

The Green Notebook

Are We Consumers or the Consumed?

I pondered this question which I heard from our pastor at church during his homily on Sunday. Sure made me sit up and take notice. He was talking about the “things of this world,” like technology for example, that perhaps consume our lives even without our realizing it. He posed the question: is it all about the chasing or the resting? Meaning, is our life’s journey about chasing the “American Dream” and all the material possessions and wealth that goes along with that or is it about resting and finding spiritual peace and focusing on what is really important in this life.

You have to admit, our society as a whole does seem to be caught up in the latest and greatest and newest version of things, whether that is a computer, a car, a cell phone or a Kindle. But, rarely, do these things provide relief from the restlessness that I think many in our nation-at-large may feel. Actually, a recent study shows that our national “happiness” is on the decline and has been for some time, despite all these great inventions.

This topic has been on my mind since viewing the “Story of Stuff” mini-movies that were sponsored a few weeks ago by Sustainable Delaware and Ohio Wesleyan University. The event was well attended by our community and by OWU students. The discussion afterward about consumption and other aspects of our mass production of goods and reduction of natural resources was really interesting with many great observations and ideas tossed out. Many local concerns and initiatives were discussed as well.

My favorite comment was from a gentleman who said that, thanks to his wife, he has gotten out of the consumption cycle and has slowed down his pace of life and has really enjoyed it. He likened the process to something like a 12-step recovery program where you have to realize you don’t really need all the stuff the marketers and advertisers tell us we need. Sounds crazy, but how true that is.

We are each a consumer, that is the nature of our economy. But the question is, are we responsible consumers and do we put that consumption first? Something to ponder and how great it is to have a forum for discussion presented by Sustainable Delaware and OWU. I am looking forward to their next film and discussion which they will be announcing soon. To find out more, go to www.sustainabledelawareohio.org.

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