

# THE HUMAN THREAD

## Three-Day Lesson Plan: The Human Thread The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers -Intermediate-

**DAY ONE: Consumed by Consumption or Clothed with Compassion**

**DAY TWO: Disposable Clothes=Disposable People**

**DAY THREE: People and the earth Cry Out: Hear I am Lord**

### Use:

Each set of three lessons is sufficiently developed for experienced and inexperienced teachers to implement with two to four hours of preparation:

- **Studying** the one to two-page overview and the three lessons as presented.
- **Studying** the recommended websites, Scripture citations and contexts.
- **Identifying** potential questions, and rehearsing answers, e.g., What does image of God mean?
- **Making** adaptations if needed.
- **Preparing** materials, and **securing** supplies and equipment as needed.
- **Rehearsing** ways to teach the vocabulary for understanding.

***\*\*Begin each lesson with Laudato Si' Prayer found in the additional resource list at the end of day three.***

**Materials Needed:** World Map

Handouts: "[Five Reasons to be Concerned About Our Clothes](#)"  
"[Climate Change](#)"  
"[Laudato Si' Prayer](#)"

### Vocabulary:

- compassion- the quality of understanding the suffering of others and wanting to do something about it.
- consumption- the act of using up something
- disposable- something that is thrown away after use

- consumerism-an intense desire to buy more and more “stuff”
- materialism- a desire for wealth and material possessions with little interest in ethical or spiritual matters
- solidarity-the capacity of expressing support of a group or the people in it- helping and thinking of others.
- social sin- Social sin occurs within a group of people. It exists within any structure in society that oppresses human beings, violates human dignity, limits freedom and prevents equality

**Overview**-Rooted in both Scripture and Catholic Tradition is the teaching that “the economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God’s creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected--the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to the organization and joining of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.”

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching.cfm>

Unfortunately, in practice, this is not how our society has evolved in its treatment of people and the earth. In this three-day unit students will explore the innate dignity of both work and the worker. They will also come to see the effect of consumption and materialism, especially in the clothing industry, on human dignity and on God’s creation.

**Learning Outcomes:** Upon completion of this three day unit students will be able to relate how consumerism and materialism blind us to compassion for our global brothers and sisters in Christ. Students will have theorized on how these attitudes lead to low wages, inhumane working conditions, human trafficking, and environmental degradation. Finally, they will have devised a plan of Christian action based on the inductive method of analysis-See, Judge and Act

## **DAY ONE: CONSUMED WITH CONSUMPTION OR CLOTHED WITH COMPASSION**

**Class Objective:** Students will quantify the level of our human consumption of clothing in the United States and evaluate if our consumerism affects our compassion for those who labor in poverty.

**Anticipatory Set:** Ask the students to write down on a piece of paper an estimate of how many shirts, sweaters, pants, dresses and skirts, sweatpants and sweatshirts they think they own. Then ask them to list some of the stores where they may have bought these clothes. After a couple of minutes ask them to share with the class if this task was hard and why or why not it was challenging. Tell them to put this away for later as it will be used in their homework assignment.

### **Procedure:**

**Step 1:** Inform students that U.S. teens are some of the biggest consumers of clothes in the world. Read to them the following statistics and have this problem on the board:

*\*\*If teens spend approximately 38% of their income on clothes  
And teens spend approximately \$104 per week total.  
Then, how much do they spend a year on clothes?*

**ANSWER:**  $*\$104 \times 52 \times .38 = 2,055$  a year (about \$40 per week)

**\*\*Obtaining statistics on what teenagers spend money on is challenging, but there are several organizations that surveys teens on their spending habits:**

- According to a [2016 Piper Jaffray.com](http://2016.PiperJaffray.com) report, teen spending habits include using **38 percent of their income on clothing,**
- Teenagers, according to a study done by Teenage Research Unlimited and published by the [National Consumer League](http://NationalConsumerLeague.com), spend \$104 a week TOTAL. This adds up to a yearly TOTAL of \$5408. This includes clothes, food, entertainment, etc.

**Discuss:**

- 1) Does \$2,055 a year seem accurate to you? Why or why not?
- 2) What would be too much? Why?
- 3) Why do you think we buy so much clothes? (Emptiness only God can fill)
- 4) Why do you think is there so much consumerism in America? (excess wealth)
- 5) Where do all these clothes come from?

**Step 2:** Instruct students to look at the tags on their or their neighbor's shirt. Have students share with the class where their shirts were made. Locate these countries on a world map. Ask:

- 1) What do you think all these countries have in common? (developing countries)
- 2) Why would all our shirts be made in these countries? (cheap labor)
- 3) What might be the problem with this practice or trend? (Using people for cheap clothing)

**Step 3:** Ask Students to think and pray about whether it is to consumption or compassion that they are called. If necessary discuss with students what compassion is and what it looks like. Distribute *"Five Reasons to be Concerned About Our Clothes"* and assign it for reading homework. Provide the "Care for Creation" group the handout on "Climate Change". Begin in class if there is time.

**Conclusions:** (Review):

Review what students learned today:

- 1) That teens in the United States consume very large amounts of clothes.
- 2) Almost all of these clothes are made by people who are very poor.
- 3) We need to make an informed choice between consumerism and compassion

**Assessment:** Students should inventory the clothing that they estimated in the anticipatory set. They should also read the handout they received and be prepared to discuss it in class. Challenging vocabulary should be highlighted and defined.

