



**Human Trafficking** is the recruitment, transportation, transferring, harboring or receipt of persons by means of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability, or giving payments or benefits to a person in control of the victim for the purpose of exploitation, which includes exploitation of prostitution of others, sexual exploitation, forced labor, slavery or similar practices and the removal of organs. (*UN Office of Drugs and Crime*)

**Prologue: A traitor's kiss** Gethsemane means: "the oil press." Perhaps the symbolic meaning of this name has much to do with Jesus' own anointing and strengthening to embrace this part of his mission. Gethsemane is a place for contact with nature, a haven of tranquility, a place to gather with family and friends, where imaginations can flow and dreams can be created. For us today, as it was when Jesus went to pray, it becomes a place of deep BETRAYAL. As you enter this garden of trees, doors and windows, you will journey with the trafficked, with those who survive and with those who help others to survive. Jesus walks with each of them, and we are invited to join them, carrying the cross to their Calvary and Resurrection.

People do not choose to get entangled in human trafficking. The fact is that human trafficking is modern day slavery. The deceptive invitations and outright abductions that take place, take us on a journey of pain, a journey that begins with a traitor's kiss. *I was sold for a weekend, tricked into being sold, bought with 30 pieces of silver, which even today can buy the life of an innocent one.*

"Then one of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?' They paid him thirty pieces of silver, and from that time on he looked for an opportunity to hand him over... His betrayer had arranged a sign with them, saying, 'The man I shall kiss is the one; arrest him'." (Mt. 26: 14 – 16; 48).

## PROMISES OF WEALTH AND

**SUCCESS: The two sided door** - People fall into human trafficking situations by force. It is



never chosen. The door they enter is beautiful and attractive, often alluring because of the promises of jobs, financial success and other dreams, only to find the back of the door, bolted with chains with

no exit. The false promises of wealth and success, of sending money for aging parents, the alluring thought of “make me a model and my parents would be proud of me” are among the entrapments.

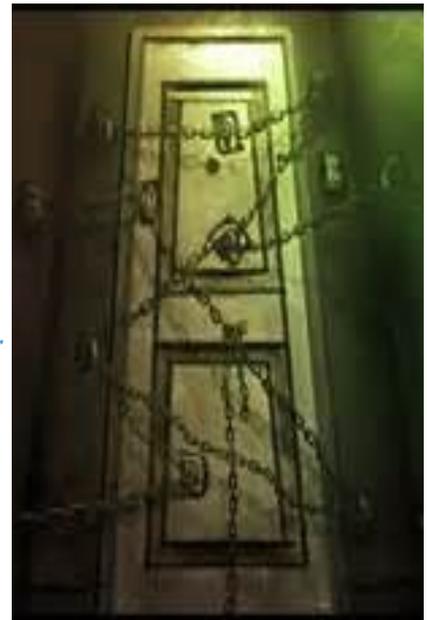
**1. Condemned to Death:** “When it was morning all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate, the governor. When Pilate saw that he was not succeeding at all, but that a riot was breaking out instead, he took water and washed his hands in the sight of the crowd, saying, ‘I am innocent of this man’s blood. Look to it yourselves.’ And the whole people said in reply, ‘His blood be upon us and upon our children.’ Then he released Barabbas to them, but after he had Jesus scourged, he handed him over to be crucified” (Mt. 27: 1–2; 24–26).

*Annie had a job at the Westfield Mall as a teenager. A well dressed woman entered her store, offered her a better paying job, and an*

*offer for lunch. Annie met her during her break and was lured into a better paying job that ended up being sexual slavery in Las Vegas. Thank God she escaped after 3 weeks. She hid in a closet for 3 days terrified they would find her.*

**2. Made to carry the cross.** Victims are torn away from family and friends. This absence of life support leaves them dependent on the very ones who tear them away from their lives. Their enslavement creates the state of absolute loneliness through forced labor, prostitution or other forms of slavery. Victims are often drugged, threatened with harm to family members and friends. Their passports and other pertinent personal and identifying documents are stolen from them.

*Kristen was a freshman at a college away from home for the first time. In an effort to make friends she accepted an offer from a senior to go to a party. On the way she gave her drink laced with drugs.*



*Kristen was sold for the weekend at a hotel where she was beaten, raped and the “friend” made lots of money off of her.*

*A kidnapper, whether he sells the person or the person is found in his possession, shall be severely punished. (Ex. 21: 16)*



### 3. Jesus falls the first time:

Trafficked Victims become loyal to the ones who hold the control over their lives; they fall into a trap of submission.

#### FACTS:

- Boys and girls are swallowed up in human trafficking right in our own communities
- Young boys and girls, as early as 10 years of age, are being groomed to become exploiters
- Teenagers, as young as 16 years of age, are selling their peers.

