

**THE
WAY OF THE CROSS
OF
HUMAN TRAFFICKING
VICTIMS**

These reflections on *The Way of the Cross of Human Trafficking Victims* are my experience of encounter with them. They have taught me something of the pain of Jesus.

All names are changed but the circumstances and gender are of real people - women, men and underage children.

Introduction

Leader: As we begin our journey along the path Jesus chose, we pray for the strength and courage to walk beside him and for minds and hearts open to the stories of all those people who walk the path of abuse and humiliation every day.

All: We live in a world where thirty pieces of silver can still buy the life of a person; where the market governs the price of coffee and people; where young men, women and children carry the cross of exploitation.

Leader: By the sharing of His steps, may we confirm our solidarity with all trafficked people and be inspired to action.

L: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

R: Because of your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

FIRST STATION

Jesus is condemned to die.



Amina works for a family in Saudi Arabia. She does not know the name of the town or city where she is. In Nairobi she only saw her passport briefly. Because she is illiterate she could only sign it with her inked finger. Then she was taken to the airport, escorted by a madam who had eight other girls, all Kenyan, all bound for Saudi, all condemned to a similar fate. The bottom line is poverty. On arrival, her phone is taken.

Poor Amina, even her best friends back in Kibera could never have imagined what fate awaited her.

Leader: Jesus walked this path.

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SECOND STATION

Jesus accepts his Cross.



Betty is in a state of shock. She was promised a 'clean' job with an expatriate family in Mombasa. The couple has two teenage boys and she is informed that 'they are no bother at all and are very serious about their studies.' But she arrives after dark and is ushered into a highly secure brothel. It trades as a 'gym & massage' but most men pay for sexual services. And she is warned sternly by the madam to 'do whatever our visitors tell you.' There is no way out. So our sister Betty must carry a very heavy Cross indeed.

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THIRD STATION

Jesus falls the first time.



Jacinta comes face-to-face with what is to be her lot in Qatar. With her phone taken, the loneliness and isolation are unimaginable. It is past the end of the first month and she has not received her promised salary of KShs 30,000/- (\$300.00). When she plucks up enough courage to ask about it she is given a strong slap on the face. Then the lady washes her hands.

‘So,’ Jacinta whispered to me, ‘I think she had fear of contamination by African skin.’ She is now told in harsh words that there is no salary for four months - until her airfare is recovered.

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FOURTH STATION

Jesus meets his mother.



Nancy tries to accept her mother Rachel's terminal illness. Rachel is recently back from Oman, where despite increasing weakness, she was denied medical care. 'Kenyan maids' are expendable, but her death brought untold hardship to her three teenage children. There is only an aged grandmother to give parental care now.

Poor women – abused, enslaved, humiliated and impoverished. Like Mary, they also carry a heavy Cross daily.

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FIFTH STATION

Simon of Cyrene is forced to help Jesus to carry his Cross.



Like Simon, many men are forced to carry the Cross of forced labor: Andrew, Joseph, Kamau. They bear the brunt of heavy construction work in the intense heat of Qatar. Others drive for ten hours daily with no break.

It is known that more than one man dies daily of thirst. Slave drivers who have no respect for human life and dignity will not transfer a body back to Kenya. In a matter of hours he is buried, another casualty of human trafficking.

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SIXTH STATION

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.



This gentle woman of God reaches out in the way she knows best - at least to wipe away his sweat and tears. Joshua cannot complain even when the temperatures soar beyond 50° C. He cannot stop and rest. On top of his vehicle is a minute CCTV scanner. Any stop will merit a severe flogging. So he must drive on even if it results in his death.

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SEVENTH STATION

Jesus falls the second time.



Wanjiku knows the dangers she faces, but her newest agent assures her that ‘this time it will all work out better.’ With her diploma this same agent gives her a job offer as ‘an IT specialist with the Samsung Corporation’ in Dubai. Then she adds, ‘I send all my clients there and they all achieve their dreams.’

Next morning she finds herself as a house help in Saudi Arabia. The lady of the house rains down insults and racist remarks on her.

Dear Jesus, our poor Wanjiku is down, down, very down. Please help her to straighten up and move on again.

