



# Trafficking in Women and Children

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## PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

### PRAYER FOR AN END TO TRAFFICKING

#### INTRODUCTION:

Reader: *The trade in human persons constitutes a shocking offence against human dignity and a grave violation of fundamental human rights.* (John Paul II, May 2002)

Response: **God of Justice, have mercy on us.**

Reader: *The United Nations estimates that every year up to 4 million women and children are trafficked around the world as forced prostitutes and laborers in a fast-growing \$7 billion industry.*

Response: **God of Compassion, have mercy on us.**

#### THE WORD OF GOD FROM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET JEREMIAH

**31: 8-9, 13, 17**

*Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth...together; a great company, they shall return here. With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back... I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.*

*"A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children"...*

*"There is hope for your future, says your God, and your children shall come back to their own country."*

#### A LITANY

Reader: *In February, five Laotian girls crossed into Thailand with dreams of working as waitresses - only to learn they had been sold as prostitutes at a beach-resort massage parlor.*

Response: **Jesus our Savior, awaken us to this suffering in our world. Give us the grace to work for justice on behalf of women and children. Grant conversion of heart to all who exploit them in any way.**



Reader: *Women are trafficked because of poverty and also because of a culture that puts women in lower status. Not one of us ever dreamed of being in prostitution and especially none of us want our children to end there.*

Response: **Holy Spirit, enlighten us in your ways, that we may help restore women and girls to full personal dignity. Be their liberating strength from structures of domination and subordination.**

Reader: *All over the world there are model programs working to offer women and children freedom from sexual exploitation.*

Response: **Through the intercession of Mary may all women and children in bondage or leading lives that are less than human, know the freedom of God's children.**

(You may want to add your own petitions with the response)

**O liberating God, free all from whatever impedes fullness of life.**

#### **PRAYER FOR AN END TO TRAFFICKING**

*O God, we cannot express what our minds barely comprehend and our hearts feel. When we hear of women and girls 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***

(Suggestion for a hymn to accompany this prayer – “You are Mine” – David Haas)





**“A WOMAN CAUGHT”  
Leader’s Guide**

**RITUALS AND MUSIC**

**Setting**

Set up a table visible to all, on which you will place a bowl of water and three scarves, or scarf-like cloths. Set up chairs for the leader and three women who will remain facing the congregation.

**Rituals**

**1<sup>st</sup> Ritual during Litany of Sorrow.**

One scarf will be picked up by “Voice 1” and worn like a fashion scarf.

The next will be picked up by “Voice 2” and placed over her head like the scarves worn to conceal women’s faces or hair.

The third will be picked up by “Voice 3”, placed over her shoulder then slid off like a garment, crumpled in her hand and held over her face in a gesture of shame and humiliation.

Each of these scarves will be picked up after the woman reads her petition and pours water into the bowl. If water is scarce, use only the scarves. The three women remain seated or standing before the community.

The intent is to symbolize the various ways in which women experience domination, oppression, shame and humiliation, and the devaluing of themselves. The scarves represent this. The water represents feminine energy, women, cleansing and healing. They may be replaced by other more culturally appropriate symbols.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Ritual following the reading from USIG.**

A member of the community approaches the three women, offers each of them a drink of water, then for each, takes the scarf and wraps it around her shoulders in a gesture of warmth and care. If water is not used the second gesture can be used alone.

**Final Ritual**

The three women, in the name of all women victims of sexual exploitation and patriarchy face the community and extend their hands in blessing. The community also extend their hands over the women. All pray the blessing prayer, then the women take the water and sprinkle it over the others as a symbol of our womanhood.



**Suggested Hymns:**

“Shekinah” and “I am Enough” are from *Dancing Sophia’s Circle* by Colleen Fulmer. Permission to use must be requested from: Loretto Spirituality Network, 725 Calhoun Street, Albany, CA 94706(925) 964-1697.

“Come to the Circle” is from *Once Upon a Universe* by Kathy Sherman C.S.J., Sisters of St. Joseph of LeGrange, 1515 W. Ogden Avenue, LeGrange, IL 60526-1721, [www.ministryofthearts.org](http://www.ministryofthearts.org)

“The Lord Hears the Cry of the Poor” and “City of God” are from *Glory and Praise*. Permission can be obtained from: North American Liturgy Resources (NALR), 10802 N. 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85029

In Canada: NALR/Epoch Universal Publications, Ltd., 6315 Shawson Drive, Suite 17, Mississauga, ON L5T 1J2.

