



**THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION PROCESS  
SISTERS OF CHARITY OF ST. ELIZABETH**

Many faith-based groups, the Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth among them, are using the coming of the Super Bowl to New Jersey in 2014 as an opportunity to raise awareness of Human Trafficking and to motivate people of faith to work for the abolition of this modern day slavery.

The Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation Office of the Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth offers this Theological Reflection Process on Human Trafficking as a resource for Sisters, Seton Associates and others who want to reflect and take action.

The format of this process is the Pastoral Cycle which uses the four movements of Experience, Social Analysis, Theological Reflection, and Action. The process is most effective when it is done with a group of people but can be adapted for individual use.

For the Experience section, you are invited to watch a short video on trafficking. Some of the images might be disturbing – as is the reality of trafficking itself. The video can be accessed on You Tube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZTN0TbsRYA>. You will need a computer with internet connection to watch the video.

If it is impossible for the group to watch the You Tube video, find attached *Lena's Story* that can be read aloud instead.

Someone in the group should take responsibility to be the leader – to set up the viewing of the video; to learn the various sections of the process, to assign readers, etc.

# I. EXPERIENCE:

Leader: We begin with a moment of silence. Think of the main street of your town or city; the shops and businesses you pass each day – beauty and nail salons, restaurants, children selling candy in front of stores. Did it ever occur to you that you may have seen a victim of human trafficking there?

Pause for a minute of silence  
Watch the You Tube Video

OR

Read *Lena's Story* aloud.

Invite the participants to reflect in silence on the question:  
How do you feel when confronted with this and other information you have received about human trafficking? Could you sum up your feelings in **an image** that you could share?

The silence is followed by a period of sharing as people share their feelings and images.

# II. SOCIAL ANALYSIS:

When the sharing is finished, we move to the phase of social analysis. Invite people to share their responses to the question: Based on what we have seen and what you might already know about the subject of human trafficking, what are the root causes of trafficking? What are the social, cultural, economic factors that promote human trafficking and benefit from it? The attached *Human Trafficking Facts* sheet might help you in your reflection.

Reflection and Discussion

# III. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:

Invite 4 participants to read each of the following readings aloud.

1. A reading from the prophet Jeremiah: (5:1,11,15)

O God, remember what has happened to us; Consider and see our degradation. The women of Zion have been raped; the young girls of the towns of Judah. Youths have been put to the mill; boys stagger under loads of wood. Joy has vanished from our hearts. Our dancing has turned to mourning.

2. A Reading from the Vatican II Document *Gaudium et Spes*, #27::

Whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where people are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonor to the Creator.

3. The Position of the St. Vincent de Paul Society on Human Trafficking:

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul reaffirms our adherence to Catholic Social Teaching, whose foundation is the inviolable dignity of every person from the moment of conception to natural death. We call for care and protection of victims of trafficking. We call for rigorous local, national and international efforts to identify and punish individuals and businesses that trade in persons. We call for greater efforts to eliminate the root causes of poverty. The weak and vulnerable must be protected from this evil. (Approved 9-10-10 by the National Council Trustees, National Meeting, New Orleans, LA)

4. Corporate Stance of the Daughters of Charity on Human Trafficking:

We, the Daughters of Charity of the United States and Canada, in keeping with our conviction regarding the dignity of each person, adopt a united stand in support of human rights and oppose human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and forced labor.

We will amplify our opposition to this violation of human dignity by implementing the following interventions:

- Advocate for policymaking which promotes detection and rescue of victims.
- Endeavor to educate first line healthcare providers to identify signs/symptoms of the trafficked person in order to secure a safe rescue and re-entry.
- Exercise consumer practices which are consistent with our commitment to human rights and trafficking prevention measures.
- Pray for the victims of human trafficking and for those working to help victims rebuild their lives.

After the readings invite a period of silence and then sharing on the question: Can you think of a biblical passage, an aspect of Catholic Social teaching or a story from our Sister of Charity history that would give inspiration and guidance to us in how to respond to the reality of human trafficking?

Reflection and Discussion

### III: TAKING ACTION:

Invite the participants to read over the following action steps. Which do you feel called to do as an individual? What might the Sisters of Charity do as a group?

Actions You Can Take:

- Pray the Prayer For an End to Human Trafficking, found below, daily individually or together with others. Include prayer for victims of trafficking in your faith community.
- Further your education on the issue of trafficking.

Some helpful websites:

-The Polaris Project <http://www.polarisproject.org/>

-Combat Against Trafficking <http://combattrafficking.eu/content/anti-trafficking-organisations>

-Trafficking Resources from the Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center  
<http://www.ipjc.org/links/trafficking.htm>

-Stop Trafficking Coalition of Religious Congregations  
<http://www.stopenslavement.org/>

- -Talk about this issue with others and ask your parish or other community to sponsor a workshop on human trafficking.
- -Change your language – use the term “prostituted woman” instead of “prostitute”.
- -Support anti-trafficking legislation
- Purchase handcrafted bags, jewelry and paper products made by trafficking survivors:  
<http://www.madebysurvivors.com/about-us/empowering-slavery-survivors>
- Buy a TassaTag luggage tag that supports women and children in Thailand to provide alternatives to trafficking.  
<http://tassatag.org/>
- -Send a letter to hotel chains you frequent to make sure they have signed *The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism*  
<http://www.thecode.org/>

- Enter this number in your cell phone so you can call if you see someone you suspect is a victim of trafficking:

The National Trafficking Resource Center Hotline at 1-888-373-7888 to report a tip or connect with anti-trafficking resources near you.

