



GO GREEN FOR LENT

WEEK TWO: CONSUMERISM & SHOPPING

Bishop Helen-Ann reflects:

I recently listened to a podcast where the participants were having a conversation about the stress of emails relating to online purchases. I could relate to their discussion and while there was an element of humour to it, there was a strong level of truth too. An email to thank you for the purchase, followed by an email offering a discount on further purchases, one about signing up to a loyalty reward scheme, an email to say your order was being prepared, and then dispatched, and then telling you it's arriving today between a time window, only 30 minutes away, then delivered, then inviting feedback on the delivery experience, and then on the product itself. Then days' later, inviting you consider another purchase based on the original item bought. And on it goes. All we need, the host of the podcast said, is a way of checking ourselves about progress, we don't need all the reminders and the invites to buy more stuff.

Early on in my time as Bishop of Newcastle, I visited The Big River Bakery in Shieldfield, in Newcastle city ('Delivering social value, one loaf at a time'). The bakery describes itself as a 'commercial bakery – shop – café and training space – but we do so much more.' It delivers daily breakfast bags to local schools for children not able to access breakfast clubs; it facilitates 'National Stottie Week' Summer 2026 focusing on local heritage with a national reach; it runs a weekly Kindness Cookie scheme, UK wide (and free), and so much more. There are many other examples across our diocese of commercial enterprises offering and delivering social value too (in ways that align with our church-based and church-led activities and engagement in God's mission, like 'Tommy's Coffee' in St Thomas, our diocesan resource church in Newcastle city centre). This Lent, as we reflect on the choices we make about shopping, we can celebrate the social value of our own local worshipping communities and how we can together make positive choices to support local initiatives and local suppliers (even following the sustainable church flowers movement, as highlighted by a recent debate in General Synod). Change often begins at home, with small steps that in the medium and long term can have a positive impact on our environment.

Prayer before Shopping

(Malgorzata Ryzm)

Thank you, Lord, for all your gifts.

For bestowing upon us the necessary food and things of daily use.

Do not let material possessions separate us from You, the Supreme Good.

Open our hearts to Your love, which You show to us through the closeness of our brothers and sisters and the beauty of Your creation. Free us from attachment to the things we possess and enable us to share sacrificially with those who have less than us. Teach us to be content with what is necessary. Protect us from greed, avarice and waste. May our daily choices serve to achieve justice in the world, not exploitation of the planet and its poor. We ask for the needed wisdom, sensitive hearts, and the virtue of moderation, so that when we purchase goods we are guided not only by our own benefit, but by concern for the common good, the rights of workers, the proper treatment of animals, and the consequences for the environment. Help us always to remember that You are our highest Good, and all that we have we owe to You.

Amen.

(as featured in Laudato Si' Movement Prayer Book).