprint.
- Eliminate vehicles used by the organization that run on any of the fossil fuels. Consider using electric vehicles for maintenance and battery-operated tools where possible.
- Consider outsourcing IT and financial services.
- Capture water from hard surfaces (roof tops, parking lots) to reduce costs, provide water to plantings, and improve self-sustenance.
- Consider landscaping options: meadows and native plants and trees that absorb extra water, are drought resistant, and don't need mowing: [Are Lawns Bad for the Environment? A Look at the Environmental Impact \(rd.com\)](#) These areas also provide educational opportunities for parishioners, retreatants, guests, etc.
- Conduct an energy audit of your buildings, finding quick ways to lower your utility bills and carbon footprint at the same time. Utility companies often offer free audits. An energy audit also provides a baseline of usage to evaluate the productivity of future energy investments (insulation, solar, new windows, etc.)

## IX. Some Resources

- The **Environmental Protection Agency** (EPA) has a list of organizations that provide sustainable purchasing guidance for various sectors of society: [EPA Sustainable Purchasing Program](#)
- The **International Green Purchasing Network** promotes ethical and sustainable production and consumption worldwide: [IGPN](#)
- **Better World Shopper: Shopping for a better world** is a comprehensive guide for socially and environmentally responsible consumers. Data is organized into the most common product categories including coffee, energy bars, computers, gasoline, clothing, banks, cars, water and more. Also included is a summary of the best and worst companies, practical buying tips and the most useful online resources available.
- **Federal Funding:** Find out about federal funding through the Inflation Reduction Act for faith-based institutions here: [Federal Funding for Energy Work at Houses of Worship | Interfaith Power and Light](#)
- **Oxfam America** has principles for all things food: [Food choices for a sustainable world](#) and **Footprint** has sustainable food shopping principles: [Sustainable food shopping](#).
- **Green Seal** - a universal symbol that a product or service meets the highest benchmark of health and environmental leadership: [Green Seal Certification](#)
- **Green Cleaning Products** provides a place for consumers and commercial clients to find out the latest information about natural green home cleaning, green janitorial supplies [Earth-friendly commercial cleaning products](#)

- **Energy Star** has resources for energy management in commercial buildings, including tracking energy costs and recommendations on appliances [Energy Star for buildings](#) and products: [Energy Star products](#)
- **Forest Stewardship Council** protects forests for future generations, and they have a buying guide for businesses for paper and wood products: [Forest Certification](#)
- Check out **WaterSense** to find and select water-efficient products plumbing and irrigation products: [Water Sense certified products](#)
- **Global Electronics Council** (GEC) manages the EPEAT ecolabel. The EPEAT ecolabel is the leading global Type 1 ecolabel covering products and services from the technology sector.
- Check out **The Sisters of Mercy's Fair Trade Resources**: [Resources-for-Ecological-Economics](#) to find many types of ethical products.
- **EcoCert Cosmos** for organic cosmetics.

## X. Vendor Relationships

The crucial question in a relationship with a vendor is: Does this business share a comparable mission of sustainability? This can be found out by asking the vendor directly and/or by looking at their website. For example, Toshiba Business Systems not only states that they are Earth-friendly, they spell out their track record and current products and services on their website: [Toshiba's sustainable products and practices](#).

Many companies are now doing things, such as switching to renewable energy, switching trucks to biofuel, or using post-consumer recycled materials to reduce their impact on the planet. These might not always be listed on their website or in their marketing materials. For this reason, we encourage regular conversation with vendors about what they are doing to become more sustainable, and how they can assist us to do the same.

For major vendors, we recommend a yearly face-to-face vendor review, where the following can be discussed: accuracy of billing, timeliness, quality of service, and sustainability.

Let the vendor know why you continue to use them. We need encouragement to deliver our services and products in an ethical way, and so do they!

When putting out a request for proposals (RFP), include sustainability in the criteria, as well as capacity, reliability, cost competitiveness, etc. Ask the vendor to describe their commitment to sustainability, and the concrete ways they display it in their products and practices. What are their plans to become more sustainable, and, in doing so, pass on the benefit to their customers? In what ways can they help you reach your sustainability goals?



## XI. Vendors We Recommend

- **Reconnect NYC** is part of the St. Paul of the Cross Province-sponsored Thomas Berry Place in Jamaica, NY. For graphics on T-shirts, cups, etc, go to: [Reconnect Graphics](#). For more information, please contact Marta Salgado-Nino, Director of Finance and Administration at Mater Dolorosa Passionist Retreat Center at [MSNino@materdolorosa.org](mailto:MSNino@materdolorosa.org), 626-355-7188 Ext 134
- **Green Safe Products** [Green Safe compostable meal products](#) sells cups, plates, cutlery, etc. that can be re-cycled or composted.
- **Allied Eagle**, a division of **Imperial Dade** which is national, has housekeeping supplies including recycled paper toilet paper. For more information, please contact Roz Salter, Operations Manager at St. Paul of the Cross Passionist Retreat Center, Detroit at [rsalter@stpaulretreat.org](mailto:rsalter@stpaulretreat.org) or 313.286.2848.
- **Pitney Bowes** uses recycling in packaging and remanufactures their meters and other office machines. For more information on their sustainable practices, go to: [Pitney Bowes](#)
- **Ethix Merch** provides graphic design and printed merchandise, like t-shirts: [Ethix Merch](#). This company sources Jesuit-sponsored bookstores and retreat centers.
- **Ignatian Solidarity Network** has merchandise for gift shops and promotions: [Ignatian Solidarity Network Catalog](#) and [HERE](#)
- For recycled paper by the case, Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) - Certified, go to **Office Depot**: [Office Depot 50% recycled copy paper](#)
- **Matera, Texas' Facility Supply Experts**: [Going Green Products](#) has cleaning supplies and pesticides for facilities. For more information, please contact Deacon James Anderson, Director, Holy Name Passionist Retreat Center, at 713.464.0211 or [janderson@passionist.org](mailto:janderson@passionist.org)
- **Solar Energy Solutions** serves the Central US, and they installed the panels on the Sacred Heart monastery in Louisville: [Solar Energy Solutions](#). For more information, contact Brother John Monzyk at 502-544-5878 or [monzykcp@passionist.org](mailto:monzykcp@passionist.org)
- **Simple Green** is an EPA Safer Choice Certified all-purpose cleaner, used for all the outdoor cleaning at the Sacred Heart Monastery in Louisville: [Simple Green](#). Indoor cleaning is done with vinegar and water. Both products are purchased in large containers for less packaging. For more information, contact Dee Dee Lockhart at [dbldees2003@yahoo.com](mailto:dbldees2003@yahoo.com) or 502-451-2330.
- Environmentally friendly **Food Service Products** (paper plates, napkins, utensils and a few other items) can be found here: [US Foods](#).

## **XII. Acknowledgements**

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For more information, and/or to add to this Guide, please contact Patty Gillis, Laudato Si' Animator for Holy Cross Province at 313.399.8320 or [pjgillis48@gmail.com](mailto:pjgillis48@gmail.com).