

## WORKS OF MERCY - Reference for Group Leaders

It fits you to a T!!! "I was naked and you clothed me"

### ***TO PREPARE FOR THE MEETING***

Consumerism in a global society, the possibility of alternate choices

- "Clothes make the person": this quote can become a hard reality for teens. Teens often get a lot of peer pressure to wear a particular style of clothing or a certain kind of shoes or brand of jeans. This need to conform in how they dress now includes also the latest version of smartphone or tablet.
- In the economic situation of the world today, we need to question the news ways that have developed for rich countries to exploit other countries in order to get what they want. We can think of the tragedy of child labor and the harsh working conditions in factories in developing countries. Multinational businesses subcontract these companies to produce the clothes, toys, smartphones, etc., that are consumed in the wealthier countries.
- Therefore, it's necessary that, first of all, we look at how much we consume, and consider seriously our way of life and the value we give to objects. Then ask ourselves about the possibility of making our choices by limiting our consumption and only buying what we *really* need, taking into consideration the rights and needs of people around the world. If we see things from this angle, it becomes logical and normal to share and circulate goods, and not just something we do every once in a while.

What can teenagers do?

- Even teens can experience that they find true happiness not in possessing things, but in giving. "Giving" includes making the right choices when buying a product, or offering our talents to help others, or donating things that we really do not *need*, but just like to *have*.
- The Gospel passage about the first Christians is always fascinating (Acts 4:32-37). It says that they were one heart and one soul, and no one claimed for themselves what they owned. They shared everything so that no one was in need among them. Their example encourages us to start projects that would distribute what we really *don't* need to those who really *do* need these things.
- Every single action has an impact on the whole world. Through our commitment as individuals and with our local community, we can improve some of the injustice in the world. One course of action is fair trade, which promotes solidarity among all nations, includes economic and political action and empowers individuals to become agents of change. You could arrange to visit a fair trade shop or invite someone who works in this field to speak to your group.

Some useful texts for exploring this topic:

· Further information about working conditions in the global garment and sportswear industries can be found on the website "Clean Clothes." Here is the link:

<https://www.google.com/#q=clean+clothes> It's very interesting!! And easy to read!

### ***FIRST MEETING***

Who can we involve in our local community? How?

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### ***POSSIBLE STEPS TO TAKE TOGETHER (OBJECTIVES)***

- Begin to evaluate our own lifestyle and what we consume
- Discover the value of the person hidden behind the clothes they wear
- Experience the happiness that comes from giving and sharing our goods and talents
- Learn how to put ourselves in the shoes of those who suffer the negative consequences of globalization

SUITABLE FOR TEENS:

From PPT "Heart in Action" – "For all those who have no clothes"

PPT "Hearts in action live" – "I was naked and you clothed me" (starting on page 11)

"The City Bundle" Experience of gen 3 of Loppiano on sharing (see page 4)

### ***Proposals for activities to help develop the meeting:***

- The shoe: video to reflect on the culture of sharing and reciprocity. Other ideas for dialogue: excessive value you can give things or appearances. . With some tips on using the video during a meeting. (see page 5)
- Quiz on my lifestyle: to evaluate if our daily decisions are influenced by the economy of consumption. To adapt to the situation and lifestyle of the teens in the group (see pages 6-7)
- A story behind a shirt. Activities to discover the mechanisms that lie in multinational chains of clothing and empathize with those who suffer the negative consequences (see pages 8-9)
- The game of traffic lights: Activities for questioning the commitment of the individual and the group for the realization of this work of mercy (see page 10)

## ***RATING***

- Has this meeting strengthened team spirit and mutual exchange? Have confidence and mutual love grown? Have we experienced the presence of Jesus among us?
  - Do we believe that the problem of those who lack necessities has become ours? Are we aware that Jesus considers done to himself any help we give to others?
  - Have we put these words into practice in daily life and possibly with a specific project?
  - Have we involved our local community?
- Find the material on the site of the animators

## THE CITY BUNDLE

For several years, here in the little town of Loppiano, we have been doing the “city bundle.” What is the city bundle? And, first of all, what is *the bundle*?

To “make the bundle,” as the Focolare Movement began doing at its very beginning, means to find everything in the house that is extra, things that are not really needed, like extra clothes, books, shoes or any other objects, and give them away to those in need. Chiara Lubich and her first companions put an old sheet on the floor and piled onto it everything in the house that could be given away to others. Then they pulled together the four corners and tied a knot. The bundle was ready for distribution to relatives or friends who might need them, or to the poor.