Our youth are not only being targeted for exploitation, but are themselves also becoming the exploiters. In the gangs minor are being recruited to get others to be exploited . At one time, young people were involved in selling drugs at school. However, now it has morphed into the selling of peers because it is more profitable. Many of the gangs are engaged in human trafficking and use girls to recruit their peers (referred to as the bottom bitch).

*“After raping their victims and threatening to kill them if they tried to escape, the gang members sold the girls online. The girls were trapped in a hotel for twelve hours a day, as men who had purchased their bodies from the gang members had sex with them.*

*Though these commercial sex acts brought in between \$1,000 to \$3,000 dollars a day, the young women and children never saw a penny of the money.”* (From the Witherspoon Institute, Public Discourse Laura Lederer)

*Enemies are on the move, scheming and planning the victim’s fate. There is no way to communicate to loved ones. The power of the*

*traffickers over the psychological, physical and spiritual lives of the victims strips away any sense of their own humanity.*

**4. Jesus Meets his Mother:** A young woman dreams of seeing her mother again, knowing that her mother thinks of her daily, wondering why she hasn’t heard from her daughter. Hope for both of them is kept alive through dreams and memories. They imagine themselves being reunited. Some never lose hope by holding on to their dreams, even if far off and away.

*Kanthy’s mother wrote her letters every week which the trafficker withheld from her. After being freed Kanthy wrote a play, “Letters from My Mother” about her mother’s persistent love.*

**5. Simon helps Jesus:** An eagle-eyed police officer sees something just by walking by an apartment building that touches his instinct to investigate. A woman is suspicious about the neighbor’s domestic help. The help of friends not available and people in general unaware, leads the victim to hope in a total stranger. Like Simon the Cyrenian, there are people on the road wanting to help so the victim can rest assured that someone will carry their burden for them.



## Local Survivor Caucus – Why Needed?



**6. Veronica:** Former victims of Human Trafficking have become abolitionists themselves. They knew the suffering, and like Job often said *“My face is inflamed with weeping, darkness covers my eyes, although my hands are free from violence, and my prayer sincere. O earth, do not cover my blood, nor let my outcry come to rest!”* (Jb. 16: 16 –18).

*“I worked seven days a week for 18 hours a day and never got paid. I suffered physical abuse, was thrown against the wall, and it was a neighbor who reached out to rescue me.”*  
A survivor from Los Angeles.



Today they march, work with police and advocacy groups, express their pain in art and stories to share their message about this reality. They are the “Veronica’s” for the Jesus -Victims enslaved. They receive moments of respite, realizing that their plight will be left on the *veils of hope* that become signs for the world to respond to this suffering.

**7. Jesus gets up a second time:** Where once all human and civil rights were violated and ignored, today the training of police agencies, social workers, church and school volunteers and other first responders are learning about the signs of a trafficked victim. They know

now how to take a step towards their liberation and help to move them forward by not criminalizing them, but making sure they receive the assistance they need for their liberation.

*“The human capacity for burden is like bamboo- far more flexible than you'd ever believe at first glance.”* (Jodi Picoult, *My Sister's Keeper*)

**8. Jesus Meets the Women:** The promise broken. When Jesus told the women to weep for themselves and their children, he knew that the world’s lust for wealth, control and sex would be the betrayal of their dignity. While all people can be part of the demand, men often create some of the most highly valued demand through the pornography industry. But our lust for wealth, consumer products at a low cost and wanting to invest as little of our own wealth into society, creates a demand for cheap, slave labor; most often from women and children. Sweatshops, illegal mining – such as the forced retrieval of diamonds and gold by children, the illegal harvesting of coffee and cocoa by children, and the sex trade – with a growing demand for child pornography all over the world is shockingly high, creating an immense market for supply—human supply.



*“Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and for your children, for indeed, the days are coming when people will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed’”* (Lk. 23: 28–29).

**9. Jesus falls the third time:** We once spoke of subjugated continents like South America and Africa. Today it is no longer a diaspora of one kind...it is the wrecking of many lives, families, peoples, and cultures, driven by the misdirected passions from peoples of all nations and backgrounds. It's about how we spend money, and the lack of discretion concerning how we make sure that what we purchase is not made available to us at the cost of human slavery in sweat shops in the US and