Suggested hymns may be replaced by the sung version of the Magnificat, or hymns which honour women or the poor, or a hymn of praise and thanksgiving.

Permission was granted for Quotations from: Good News Bible, Canadian Bible Society, 10 Carnforth R., Toronto, ON M4A 2S4

“The Inclusive Psalms” by Priests for Equality, P.O. Box 5243 W. Hyattsville, MD 20782-0243

*“A Woman Caught” was prepared by Sister Priscilla Solomon, CSJ.*



## “A WOMAN CAUGHT”

### Opening Hymn:

“Shekinah” by Colleen Fulmer; or

“Come to the Circle” by Kathy Sherman; or

“The Lord Hears the Cry of the Poor” (*Glory & Praise #93*)

**Leader:** In the Name and presence of our God we begin our prayer together.

**All:** Compassionate God, you created every man, woman and child in your likeness. For this we praise and thank You. We gather in your name to pray for our sisters and brothers, including all women and children who are caught in a violent and impoverished world that denies their dignity and worth. O God, hear us and have compassion on us all. Amen.

**Litany and ritual of Sorrow:** (Leader’s guide)

### *Voice 1:*

For women and children on every continent whose hopes and dreams are shattered by domination and violence while we remain silent

**All:** God of compassion, have mercy.

### *Voice 2:*

For our sisters whose dignity and bodies are stripped while we clothe ourselves in comfort

**All:** God of compassion, have mercy.

### *Voice 3:*

For your daughters who stand shamed and judged, enslaved and imprisoned in fear, while we walk in security and perhaps even self-righteousness

**All:** God of compassion, have mercy.

**Leader:** Throughout history women have been caught in nets of judgement and violence, especially those cast by poverty, patriarchy and cultural patterns. The Good News is that freedom is possible.

(Two readers alternate – R. 1 and R. 2)

**R. 1:** Mary of Nazareth was caught; found to be with child before she came together with Joseph.

**R. 2:** Joseph, guided by his dream, took her as his bride, protecting her from shame and disgrace.

**R. 1:** A young bride and groom were caught, ‘out of wine.’

**R. 2:** Mary asked Jesus to help, protecting them from shame and humiliation.



- R. 1:** A bleeding, desperate woman, caught in suffering and cultural impurity, reached out in trust and touched the hem of Jesus' garment. Jesus, healing her, said:
- R. 2:** "Courage my daughter. Your faith has made you well." (*Matt. 9:22*)
- R. 1:** A sorrowing woman, caught in grief and shame, washed his feet with her tears and Jesus said:
- R. 2:** "I tell you, then, the great love she has shown proves that her many sins have been forgiven...then Jesus said to the woman: "Your sins are forgiven,...Your faith has saved you; go in peace." (*Lk. 7:47,48,50*)
- R. 1:** A condemned woman stood trembling before Jesus and her judges. "They said to Jesus, 'This woman was caught in the very act of adultery.' Jesus said: "Whichever one of you has committed no sin may throw the first stone at her... Jesus was left alone with the woman standing there."
- R. 2:** "He straightened himself up and said to her, 'Where are they? Is no one left to condemn you?' 'No one, sir,' she answered.
- R. 1:** Well then, Jesus said, 'I do not condemn you either. Go, but do not sin again.' (*John 8:4,7-11.*)
- Response:** **Psalm 13** (the inclusive psalms)
- Left side:** How long, Adonai?  
Will you forget me forever?
- Right side:** How long must I wrestle with my anguish, and wallow in despair all day long?  
How long will my enemies win over me?
- Left side:** Look at me! Answer me, Adonai, my God!
- Right side:** Give light to my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,  
lest my enemies say, "I have prevailed,  
lest my foes rejoice when I fall."
- Left side:** I trust in your love, my heart rejoices in the deliverance you bring.
- Right side:** I'll sing to you, Adonai, for being so good to me.
- (Used with the permission of Priests for Equality)*
- Leader:** Let us listen now to the Word of God revealing God's compassion.



**Reader:** A reading from the Gospel of Luke (*Lk. 4:18-21.*)

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me;  
therefore he has anointed me.  
He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor,  
to proclaim liberty to captives,  
recovery of sight to the blind  
and release to prisoners,  
To announce a year of favour from the Lord.”

