



Trafficking in Women and Children

THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND SNJM COMMITMENTS

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Lamentations 5: 1,11, 13, 15

O God, remember what has happened to us;
consider and see our degradation.

The women in Zion have been raped,
the young girls in the town 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.

Luke 13: 10-13

One Sabbath day Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and there before him was a woman who for eighteen years had been possessed by a spirit that crippled her; she was bent double and quite unable to stand upright. When Jesus saw her he called her over and said, 'Woman, you are freed from your disability, and he laid his hands on her. And at once she straightened up, and she glorified God.

*What "spirits" (i.e. forces) contribute to crippling women who are trafficked? What "spirits" cripple you? What would contribute to freeing these women? What would contribute to freeing you to respond?**

Genesis 1:27

God created humankind in God's image.
In the image of God, God created them;
male and female God created them.

*What are the forces in your life that cause you to forget your inherent dignity? If you can imagine yourself as a woman who has been trafficked for sex trade, what forces contribute to your loss of dignity?**

Galatians 3:28

There does not exist among you Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. All are one in Christ Jesus.

John 10:10 I came that you may have life and have it abundantly.

* The reflection questions come from the School Sisters of Notre-Dame's Theological Reflection Packet on the Trafficking Issue.



CHURCH DOCUMENTS

SLAVERY, SELLING OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN...

Gaudium et Spes, Vatican II no. 27

Whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, or wilful self-destruction, 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 instruments of gain rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others like them are infamies indeed. They poison human society, and they do more harm to those who practice them than to those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonor to the Creator. (*quoted in The Gospel of Life, John Paul II*)

Catechism of the Catholic Church, number 2414

The seventh commandment forbids acts or enterprises that for any reason — selfish or ideological, commercial or totalitarian — lead to the *enslavement of human beings*, to their being bought, sold and exchanged like merchandise, in disregard for their personal dignity. It is a sin against the dignity of persons and their fundamental rights to reduce them by violence to their productive value or to a source of profit. St. Paul directed a Christian master to treat his Christian slave ‘no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother... both in the flesh and in the Lord’.

ON HUMAN DIGNITY

With respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God’s intent. *Gaudium et Spes no. 29*

În creating the human race “male and female”, God gives man and woman an equal personal dignity, endowing them with inalienable rights and responsibilities proper to the human person. (*See Genesis 1:27*) *John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio, 1981 no. 22*

ON HUMAN WORK*

... each sort (of work) is judged above all by the measure of the dignity of the subject of work, that is to say the person, the individual who carries it out. *Laborem Exercens no. 6*

... the danger of treating work as a special kind of “merchandise”, or as an impersonal “force” needed for production always exists, especially when the whole way of looking at the question of economics is marked by the premises of materialistic economism. *Laborem Exercens, no 7*

*Although we have included these passages on work, it is our view that trafficking and prostitution are never to be considered as “work,” but rather as violation of human rights and forms of violence against women and children.



ACTS OF GENERAL CHAPTERS

“Faithful to our tradition of education, and committed to the promotion of justice, we will continue to work in mutuality with all women and men to give birth to a new humanity in which the rights of all are respected.” **1986**

“In solidarity with women, we will network at the local, provincial, interprovincial and international levels to address issues related to women... oppression and impoverishment of women because of systems; violence against and abuse of women...”

In solidarity with women, we will develop instruments and processes that will enable us to take public, corporate stances on situations which affect women.” **1991**

“We commit ourselves to use our corporate power effectively in solidarity with people who are impoverished. Called to be prophetic witnesses to the Gospel, we commit ourselves to work to change structures and systems which oppress life wherever it is threatened. As we communally discern our commitment, some may be called to risk job, reputation, security, or life itself.” **1996**

“As women in the New Millenium we carry the fire of Marie-Rose Durocher amid the cares and questions of our times... We dare to dance justice in the face of oppression, reverence in the face of exploitation, beauty in the face of brokenness, tenderness in the face of violence.” **2001**