## **DAY TWO: DISPOSABLE CLOTHES=DISPOSABLE PEOPLE**

**Class Objective:** Students will evaluate the significance of the "[Five Reasons to be Concerned About Our Clothes](#)" and integrate this knowledge into their faith perspective on love of neighbor and solidarity. They will propose alternative ways to live in the world that challenge "the culture of indifference".

**Anticipatory Set:** Ask students to take out their clothes inventories and ask:

- 1) How many of you have more clothes in your closets or drawers than you estimated. How many have less?
- 2) How many of you have a lot more clothes than you truly need?

### **Procedure:**

**Step 1:** Inform students that we are now going to dive deeper into the handout "*Five Reasons to be Concerned About Our Clothes.*" Break students into five groups and assign a different "*Reason to be Concerned*" to each group. Ask them to reread their assigned "reason" out loud and then discuss and report on how this reason challenges Jesus' call for us to love our neighbor and/or to be stewards (or caretakers) of the earth.

**Step 2:** Reconvene into the large group and take turns having groups report on their "*Reason*" and how this detrimentally affects our "love of neighbor" or our duty to be stewards/caretakers of the earth.

**Step 3:** Ask students to return to their group and brainstorm three or more alternative ways to live in the world that will address their groups assigned "*Reason to be Concerned.*" Inform them that they will need to demonstrate how their proposed ways to live in the world are clearly examples of love of one's neighbor. This is due by the next class.

### **Conclusions:** (Review):

Review what students learned today:

- 1) Concern about Human Trafficking, Care for God's Creation, Women's Rights, Living Wages, and Christian Stewardship are all reasons to live our faith through love of neighbor. This concern needs to be translated into action.
- 2) We need to adopt alternative ways to live in the world if we are to stop treating our global brothers and sisters as disposable people.

**Assessment:** Group Reports

### **DAY THREE: PEOPLE AND THE EARTH CRY OUT: HERE I AM LORD**

**Class Objective:** Students will relate the work they have done so far to the inductive method of analysis for Catholic Social Teaching-See, Judge and Act. They will then plan a communal action as a response to personal and societal indifference.

**Anticipatory Set:** Student groups take turns presenting to the class on their alternative ways to live in the world and demonstrate how these show their love of neighbor.

#### **Procedure:**

**Step 1:** Inform students that in the Catholic/Christian tradition there is a method that we are called to follow when we are trying to live out Catholic Social Teaching within the context of a modern day social injustice. It is called: **See, Judge and Act** (put on board). Ask the students (on board):

- 1) What great social injustice did your groups **see** in the clothing industry?
- 2) How did your group **judge** this? Was it good? Was it bad? Was it a personal sin? Was it a social sin?
- 3) What **Action** did you group decide to take? (Add options like shopping at second hand stores, buying fair trade, questioning store owners, keeping a check on consumerism, writing clothing companies, PRAYING, etc.)

**Step 2:** Have students return to their groups and relate the work they did to the See, Judge, and Act model and write a brief synopsis of their discussion. Collect.

**Step 3:** Review the different “Actions” that the groups formulated. As a class, decide one communal response that the students can do together to help those people who labor as slaves to make our clothing. Remind them that this is a tangible way to battle the “culture of indifference” and that it is a means to atone for our consumerism.

#### **Conclusion: (Review):**

Review what students learned today:

- 1) When faced with a social sin like we see in the clothing industry we must first see what the problem is, then make an informed judgment as to what factors cause the problem, and then take action to address the problem.
- 2) Remind students that it is up to all of us to take on the culture of indifference. That our faith informs us that materialism and consumerism leads to disposable clothes, disposable people, and environmental degradation (the ruin of the environment).

**Assessment:** Students written See, Judge and Act synopsis and their formulation and execution of a communal action.

**Additional Resources:****Prayer from *Laudato Si'***

*A prayer for our earth*

All powerful God, you are present in the whole universe  
and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love,  
that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live  
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor,  
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,  
so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives,  
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,  
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts  
of those who look only for gain  
at the expense of the poor and the earth.  
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,  
to be filled with awe and contemplation,  
to recognize that we are profoundly united  
with every creature

as we journey towards your infinite light.

**Primary:** We thank you for being with us each day.

Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle  
for justice, love and peace.

Amen.

The Human Thread website: <http://www.humanthreadcampaign.org/>

Catholic Relief Services:

Catholic Social Teaching-Video

Shorts: <http://www.crs.org/resource-center/CST-101>

- (Life and Dignity of the Human Person)
- (Care for God's Creation)
- (The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers-upcoming) (For grades 3-6)

See, Judge and Act:

<http://www.cardijn.info/2011/05/see-judge-act-fifty-years-of-catholic.html>

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: [Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching](#)

See also:

- [Textile Recycling Facts and Figures](#)
- [What Happens When Fashion Becomes Fast, Disposable And Cheap?](#)
- [Fast Fashion is Creating an Environmental Crisis](#)

*Human personhood must be respected with a reverence that is religious. When we deal with each other, we should do so with the sense of awe that arises in the presence of something holy and sacred. For that is what human beings are: we are created in the image of God ([Gn 1:27](#)). (USCCB, [Economic Justice for All](#))*