The citizens of Loppiano, and all our acquaintances and friends who want to join in, have this experience of the bundle every year in November. For three days we collect all that we are not using and bring it to the big meeting hall and then we distribute the clothing and other things to people in need. We gen 3 join in and bring our things, too.

We take advantage of this opportunity to meet other young people and share with them our ideas and opinions. We use skits, games or a treasure hunt to get across the idea of how important it is to share and live the culture of giving. For example, Elsa asked: “But are there any poor people in our town?” We spoke about this and also asked the question: “Have you ever thought of giving up making a phone call and giving the cost of it, even if only a few cents, for those in need?” That’s when Angela said that this could be a good idea and was something she had never thought of. James, instead, realized that he could help by using his scooter less and going on foot, and then give the money he saved on gas to those in need.

We all went together to the hall where we had the “city bundle” and put out on a table all the things we brought for the communion of goods. The nice thing is that some of our parents, who were struck by an idea they were not familiar with, came back in the following days to bring things of their own to share.

## THE SHOE

Downloadable video from Youtube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HX3BVdONvZA>

This is a video that talks about sharing and recalls an episode from the life of Gandhi who lost a shoe on the tracks when he was getting onto a train. He tried to get it as the train was about to leave, but it was impossible. So he took off his other shoe and threw it next to the first one. Someone, astonished, asked why he had done that. Gandhi replied, smiling: "A poor man who finds one shoe would not know what to do with it. By leaving my second shoe there, he will have something to be happy about."

Here are some tips to help you to learn more and grasp more fully what is behind the pictures in this video:

Stop the viewing at 2:54 and begin the first discussion on what you have seen:

- What are the feelings and emotions of the boy with the ruined sandals?
- What are the feelings and emotions of the boy with the new shoes?
- How do you expect the story to continue?

If the group does not respond immediately, the facilitator can bring up some of the questions about the excessive importance that the boy gives to his new shoes. His attention is focused only on them and he is not free to notice what is going on around him.

Continue with viewing the video until the end:

- Is the ending different from what we expected from the video?
- What has intervened to change the course of things?
- What are the feelings of the two boys now?
- What do you think it is that really makes everyone happy?
- Do you see parallels in the story of these two boys and in our stories that we live every day, regarding use of our possessions?
- What can we do to promote the culture of giving and sharing?

## What is your lifestyle?

Before starting the quiz, print the table on page 2, one for each player

Calculate your profile - mark with an "X" the response that you give to every question

3. Now we can begin...

4. What is your lifestyle? Have you ever thought that the way you consume material goods could contribute toward making humanity one family? Discover with the test where you might improve.
5. Do you compare yourself with the needs of others when you decide whether or not to buy a product, to see if you really need it or not?
6. Do you use things that other people have given away instead of buying something new?
7. Do you put your extra goods in common? Things you don't need but could be of use to others?
8. Do you share a list of what you have, and talk to others about what you need and what others could really use?
9. Do you buy things just to attract attention? (designer clothes, smart phones...)
10. Do you buy products with less packaging to avoid wasting the plastic, paper or aluminum used in the wrapping?
11. When you purchase something, do you consider whether it can be repaired if it breaks or whether all its components can be recycled?
12. Do you purchase used or recycled products?
13. Do you buy high-end technological products that have functions you will never use? (Computer, smart phone, etc.)
14. How many times have you changed cell phones?
15. Do you buy products that come from your own area or from as close by as possible?
16. Do you eat fresh food and fresh fruits and vegetables in season?
17. Are you acquainted with "fair trade"?
18. How many times do you buy from small producers rather than from multinational corporations?
19. Do you buy products that are widely advertised even on internet?
20. Do you read magazines or websites that give information on being a responsible consumer?
21. Do you sort out your waste and recycle?
22. Do you turn off lights and electronics when they are not in use?
23. Do you try to get around on foot, by bike or by public transportation, instead of going by car?
24. Do you share your savings with those who may temporarily need money?
25. Now let's compare the results, but using the table and see... what lifestyle you have!
26. Calculate your profile  
Add up the points and see what your lifestyle and level of consumption is and what you can do to improve it
27. From 0 to 25 = Hurry up  
You are sufficiently influenced by consumerism. Take courage! Find out how you can change and begin with your daily choices!

28. From 26 to 51 = Don't stop the race

You are headed toward a culture of giving, but you are still influenced by consumerism. Give more room for sharing and for seeking information on alternative choices:

Consumerism is beginning to fear you!

29. From 52 to 77 = One more sprint

You are decisively directed toward a culture of giving. You are freeing yourself from the influence of consumerism. You are building a new economy - keep it up! Try to involve your friends as well by giving the testimony of your choices.

