

Consumerism at Christmas Time

Environmentalists argue that socio-cultural patterns of over consumption, within the new liberal economies of developed societies, present an impending ecological threat to the individual, social and global well-being.



Business Group *Retail Ireland* has said it expects Irish households to spend an average of €2,654 in shops this Christmas. Shopping days such as Black Friday and Cyber Monday, contribute to this figure.

Every effort to protect and improve our world entails profound changes in 'lifestyle, models of production and consumption.

Laudato Si 5

Biodiversity has been described as the 'infrastructure' that supports all life on Earth. These natural systems allow the functioning of our atmosphere, oceans, forests, landscapes and waterways. They are, simply, a prerequisite for our modern, prosperous human society to exist, and to continue to thrive. *World Wildlife Fund*



Over exploitation and ever-expanding agriculture are driven by spiralling human consumption. Over the past 50 years our Ecological Footprint – one measure of our consumption of natural resources – has increased by about 190%. Creating a more sustainable system will require major changes to production, supply and consumption activities. For this we need a detailed understanding of how these complex components link together, and the actors involved, from source to shelf.

WE ARE THE FIRST GENERATION THAT HAS A CLEAR PICTURE OF THE VALUE OF NATURE AND THE ENORMOUS IMPACT WE HAVE ON IT. WE MAY ALSO BE THE LAST THAT CAN ACT TO REVERSE THIS TREND. FROM NOW UNTIL 2020 WILL BE A DECISIVE MOMENT IN HISTORY.

“Nature contributes to human wellbeing culturally and spiritually, as well as through the critical production of food, clean water, and energy, and through regulating the Earth’s climate, pollution, pollination and floods.” “The Living Planet report clearly demonstrates that human activities are destroying nature at an unacceptable rate, threatening the wellbeing of current and future generations.” *The Guardian*

A constant flood of new consumer goods can baffle the heart and prevent us from cherishing each thing and each moment... Christian spirituality proposes a growth marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little.

Laudato Si 222

Studies have shown that people who have grown up in an era of neoliberalism, with its celebration of self-interest and hyper-individualism, have themselves become more individualist and consumerist. We are now steeped in a culture where we are taught to think as consumers instead of citizens. During the Reagan/Thatcher era, Thatcher herself said “There is no such thing as society”. Their policies of privatization, deregulation, tax cuts and free trade deals have allowed corporations to accumulate enormous profits and treat the atmosphere like a sewage dump.



'A flourishing humanity on a thriving Earth in an evolving universe, all together filled with the glory of God – such is the theological vision and praxis we are being called to in this critical age of Earth's distress.'

Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ

"So grow some carrots and jump on a bike: it will make you happier and healthier. But it is now time to collectively take on corporate power" and bring back this departed society. *Martin Lukacs*

We have a possession obsession. We're obsessed with what we own, and defined by what we possess.

Irish Examiner



'They shall not hurt or destroy on my holy mountain; for the land will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples.'

Isaiah 11:9

Only when the last tree has died and the last river has been poisoned and the last fish has been caught, we will realise we cannot eat money.

Cree Proverb

The Future We Need

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