“In union with all who search for meaning in their lives, we are called to use our abilities to bring about relationships of equality, justice and solidarity.” **2001**

“Faced with situations of injustice, violence and exclusion, we will seek the courage in the Names of Jesus and Mary

- to denounce in a nonviolent way all that is contrary to basic human rights, to the respect and dignity of the human person, and to the harmony of creation...
- to use our influence by taking corporate stands for systemic change.” **2001**

“The 31st General Chapter mandates the Congregational Leadership Team to develop an explicit process to arrive at a corporate stand in the name of the Congregation in a timely and effective manner.” **2001**



REFLECTION PROCESS

PART I

1. **Opening Ritual** — Gather in a circle around one or several pictures or sculptures of women carrying a heavy burden, or bent over...

Reading: Lamentations 5: 1, 11, 13,15

If appropriate, chant a lament. Use scarves if desired

When the chanting has subsided, allow for a few moments of silence. Then proclaim the words of Jesus from John 10:10 *"I came that you may have life and have it in abundance."*

2. **Exploring the concept of LIFE and its opposites.**

Using a pyramid grill might be very enlightening. (See Appendix A.)

The following is taken from workshops on *Evangelium Vitae*. The grid requires the user to clarify his or her concept by means of contrast and likeness. The essence of the approach is that every construct has alternatives which can be exposed, offering choice to the person. The pyramid grid is an instrument taken from personal construct psychology which enables the participant to clarify his or her ideas by realizing that every construct has its opposites and its similarities. Thus, the person realizes the choices which lie before him or her.

Write the word LIFE in box 1. In box 2, write a word or phrase which to you is as different as possible from life. In box 4, write the word or phrase which to you is as similar as possible to life. Next forgetting about the boxes on the top line turn to the second line. In box 3, write the word which is to you as different as possible from what you wrote in box 4. Continue in this way until the whole grid is completed.

3. **Share in small groups. Hear a few concluding comments in large group.**

4. **Contemplate Jesus** who promotes life, particularly that of women. What passages come to mind? Share these in small groups.

5. Conclude this section with a **circle prayer**. Name the passages chosen. Then say: *Jesus Himself is LIFE. "In him was life and the life was the light of all."* John 1:4

PART II

See Appendix B. The text is found at the center of the circle.
Answer the questions.



6. "Male and female God created them. In the image of God, God created them."

What do you understand by this?

Who has influenced your thinking on this?

What effect has this had on your life (Beliefs, attitudes, actions)?

How does this passage challenge human trafficking?

How does it move us to act?

What are your own questions...

7. Share in small groups. Plenary to share new insights **on the human trafficking issues.**

PART III

8. Church teaching has continuously called us to promote life for every human person. Read *Gaudium et Spes* no. 27 and *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2414.

9. What action would we like our governments and law makers to take in order to correct abuses listed in above passages? **In small groups, create a postcard.** On the front, chose a symbol that represents the desired direction. Write the direction on the postcard.

10. Closing Litany; Response: Choose Life —

Directions developed in no. 9 can serve as the first part of the litany.

OR from **Acts of Chapter:**

I have come to cast fire on the earth.

How I wish that fire were blazing. Luke 12:49

As women in the New Millennium

we carry the fire of Marie-Rose Durocher

amid the cares and questions of our times.

We dare to dance

from indifference to love,

from division to communion,

from fragmentation to wholeness.

We dare to dance

justice in the face of oppression,

reverence in the face of exploitation,

beauty in the face of brokenness,

tenderness in the face of violence,

And in the face of doubt and death,

we dance our belief in the living God.

I have come to cast fire on the earth.