**Leader:** Our God is a God who saves!

**All:** Our God is a God who saves!

**Leader:** Many of us are ignorant and unaware of the pain and suffering of our Sisters in the human community.

Let us listen to these words:

**Reader:** “Trafficking in women and children has become a multi-national business. It is more lucrative than trafficking in drugs or arms because it is more difficult to detect. Overall profits in the trade are staggering. For example: Thai traffickers who incarcerated Thai women in a New York brothel made about 1.5 million in a year and six months. The women were made to pay debts ranging from \$30,000 to \$50,000. They were forced to charge \$130 for their services. The madam of the brothel would receive \$30 and the traffickers \$100.

One to two million women and children are trafficked each year.

This is a grave evil caused by the unjust structures we have today in our globalized world. Its principal cause is poverty. The countries from which the women are taken have weak economies, few job opportunities and a low risk of prosecution. Poor women are easily lured into sex slavery with promises of work overseas. Working for the transformation of the unjust structures which are the causes of the gross inequality which disfigures our planet is one of the best ways in which we can fight against the evil of trafficking.”

*(A Collage of excerpts from USIG Special Bulletin #116, 2001, p.p. 35-37)*

**Leader:** Let us now reflect on the readings.

**What draws me?**

**What disturbs or repels me?**

**What challenges me?**

**Leader:** I invite you now, if you wish, to share what touches your heart at this moment.

\* \* \* \* \*



**Leader:** Let us pray in the name of all women who are caught in abuse or imprisoned in slavery, shame and fear.

**Petition Reader:**

For our sisters who are caught in the violence of the sex trade, trapped and trafficked, shamed and shunned, and for ourselves we pray in the name of the One who came as brother and servant

**All:** We ask for compassion.

In the name of the poor from whom we must learn

**All:** We ask for humility.

In the name of the oppressed who have suffered to long

**All:** We ask for a sense of urgency.

In the name of the Spirit who calls us

**All:** We ask for integrity.

**All:** In their names and in our own names, and in need we pray: Grant us the gift of your Presence. Bless us and enable us to serve You in truth.

**Leader:** “Spirit of God, you are the life-giving Spirit who sets us free. You are both promise and uncertainty, poverty and hope, comfort and challenge. Inspire us with courage to proclaim the truth, and strength to work for justice and peace. Waken in us a spirit of joy that we may celebrate all that is good and human, and, especially today, all that is woman.”

**Prayer of Commitment:**

**All:** Compassionate and Loving God, be with us today as we seek to respond to your call, and to commit ourselves to transform our world, bringing to birth your reign on earth.

**Closing Ritual and Blessing:**

(All stand. The three women extend their hands over the group, who do likewise over them. All pray the blessing.)

**All:** “May God, our Liberator, free you from every fear that may prevent you from living fully in dignity and honour. May you be filled with compassionate Love to reach out to our sisters and heal, restore and love as Jesus does. Amen

(After the prayer, the three women then sprinkle the water over the group in blessing and joy.)

**Closing Hymn:**

“I am Enough” by Colleen Fulmer

“City of God” (*Glory and Praise* #187)

(All Scripture quotes, used with permission of the Canadian Bible Society, are from the Good News Bible.)

“A Woman Caught” was prepared by Sister Priscilla Solomon, CSJ.



**PARAPHRASE OF JUDGES 19**

**INTEGRATION STAGE**

Suggestion: You may want to use this prayer with a group prior to voting on the question of taking a Corporate SNJM Stance.

**BASIC STRUCTURE TO BE REWORKED BY THE TEAM, IF ACCEPTED**

1. Empty cradle...

From around it, 4 young women approach the microphone...(suggestion: young girls from our schools)

Examples taken from stories of lived experiences are used during this skit: (*see following pages*)

- I am Rachel, a woman in the sex traffic, forced into prostitution in the windows of cafés of Anvers, in Belgium... I am not in your big Bible ...
- I am Simone Borges Felipe, from Brazil, trafficked, betrayed, treated like a slave in Spain. I am not in your big Bible.
- I am a nameless child from the Indies, trafficked for money, betrayed, exploited at work by a cousin of my own family. I am not in your big Bible .
- I am Gabrielle, 12 years old. I ran away from my family and traffickers helped me at the metro. They fed me, loved me, and after three days raped me and trafficked me to Niagara Falls as a nude dancer. I am not in your big Bible ...