## IV. Feedback:

Spend a few moments reflecting on your experience of this process:

1. What most impacted you from this Theological Reflection on human trafficking?
2. What changes are you being lead to make personally in response to the reality of human trafficking?
3. What further information or training would you find helpful to respond to the reality of human trafficking?

Send any suggestions you might have to:  
Office of Peace, Justice and Ecological Integrity  
Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth  
PO Box 476  
Convent Station, NJ 07961-0476  
[tmoran@scnj.org](mailto:tmoran@scnj.org)

The gathering ends with the following prayer:

Closing Prayer: **PRAYER FOR AN END TO TRAFFICKING**

All:

O God, we cannot express what our minds barely comprehend and our hearts feel. When we hear of your daughters and sons deceived, transported to unknown places for purposes of sexual exploitation, and abused because of human greed and profit, we can only lift our voices and cries to you.

Our hearts and spirit are saddened when the dignity and rights of those who are trafficked are violated, threatened by deception and force. We cry out against this degrading practice of trafficking and pray for it to end.

Strengthen the broken-hearted and weak in spirit. Fulfill your promises to give our sisters a love that is tender and good. Send their exploiters away empty-handed. Give us the wisdom and courage to learn more about this tragic reality in our world. Help us stand in solidarity with our sisters, that together we may find ways to nurture that freedom which you give us all freely.

**Adapted from a prayer by Gen Cassini, SSND**

## Lena's Story

You can't use my real name. Or even the name they gave me in China. I don't even know what my name should be. I am not the same person who left this village two years ago. My body came back but my soul is somewhere else. No one recognizes me anymore and everyone who comes to see me.... I think they come to stare at me because I am dirty now. I am filthy inside and my soul is empty. I don't know if I can live this way. My mother comes to my room and says 'Lena, you were such a friendly person. I miss you the way you were,' and I say, 'Mama, I am different. Something died in me. I think it was happiness.'

I never thought this would happen to me. I was sixteen when they came to the village. They looked very nice and offered jobs to the girls here in China as cooks. The program looked very good. Three months of cooking school with all expenses paid. Then guaranteed work for one year in an expensive Chinese hotel. Nine other girls and I signed their contracts. They didn't give us time to read them or take them to our parents. I thought our parents would have to sign because we were still in school but they said it was no problem. They were in a hurry and we signed their papers before all the places were gone.

We were so excited when we got our tickets and visas to China and the nice people who came to the village escorted us to the plane. Our families thought we would make good money and be able to help at home. But then, everything was different. Our escorts on the flight treated us like we were criminals. In China they burned our passports.

When Masha tried to fight them, they beat her and raped her in front of us. There was no cooking school or jobs. There was only a whore house. The first day in China they took us to a morgue to show us the bodies of two girls who had jumped out of the window to try and get away. They told us there was no way out until we had worked as prostitutes long enough to pay back our debts for tickets and expenses. But then they kept all the money.

I am home because our brothel was raided by police six months later and I was deported. You might think I am lucky but I am not. Someday they will come back for me and if I do not go, they will kill me and maybe my family. Once they come to your village and you sign their paper your life is over. I wanted to be a teacher.

# Human Trafficking Facts

## What is Human Trafficking?

In order for a situation to be trafficking, it must have at least *one* of the elements within *each* of the three criteria below.

Process	+	Way/Means	+	Goal
Recruitment <i>or</i> Transportation <i>or</i> Transferring <i>or</i> Harboring <i>or</i> Receiving	<b>A N D</b>	Threat <i>or</i> Coercion <i>or</i> Abduction <i>or</i> Fraud <i>or</i> Deceit <i>or</i> Deception <i>or</i> Abuse of Power	<b>A N D</b>	Prostitution <i>or</i> Pornography <i>or</i> Violence/Sexual Exploitation <i>or</i> Forced Labor <i>or</i> Involuntary Servitude <i>or</i> Debt Bondage <i>or</i> Slavery/Similar Practices

(Chart developed by the Solidarity Center and International Catholic Migration Commission – extrapolated from the 2000 UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons.)

## Human Trafficking is a Global Reality

- There are varying estimates of the number of trafficked persons.  
It is hard to get an accurate count because of the nature of human trafficking
- 600,000 to 800,000 persons trafficked across borders (US Government)
- 12.3 Million in forced labor/sexual servitude (UN International Labor Office)
- 27 Million persons trafficked worldwide (Free the Slaves)

## Human Trafficking is a National & Local Reality

- 17,500 persons are estimated to be trafficked into the US each year (US Govt)
- The number of US citizens trafficked within the country is estimated to be even higher, possibly as high as 200,000. (Polaris Project)
- Washington was the first state to pass an anti-trafficking law in 2003, though the first state prosecution occurred in 2009. Oregon passed its anti-trafficking law in 2007.
- The Pacific Northwest is a hub for both international and domestic trafficking.

## Human Trafficking is a Criminal Industry

- Human Trafficking is the fastest growing source of income for organized crime—second only to drug trafficking
- The large profits are due to high demand and negligible-to-low risk of prosecution.