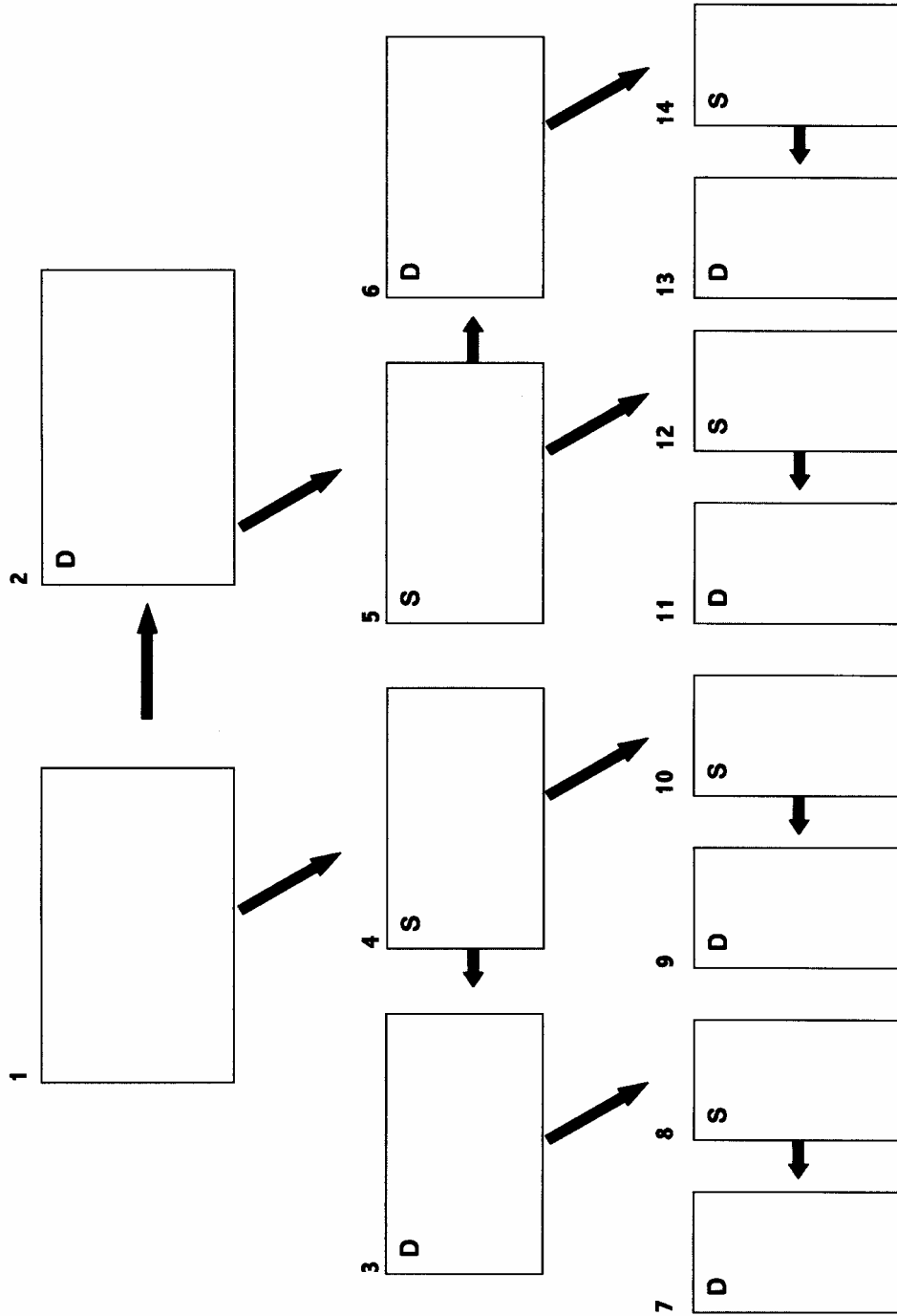
How I wish that fire were blazing. Luke 12:49



APPENDIX A

Pyramid Grid

S = SIMILAR
D = DIFFERENT





APPENDIX B

Write your answer at
The end of each arrow

A question of your own

What do you understand by this?

Who has influenced your thinking on this?

How does this passage move you to action?

How does this passage challenge human trafficking?

What effect has this had on your life (beliefs, attitudes, actions)?

Male and female God created them. In the image of God, God created them.