**The Diary of a Prodigal Parishioner 3 - “Who would know Grandma?”**

It is several weeks since this prodigal parishioner took her first clumsy steps towards reducing her carbon footprint and living more lightly on God’s earth.

How have I progressed? Just a quick update before moving on to the altogether more personally taxing problem of auditing my bulging wardrobe. I fear an enormous looming environmental crisis is lurking there, amidst the dark recesses of impulse buys and fashion regrets.

Earlier this year I began to examine my own environmental footprint in terms of waste. With spring approaching green shoots begin to break through the hitherto frozen soil in my garden, but is my daily life beginning to flourish with similar green shoots of sustainability in mind? My intention is positive but my action is often variable. I am more conscious of what I eat, and therefore waste. My reduced left overs are no longer black bagged for landfill but secured in my new garden compost bin, no longer flying around the garden chased by the cat, but instead safe with a firm lid and brick base. However, the cat does look sad to have lost her plaything.

I am marginally better at meal planning, using fresh ingredients rather than joining the M and S queue for singletons’ meals for one, thus reducing packing waste and food in my fridge that is well past its sell by date, often hiding from sight in the fridge (no black puddings though this month).

I am far from vegetarian, but I am trying to only eat red meat once a week. However, my grandchildren, whose welfare precipitated my initial drive to help the planet, are far from impressed with lentil burgers and soya yogurts for their weekly tea with Grandma. They are even less impressed by my justification for the change from fast food to healthy, not only as part of my personal journey towards sustainability, but questioningly monitored for public viewing in the parish magazine. They even went as far as to suggest some minor massaging of tea time truths for the sole purpose of this article.

‘Who would know Grandma if we had normal burgers?’

‘God would’ I offered hopefully.

On a positive note, researching a tea bag not containing plastic led me to Fairtrade and Clipper tea both readily available locally. Sadly, for this Yorkshire tea addict, learning to fully enjoy alternatives will, I think, take time. In the meantime my daily consumption of tea is vastly reduced, which can only be a bonus, both for my purse and my health.

On the creative front, the cat is still wrecking my knitting plans for left over wool. Any more delay in this and resulting scarves will not be needed until the summer of 2023. I imagine there will be little demand, for knitted woollen swimming trunks in Guiseley this year.

The dreaded wardrobe audit. I am cautiously opening the Pandora’s box of the ‘real cost’ of the clothing we buy. Not necessarily in monetary terms, but how clothing manufacture creates an appalling destruction of our vulnerable environment, and makes a significant, ongoing contribution to global warming and climate change. At all stages of clothing manufacture our precious earth is destroyed.

Before I attack my bulging wardrobe some facts.

* The clothing/fashion industry uses more energy that all planes and ships combined and contributes to more than 10% of global gas emissions each year.
* We buy more clothes in this country per person than anywhere else in the world. Yet here in Leeds 4000 tons of our cast-offs, often unworn, end up in recycling bins per annum.
* A third of micro plastic pollution junking up our oceans comes from what we wear.

These facts, as horrifying as they can seem, scarcely prompt us to act.

I examine two pairs of my trousers unceremoniously draped over my chair-drobe, ready for quick morning accessibility if necessary. My well-worn-friends, my jeans, apparently took over 2000 gallons of water to produce. Yet two billion people, a quarter of the human population, are without access to safe drinking water. I have three pairs of jeans, covering my size fluctuations over time. I am now aware that it took over 6000 gallons of water to produce them.

The old tracksuit trousers show me clearly a Bangladesh label. I admit to having ignored it, just aware they are cheap, comfortable and ultimately ‘disposable’, or are they?

What happens to our cast-offs, especially those that can’t be recycled and reused through our many local charity shops? One bin load of discarded clothing is landfilled every second, some of this carted across the world to areas such as Chile. Here mountains of unused clothes create vast ugly mountains in the Atacama Desert. Local women scan the debris in search of possible items to sell or wear themselves. I felt physically sick to view their young babies, dressed only in nappies, crawling across our disgraceful waste. (thetruecost.com) View this at significant, personal, emotional cost.

 Our unquenchable thirst for disposable fashion has created and promoted the concept of modern slavery. In the case of Bangladesh, highlighted in a horrendous way by the 2013 Rana Plaza disaster, where an 8 storey garment factory (where thousands, mostly women, worked in appalling conditions for a pitiful wage) collapsed. 1134 people died in this disaster.

Since then there have been 109 subsequent accidents in third world garment factories.

Yet slavery is not confined to the third world or the past colonial slave trade. We can self- righteously, in a virtual sense, push the statue of Edward Colston into the Bristol docks, but first of all we need to look at our own role in the current concept of modern slavery (slaveryfootprint.org). I did and was deeply unsettled and truly challenged by the results.

My wardrobe, full of items manufactured by thousands working as modern slaves for me, in the third world, awaits my conscious clear out.