30. From 78 to 100 = The goal is near

You are a true witness to the culture of giving; consumerism no longer makes you afraid!

Keep on going as you are, maintaining consistent choices, and try to commit yourself publicly to changing the lifestyle of your whole city!

31. Now let's talk about it...

## THE STORY BEHIND THE T-SHIRT

### Objective:

This activity aims at promoting awareness of the conditions of workers (children and adults) on assembly lines in the factories of multinational corporations. It starts from the products we consume and aims at awakening the teen's critical skills.

### Material:

Large poster, colored markers, magazines for children with advertisements for clothes and accessories (sunglasses, smart phones, etc.)

### Time:

40-50 Minutes

### Step by step:

- Have a very large cardboard poster with a figure drawn on it, representing a teenager.
- Provides the children with printed material (magazines, newspapers, etc.) from which they can cut out some images/logos of famous brands to "dress up" the figure on the poster with the products generally preferred by their peers.
- Glue the images to the poster. If there are brands not represented among the images, draw some.
- Show an advertising sequence taken from a magazine and ask the teens what images or messages are suggested. (for example, Benetton)
- Then tell or read the true story of one of the products (see below the story published in a newspaper), emphasizing the working conditions of the people in the factory. Only at the end are they told which product it is!

### THE STORY OF NAZMA

Nazma is 19, small and petite, and lives in Bangladesh. She works in a T-shirt factory of a famous clothing company that is all over the world. The building she works in is the oldest factory in the city of Dhaka. The walls are covered with mold. The sewing machines are lined up next to one another on a long table, with 20 to 30 women working at each table. At the beginning of the assembly line there are huge piles of sleeves and the front and back parts of the shirts. At the end are the completed shirts. Nazma does not sew; she holds a small pair of scissors and a wire cutter. She checks the seam of the collar. It is a new collar introduced this year because of a new fashion and is narrower than last year's model. Stitch by stitch, centimeter by centimeter she checks all the seams. This is her task. At the end of each table there is a sign that says "250." This means 250 T-shirts have to be finished every hour. This is the goal to be attained at each workbench. Nazma works quickly, measuring and checking every T-shirt that passes her. The important thing is that not even a single thread escapes her - and that she does not drink too much water because otherwise she will have to go to the bathroom, and she won't make the quota of shirts per hour. Month by month she produces T-shirts. For months she has been working ten, even twelve hours a day, six or seven days a week. The shirt she produces seems to be selling very well in the stores of this brand name in New York,

Hamburg, Rome, Hong Kong and other major cities where that chain has stores. Nazma goes to work every morning at 7:30 with two or three other girls who work in the same factory. She comes from a town in northern Bangladesh; her father is a farmer, but the field he cultivates is much too small to support a large family like his. Nazma had heard of the textile factory and that there was work for young women. For the first time she is earning money to pay her rent and buy food. You might think that these big corporations are doing something good by producing T-shirts in these countries and providing job opportunities for young women. But then you are overlooking the fact that even in Bangladesh a person cannot live on only one dollar a day. This is Nazma's actual monthly wage: 3500 Bangladeshi Taka, which corresponds to about \$40, and this includes the overtime Nazma has to work to reach this amount. Precisely \$1.33 a day!! Besides Nazma, there are many other people along the line of production who are also exploited in this way. That's why we only pay \$5.00 for a shirt in an H & M store!!  
(Article published in DIE ZEIT, 16.12.2010)

· Discuss this article and what alternatives there could be. Below we offer some questions and proposals for action during a guided reflection.

Discuss and reflect together:

- This clothing chain (H&M) is not the only one that produces clothing in factories with unjust working conditions for their employees. Does anyone have information on other chains?
- How can we be better informed on working conditions in the factories of huge multinational companies that produce the brand-name clothes we often buy?
- What are the pros and cons of producing clothing in countries in the southern hemisphere (South America, Africa, Southeast Asia)?
- Are there some brands that teens prefer over others? Why?
- How important is it for your peers to have certain brands of clothing/shoe, etc.?
- What role do you think advertising plays in these choices?

Getting into ACTION

*We can contribute in many ways to break down these unjust structures. Here are some ideas:*

- You could order some white T-shirts in a "fair trade" shop and decorate them during a meeting. Typically, these shirts cost a little more, but guarantee fairer working conditions for the workers who made them.
- To renew our wardrobe we can also transform the clothes we have into something "new" – like changing the buttons, painting some symbolic signs on a shirt, adding decorations. We can get creative!
- At the next meeting, we can bring clothes we have that are still in good condition, but which are no longer used. We can redistribute them among ourselves according to the needs and tastes of each one, or we can set up a second hand sale with our bundle. We can invite other teens who need jeans or sweaters, but for various reasons cannot buy them.