2. An SNJM from the hall stands...

Yes, you are in our big Bible... and you are especially in our hearts...

3. Mimed reading of Judges 19

Secondary characters: father, husband, host, abusers...

Suggestion: mimed reading by students from our schools...

Character of the woman loved and betrayed: woman of colour who possesses the art of storytelling, e.g. Marie-Michelle Dimanche, a Haitian storyteller.

4. The scene closes on the dead woman...

An SNJM stands up and goes to the dead woman's bedside, takes care of her and accompanies her to the cradle around which the 4 young women are seated...

5. The LOVED AND BETRAYED WOMAN tells the same story from her experience as a woman Loved and Betrayed... Taken from bible stories and others, *Vers l'aube*, by Aldina da Silva.

\* Author's note: "The stories in this book represent the journey I have made from my first gut awareness of my finiteness to obtaining the laughter which dwells in me today." Aldina da Silva historian of the ancient Near East and bible scholar, was a qualified teacher in the theology department of the University of Montreal. She died in a battle with cancer on Christmas 2000.

6. Silence... Question of integration... silence... Sharing: After this educational play, do you feel solidarity with these women and children who are trafficked? How?



## THE WOMEN WHO CHOSE TO DIE

The writing. The anguish of childbirth. That urgency to talk about it so as not to go crazy, so that living would not be an interminable night without any star of hope. But how does one talk about lying and betrayal? How does one howl one's revolt against the assassination of a life, of hope, of beauty? How does one express the madness of a look that tries to understand? My pain is great, my sadness is deep, my wound is enormous, and words, my words, so small, so poor... They cannot sound the cry within me, form the anguish that rises from my womb and tightens my throat. Insufficient, my words are insufficient. The day after the torment, reality bursts forth in all its truth: And I? What happened to the happy, innocent woman of before? What became of my songs, my dances, my dreams for the future?



I waited. Early every morning, I climbed the hill near my father's house, and I would look into the distance. I let my eyes roam. They wandered over the fields of Bethlehem covered with wheat watching for the slightest movement. At this early morning hour, the weather was always silent. Not the least trace of wind. I waited. I waited for him to come, for him to hug me and tell me anew, "Yes, I want it." Day after day, one month, two months, then three months. I waited. Without him, the days, the months, were gloomy.

I saw him. He was walking slowly accompanied by his donkey, followed by his servant who was also accompanied by his donkey. I saw him approaching, ever nearer, his stick in hand, his hair falling free on his shoulders, his face turned toward the road. And then he stopped a moment above the tamarisk, the same one that had listened a few years before to what we said, to our joys and dreams, that had witnessed the magical charm of our first meeting. How happy I was to see this man I loved so much! I loved him for life, yes, I was sure of it. And ecstasy filled my body ...

My father came out to meet him. The two kissed, then they sat down to eat the bread and salt of peace. I knew what that meant. Hours and hours of conversation. They talked about the flocks, the people of the village, the incursions of the clans. They also talked about nothing. A neighbour came to sit with them. A traveller too. I served them. Once, twice, then three times. His look told me, "I have come to speak to your heart and to bring you back with me." I answered him with mine, "I will follow you." That is how the day passed; then came night. And, near him, the day seemed like an hour. In the fields, the weather was calm, the sun lit up the ears of grain with its diagonal rays. The discreet, golden rays lengthened between the trees to disappear in the distance. It was already night, a starry, peaceful night.

- Finally, the man remarked that the moon shone silent and bright in the firmament.
- It is already late and time to go to bed. Stay with us tonight, my father answered.

And he stayed one day, two days, three days, then four. He and my father, my father and him. And the neighbour and the traveller. On the fifth day, he rose early to leave. I was already up, ready to follow him to his village, near his people, who from now on would be mine. My



father held him back a moment, then we were on our way - he, I and the servant - by this time, the day was already advanced. Close to each other, sometimes I was behind him, without exchanging the least word, without asking questions. Only our looks spoke. Our donkeys followed us and the servant too with steady, measured steps. With my head high, I stopped here and there happy to gather forest flowers and to smell their perfume. I meditated on life. To live was to burn inside, to create freedom, to experience the dizziness of jumping into the unknown. It was also working a lot; I would have to knead the bread well, bake cakes, draw water from the spring, weave the flax and wool. And he would pasture the flock, the small flock of sheep and goats, and at night and in the early morning, he would draw me to himself, would look into my eyes and say, "Ah my beautiful, gentle one..."

