

THE HUMAN THREAD

In his [Message for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation](#), Pope Francis wrote:

As individuals, we have grown comfortable with certain lifestyles shaped by a distorted culture of prosperity and a “disordered desire to consume more than what is really necessary” ([Laudato Si'](#), 123), and we are participants in a system that “[has imposed the mentality of profit at any price, with no concern for social exclusion or the destruction of nature.](#)” Let us repent of the harm we are doing to our common home.

Let us examine the harm that our clothing does to care of our common home. Fashion’s environmental record raises significant red flags:

- Apparel accounts for [10% of global carbon emissions](#), the second largest industrial polluter, [second only to oil](#).
- Nearly [70 million barrels of oil are used each year to make the world’s polyester fiber, which is now the most commonly used fiber in our clothing. But it takes more than 200 years to decompose.](#)
- We churn out clothes at an alarming rate — [Americans now buy five-times as much clothing as they did in 1980](#).
- And many simply go to waste: in the US alone, [12.8 million tons of clothing is sent to landfills each year](#) (about 87 lbs of clothing per person every year).
- It takes up to [700 gallons of water to produce the cotton needed to make a single t-shirt](#).
- [Textiles use 25% of chemicals produced worldwide](#), many of which are [dumped into the environment after use](#).
- New challenges: [in 2014, the US produced 35.4 million tons of containerboard](#), a large proportion of which becomes disposable packaging used in e-commerce.

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