*... Many other ideas might come from the group!*

## **THE TRAFFIC LIGHT GAME**

### Objective:

The goal is to come up with a plan of action at the conclusion of the meeting, indicating the commitment of the individual or of the group to putting into practice the work of mercy, "I was naked and you clothed me."

### Material:

Large poster board, markers, sticky notes in three colors (red, yellow, green)

### Time:

20 minutes

### Step by step:

On a large poster board draw a large traffic light (see model below). The traffic light is the action plan of the individual or group.

**RED LIGHT:** actions, attitudes or choices that participants want to stop doing

**YELLOW LIGHT:** actions, attitudes or choices that the participants want to do less often from now on

**GREEN LIGHT:** actions, attitudes or choices that the participants want to do more often and continuously

Ask everyone to write on colorful sticky notes (according to three categories: red, yellow, green) the actions they want to commit to. Allow 5-10 minutes.

Ask the students to tell the rest of the group what resolutions they wrote down.

Everyone can then place his or her notes on the corresponding color of the traffic light.

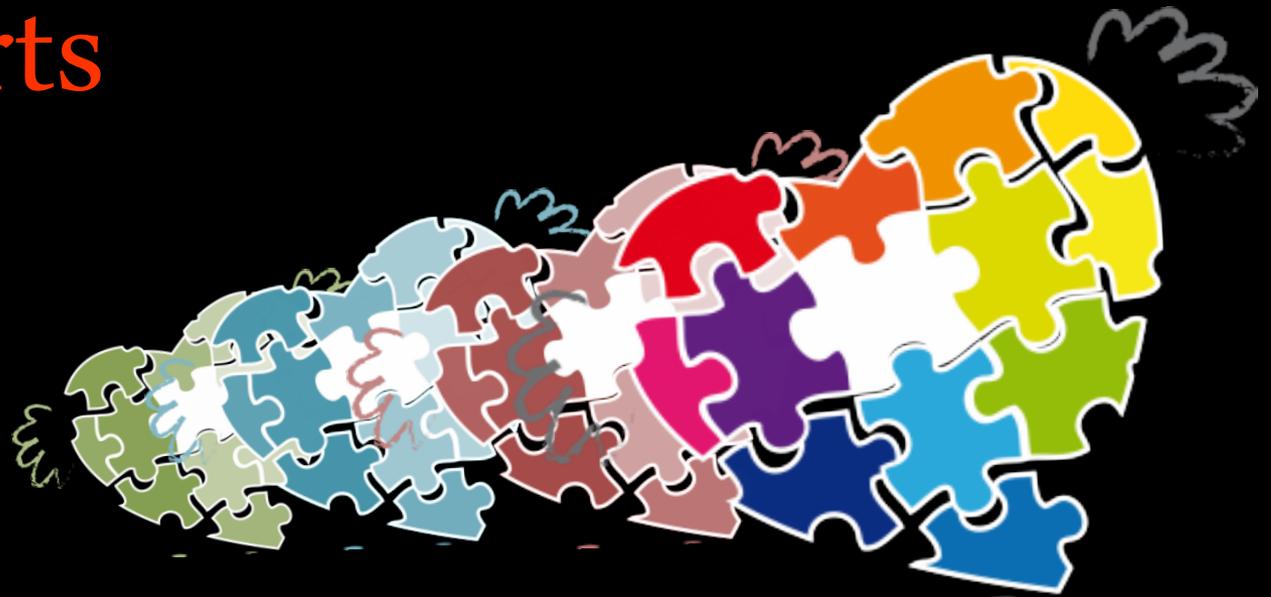
You could conclude by choosing by vote a resolution the group aims to achieve in each category.

Hearts

in

Action

live



Philippines

**In our country,**



I was naked...



**there are children who have  
no shoes. Each of us picked  
two kids to give a pair of  
shoes to.**

**I was naked...**



The parents of one of them told us:  
"Yours was the only gift our child received for Christmas.  
Thanks!"





...and you clothed me.

It seemed like Jesus himself was telling us: "You did it to me!"





## CUBA

While repairing the roof of their home, a neighbor seriously damaged my grandma's roof and didn't have any intentions of fixing it.

I was homeless...

Seeing our grandma really sad, my brother and I





**together  
with other  
gen 3 who  
live the  
Gospel with  
us, decided  
to get to  
work.**



Now the roof is  
fixed and it  
doesn't rain  
inside  
grandma's  
house anymore.



...and you took care of  
me

**Her joy was ours too!  
Indescribable!**