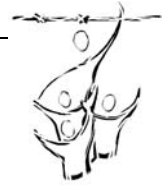
The day was rapidly coming to a close. We stopped at the nearest village square waiting for someone to offer us hospitality in his house for the night. One man, two men, then three passed without stopping, without even noticing us, their faces closed, mute. Suddenly I began to fear this lack of the usual welcome. Was this a damned place? And were the people of this place also damned? Dusk drifted down over us, silent and sombre. The golden rays of the sun gradually disappeared. Night fell noiselessly. I held my breath... In this silence, an old man coming back from the fields appeared before us. He spoke to my man:

- Where are you going and where do you come from?
- I don't know the way... Tomorrow I will see more clearly.
- Then come to my house, you, your wife and your servant. You are welcome.

And we went to his place. He gave us some straw to feed the donkeys, water for us to wash our feet, bread to eat and the salt of peace. We could finally rest our limbs tired from the long walk...After the meal, the old man said these words, "Thank you for today. Tomorrow the sun will rise, the light will shine, there will be food on the earth and protection for everyone." Reassured and lighthearted, thinking and rethinking about these calming words, I covered myself with a coat, closed my eyes, curled up in the corner of the room, and went to sleep for the night. The men, seated beside the fire which they stoked endlessly to keep it burning, told stories and laughed.

Suddenly, the weather changed. The wind and the storm swept the fields and roads of the village. To the noise and fury of the elements, was mixed the cries of the frenzied people. What did all that mean, why this confusion? Fear engulfed me, I curled myself up even more. Violently, they knocked at the door. It was a nightmare. The men of the village yelled to the master of the house:

- Let us see the man, the one who went into your house.
- Why?
- We want to know him, to have a good time with him and have some fun.
- Brothers, don't harm him!
- Bring him out, bring him out...



The impossible became possible. The unthinkable was done. It was the end of an illusion. The old man and my man looked at each other. They nodded. Then they came toward me, took me by the arms and threw me outside crying:

- Do violence to her, abuse her, calm your instincts, but let us rest.

I do not know, I do not know why I did not say anything. My eyes followed him imploring his compassion. He looked at me with a distant look; then he closed the door. I went back into the night, I drowned in the night. My body maltreated, tortured, torn. And while these men went at me fiercely, I saw his last look and the door closing, and I saw again the door closing and his last look. One hour went by, two hours, then three. It was a long time, very long. My body abused, used, worn out. And he was resting inside near the fire, at the time of my greatest need... why? Why did he give me up to the night? Was it fear? Dread of the difficulties of the journey? We had just renewed our promises of love for life, to go back to walking with a new rhythm...

The men went away leaving me in the middle of the road. My body wounded, mutilated. How could I live with the memory of this night? How could I live with the memory of this treachery, this lack of respect? I knew that from now on I would interpret all of our meetings in the light of this horrible night. His look and his closed door would haunt me every moment of my life. To become a night wanderer, to roam around the city in search of the key to the puzzle, to cry out my unhappiness, to wound the white page with my writing so as not to go crazy... in the space of a moment, I saw and saw again what my future road would be : a road without sleep, or a road without a past. I could not, I would not live with the memory, and I could not, would not live without memory. I did not have the strength, the desire to pick up the broken splinters of what I had given and to make a pretence of love. I was afraid, afraid of myself.

Clothes in tatters and feet bare, trembling with a mute cry inside my throat, I dragged myself heavily to the closed door and plunged into the night. In the distance, the light of day was beginning...



In the morning when the sun was already high in the sky, the man got up to start out again, free and well rested. He opened the door. The woman, his wife, lay on the threshold, staring fixedly, her hands stretched out to him in the final supplication of a person that is loved.

He said to her:

- Get up, the journey is long.

But she did not answer him. Then he understood. Taking his wife's body, he put it on the donkey and went home. To flee the responsibility of his miserable acts, he accused the whole country of the crime committed : to the twelve corners of the earth he sent a piece of his wife's body, which he had dismembered limb from limb. And war broke out. And many died. And the man who was a Levite, who studied religion and prayed to God was condemned to live forever with his dead wife: he would see her in his dreams, would listen to her in his silences, would bring her along on his escapes, for he did not know how to dream, or to listen, or to leave... And the man went crazy.