

# ETHICAL CONSUMPTION



## SESSION 1

- \* Elicit from students what a 'moral problem' is: (a situation that calls us to do this, rather than that).
- \* Discuss the contrasts on the photographs. Draw attention, in particular, to the 'You're Worth It' slogan and the 'Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend'.
- \* **Either:** Watch the documentary: *The Dark Side of Chocolate* on [www.thedarksideofchocolate.org](http://www.thedarksideofchocolate.org);  
**Or:** Watch the documentary: *Black Gold*. It is supported by <http://blackgoldmovie.com> [both available 02/15]

## SESSION 2

- \* Here's Kothrai Gogan's Poem:

*On Opening a Page in Time Magazine*  
Sunshine beauty bathed in the tumbling surf  
of warm south sea seas, breathing the full clear air  
of distant oceans, radiating health and grace  
from your soft cosmetic skin... But why do you  
flaunt your grace and health and beauty  
before the despairing eyes of those poor refugees  
on the opposite page? Shaming their near nakedness  
their dried-up skin with bones protruding, ribs  
countable, their eyes already dead... and you,  
the sparkle in your glad youthful eyes reflects  
the blue-quick-silver sheen of smooth summer waves...  
so hateful now! so shameful now! for how can you  
be so happy  
amid such gross unhappiness? (only a quick  
nightflight away in the plane you advertise so...  
what shall I say? So  
gracefully or so barefacedly? or simply so forgetfully?)  
Why don't you take a flight yourself?  
Forget the clump of rich young men, bronzed, well-fed  
who gaze at you with such interest and appreciation  
from the other pages. Long cigarettes hang from  
their languid lips.

- \* **Naming Our Emotions:** See if students can specify the virtue they need to practise in response to the emotion they feel. For example, if angry, then patience, or being motivated to do something about it; if apathy, then they need to think about how they challenge their apathy through empathetic exercises and reflection.
- \* Ask students to relate the issues they see in the film to the concept of 'justice', set out in the *Virtue of Justice* resource. Can they relate the issues here to the virtue of generosity?

*Long cars await behind. (This is not a sales promotion.)  
Forget them all and stretch your hand across the page!  
Discover for yourself the thrill to see a smile  
dawn again in the eyes of a once-starved child.  
what new joys you would discover in giving just a little  
of your own to those poor sad old men.  
How peacefully they'd die holding your soft long fingers  
in their knotted claws, despairing hands now full of hope  
convinced by you that amid the hate and  
ugliness and fear  
of all those long horrible years – that beauty still exists!  
Love is! And happiness is possible!  
Turn the page. And take that dead child from  
his ravaged father's arms. Or must he carry it  
without you forever? <sup>1</sup>*

### Discuss:

- Which virtues is the poet calling us to practise?
- Which vices does he condemn? How and why?
- How does the poet convey criticism of the girl?
- How are the refugees described?
- What does the poet ask the girl to do with the dead child?

<sup>1</sup>This, and the questions below, quoted from The Catholic Spirit, Michel Bettigole OSF, and James D. Childs





- \* Provide resources that enable students to make a collage, with sharp contrasts between wealth and poverty.
- \* Locate and listen to the song 'Driven to Tears', written by Sting and performed by The Police.
- \* Compare and contrast the messages in the poem and in the song.
- \* Elicit how, if at all is this material challenging students?
- \* Are they complacent about it; relieved; sickened and disgusted; moved to do something about it, or change their outlook?

### SESSION 3

- \* Ask students to make a list of all things their family buys over the next half term.
- \* They can copy the table on the PPT and record on it.  
N.B. this material could also be used to link to the virtue of self-control and the virtue of generosity, in particular.

### SESSION 4

- \* Useful resource: *The Rough Guide to Ethical Shopping*, Duncan Clark, Penguin 2004
- \* How does the virtue of good sense relate to being a fairer consumer?

### SESSION 5

- \* Stress that students are to look at the moral issues involved in the various research projects.
- \* Accord a different research project to each group.
- \* Ask groups to feed back – some may find that the claims to being ethical need qualification!

- \* When have you encountered a vivid contrast between poverty and materialism?
- \* Ask students to think, in particular of the contrast between glitzy department stores and the homeless, especially at times such as Christmas. Should this move us?

This, and the questions below, quoted from The Catholic Spirit, Michel Bettigole OSF, and James D. Childs

- \* Students then have to use a range of websites to evaluate the ethical qualities of the producers of the products they have bought. Ask students to devise an ethical rating system, or to use one already in existence. How ethical, or unethical do they think each others' ethical rating systems are?
- \* Then, using this ethical rating system, ask the students to evaluate how ethical, or otherwise they think the products they have bought are.

- \* Ask the students to think through the issues that explore how good sense might show itself when it comes to buying.

- \* Ask students to reflect on their consumption habits. They may wish to use the Examined Life Tool to help with this.

