

FILM DISCUSSION GUIDE

THE TRUE COST

Official Film Trailer:

bit.ly/2zzd1uA

Release date: May 29, 2015 (USA)

Genre: Documentary, Biography, Drama

Directed by: Andrew Morgan

Featured: Livia Giuggioli, Stella McCartney, and Vandana Shiva

Length: 1 hour and 32 minutes

Rating: PG-13 (thematic elements and disturbing images)

SYNOPSIS

The True Cost tells the global story of the clothing industry and asks the question, “who really pays the price for our clothing?” The global fast fashion industry is the most labor-dependent industry in the world, bringing the principle of the dignity of work and rights of workers to the fore. The documentary offers key insights, like the fact that the price of clothing has decreased while the human and environmental costs of this industry have dramatically increased. The film also poses hard questions, like “Why is the fashion industry unable to provide basic human rights to its workers while producing such high profits?” Through interviews with leading fashion and clothing industry professionals, *The True Cost* presents the realities of the demand for cheap clothing in developed countries and the pervasive poverty and environmental degradation that is a result of the Western world’s demands.

The film challenges its viewers to question their own shopping habits and desire for clothes and shoes. *The True Cost* is a foundational documentary for any person of faith seeking to understand how individual shopping and consumption habits impact the poor, the environment, and the economy around the world.



CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT
THEMES IN THE FILM

Dignity of Work and
Rights of Workers

Caring for Our
Common Home

Common Good

Community and
Participation

Solidarity

REFLECTION QUESTIONS: THE TRUE COST

1. Prior to viewing this documentary, did you ever think about the ethical implications of where your clothes came from? How has this documentary changed your view of the fashion/clothing industry?
2. Which person stood out to you in the film? Why?
3. Do you know of any Catholic social tradition documents that talk about consumerism? What has Pope Francis said about consumerism?
4. Living in a developed country where choices abound, how can you be a more conscious consumer of clothing and footwear?
5. Guido Brerea, gives the example of someone saying, "I can buy two t-shirts a day, although I am very poor and have lost all the things I really needed." Why do you think purchasing a brand new item of clothing assuages other difficulties in life? Is this practice unique to those in poverty? Explain.
6. By paying garment industry workers a fair and just wage, the price of clothing would increase. However, the documentary does not address the difficulties of those in lower socioeconomic statuses would have if labor were fairly reflected in price. Discuss this reality.
7. What does Catholic social tradition say about the role of the economy in society? Do you agree with the critique of the fashion industry as it relates to the economy in The True Cost?
8. This documentary tells us, "The average American throws away 82 pounds of textile waste each year, adding up to over 11 million tons of waste from the United States alone." As people of faith, how should we respond to decrease this statistic?
9. One interviewee, Rick Ridgeway, states his company, Patagonia, encourages its customers to "consider their consumption." How can you encourage others in your community to "consider their consumption?"
10. Mark Miller, Ph.D., professor of media and culture at New York University, says fashion advertising is a form of propaganda. Do you agree or disagree? Explain
11. What does the film say about donating clothing in a country like the United States and then having 90% of that clothing go to developing countries? How does this influx of donations impact the economies of the "receiving countries?" How does this make you think differently about offering aid and resources to countries in need, especially after a natural disaster?
12. Do you participate in Black Friday or Cyber Monday? Why? What do days like this say about the values of an individual? What about the values of a country? Spend time reflecting about the values implicit within Black Friday and Cyber Monday. How will you respond to these days as a person of faith, rooted in Catholic social tradition?