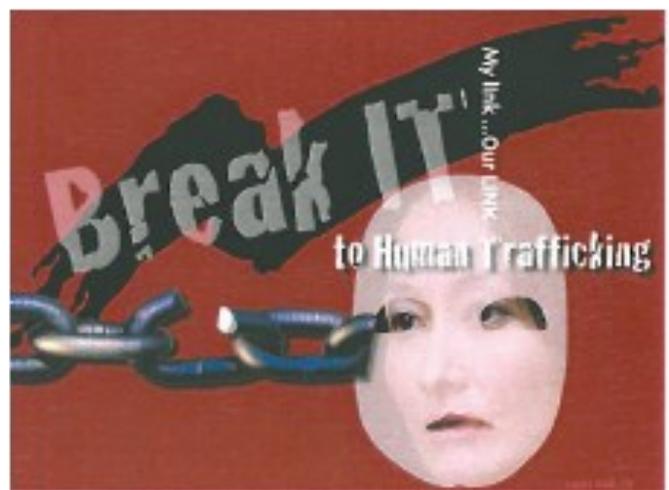
**STOP  
THE  
DEMAND**

around the world. We always want to "save a buck". Perhaps what we need is to want is to "save a human life". As humanity falls, so does Jesus. As he rises, so too does humanity.

*Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus inside the praetorium and gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped off his clothes and threw a scarlet military cloak about him. Weaving a crown out of thorns, they placed it on his head, and a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They pat upon him and took the reed and kept striking him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the cloak, dressed him in his own clothes, and led him off to crucify him (Mt. 27: 27 ff).*

**10. Jesus is stripped naked:** We have reduced the suffering of Jesus to pretty gold settings with a corpus bearing a loincloth to cover his "humanity". Many pimps and people engaged in trafficking victims wear this kind of jewelry without even thinking of the implications of how they actually contradict themselves by their very actions. However, reducing the human person to nothingness, stripped of dignity and faced with broken lives, leaves only one hope: liberation. Jesus' nakedness on the cross needs to be fully embraced if we are to begin to understand the dehumanization of human trafficking, the modern day slavery. We look at the cross and make a choice. We can walk away from it because it's just too painful to look at, or we can see it for all its broken humanity.

*When the soldiers had crucified Jesus they took his clothes and divided them into four shares, a share for each soldier. They also took his tunic, but the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top down. So they said to one another, "Let's not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it will be" (Jn. 19: 23 – 24).*



**11. Jesus is nailed to the Cross:** If we chose to embrace the humanity on the cross, embracing humanity's nakedness as it takes in all human dignity through human slave



industry, we are then able to name the truth of this modern day reality. Here you are invited to name the reality of human trafficking in ***your own personal world***, asking Jesus to accept it as part of his cross. What touched you? How have you ignored this? Or, better yet, what can you identify in your own life

that contributes to this reality? Name The truth that comes to your heart from this prayer journey, this Via Crucis, and “nail” it to this cross, and as you walk away carry it in your heart.

*We adore your Cross, O Lord, we praise and glorify your holy Resurrection, for behold, because of the wood of a tree joy has come to the whole world.* (Good Friday Liturgy, Roman Missal)



**12. Jesus is raised on the cross and dies:** The passion of the Christ is the full submission to God's will, which includes the imposing physical blows, torture and mind games altering reality. But the cross is truly a paradox. For while it is a symbol of torturous death, it is also a symbol of promise; a promise that cannot be broken. The promise of our journey today is to give hope to an enslaved part of our human race; a call to join the efforts to the demand that creates the need for generating the supply line of human enslavement. As certain as we are that what died with Jesus was the sin of our broken

humanity, we can be just as certain that what can die here is everything that enslaves



us...including creating a demand so great that a world of slavery and abuse of real people becomes a lucrative commercial industry today.

*My people, what have I done to you? Or how have I grieved you? Answer me! What more should I have done for you and have not done? Indeed, I planted you as my most beautiful chosen vine and you have turned very bitter for me, for in my thirst you gave me vinegar to drink and with a lance you pierced your savior's side.* (Good Friday Liturgy, Roman Missal)

**13. Jesus' body is taken down from the cross and placed in the arms of his mother:**

The message of salvation is about liberation... one that can only be accomplished when the "liberators" become one with the captured and enslaved. The mystical Body of Christ must become one in the agony, the passion and the hope. Only then can there ever be the liberation of rising from the dead.

*The trade in human persons constitutes a shocking offense against human dignity and a grave violation of fundamental human rights.* (St. John Paul II)

**14. Jesus is buried:** The agony of Jesus about which the scriptures speak continues in history through the machinations of the

powerful and their manipulation of the victims; the human degradation disguised as business and commodities, continues to inflict pain on the most vulnerable, the voiceless, the poor. But it is brought full circle through the life that resurrection raises from the ashes of death.

The quilt you see is coming out of the tomb that will never remain shut, signifying the resilience of rescued trafficked victims, parallel to new life in the human spirit touched by the divine life that is celebrated in the Passion, Death and Resurrection of the Christ.

*"Keep knocking and the joy inside will eventually open a window and look to see who's there" (Rumi)*





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