

What are you giving up for Lent?

A Lenten series of suggestions to bring greater peace to your life

Buying “stuff”

Reflect on how we as individuals may be using more than our fair share of the world's resources, and on how the overwhelming messages to buy may be distracting us from our more real concerns.

How are we getting and “buying” the message that we deserve to consume more than our fair share?

Does the consumer message invade our personal and family lives to the detriment of real relationships?

Today's consumption is undermining the environmental resource base. It is exacerbating inequalities. And the dynamics of the consumption-poverty-inequality-environment nexus are accelerating. If the trends continue without change — not redistributing from high-income to low-income consumers, not shifting from polluting to cleaner goods and production technologies, not promoting goods that empower poor producers, not shifting priority from consumption for conspicuous display to meeting basic needs — today's problems of consumption and human development will worsen.

... The real issue is not consumption itself but its patterns and effects.

... Inequalities in consumption are stark. **Globally, the 20% of the world's people in the highest-income countries account for 86% of total private consumption expenditures — the poorest 20% a minuscule 1.3%.** More specifically, the richest fifth:

- Consume 45% of all meat and fish, the poorest fifth 5%
- Consume 58% of total energy, the poorest fifth less than 4%
- Have 74% of all telephone lines, the poorest fifth 1.5%
- Consume 84% of all paper, the poorest fifth 1.1%
- Own 87% of the world's vehicle fleet, the poorest fifth less than 1%

Runaway growth in consumption in the past 50 years is putting strains on the environment never before seen.

— *Human Development Report 1998 Overview, United Nations Development Programme*

Pax Christi is an international Catholic peace and justice organization. Pax Christi USA takes a proactive role in making Americans aware of many social issues such as hunger, homelessness, and the death penalty. It strives to make peace a viable solution for conflicts throughout the world.

The Immaculate Conception Pax Christi group meets on the first Monday of every month at 8 pm at the Rectory. Contact Father Byrne 914-591-7480 for more information.