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EIGHTH STATION

Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem.



What comfort can we bring? I sit in a tin hut with Mwende in Majengo slum. She is a recent victim of human trafficking. Yes, there were the multiple rapes in a brothel in Malindi for days and nights on end, but since she returned to her slum village she has faced the worst stigma and rejection from her very own family. They simply do not want to know her.

Mwende would like to end it all and quickly! ‘But what would happen to my two-year-old twin boys? They are fatherless. Can I now leave them motherless too?’

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NINTH STATION

Jesus falls the third time.



‘My husband just walked out of our marriage. It was a heavy blow to take.’ I could see she was profoundly depressed.

‘But life goes on,’ she said. ‘Imagine, just then my best friend suggested she could get me a great job opportunity in Mombasa. It sounded good. I left my three children with my mother. I knew I would be able to send her money home to feed them.’

Amid copious tears she told me, ‘I was plunged into a highly secure brothel. We were eleven women and each of us serviced more than ten men daily. There seemed to be no escape route at all. I became dead inside.’

Does Jesus feel dead already, too? Who can lift him up again? In Amina’s case the way to Golgatha is very far indeed.

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TENTH STATION

Jesus is stripped of his garments.



How many times is too often to be stripped? Florence is stripped of all her dignity. At three years of age she was defiled by her uncle. Her mother could not understand why she ran away any time he came to their rented room in the slum. At twelve she was raped by her father.

Her world was a very insecure place. Those memories intruded on her school work and she has frightening nightmares. Her mind often wanders back to those painful encounters when her innocence was destroyed.

When she reached class seven her mother pulled her out of school saying, 'Flo, I know you'll not perform well in the exam next year. Better you take up a job in Saudi now. I hear there are many great jobs there.' At thirteen years of age she had no choice and having been brought to a brothel in a foreign land the multiple raping became her daily ordeal - being stripped over and over again.

So I ask Jesus, 'How can any of us find dignity and self-worth when one's very flesh is stripped day after day and there is no end in sight?'

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ELEVENTH STATION

Jesus is nailed to the Cross.



Being nailed takes many shapes and modes of 'being under the control' of another. Julie is stripped of her freedom and effectively becomes the property of others. She is in a foreign land but who cares? With no salary, knowledge of Arabic, phone or passport she is merely a utility in a house of strangers.

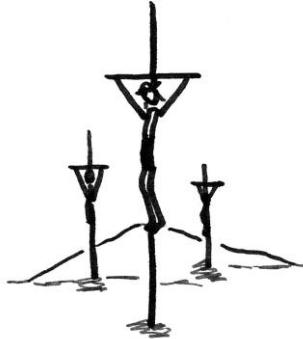
Jesus himself was nailed 'outside the walls' and just like him, Julie is nailed and chained by strangers. It's been six months of grinding hard labor and she has not seen or felt the sun's warmth. Julie is dying a slow and agonizing death.

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TWELFTH STATION

Jesus dies on the Cross.



Rahab dies slowly, too. Each twenty hours of every day is unrelenting labor. Winfred is doused with acid for every small mistake. She escaped by climbing over a ten- foot wall. I've witnessed the acid burns on every inch of her flesh.

'From the sole of the foot to the head there is no sound spot' (Is 1:6).

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THIRTEENTH STATION

Jesus is taken down from the Cross.



Dear Jesus, let me hold you lightly and very gently. He is wounded all over; so are Wanjiku, Lujaas, Anyango, Rotich and hundreds of others.

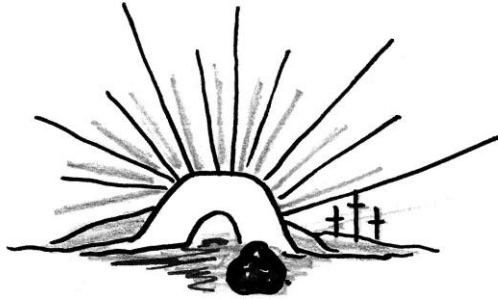
Mwangi tries to fight back the tears. This fine-featured young man found himself trafficked to a gay club in Dubai. Over and over again he shakes his head in his hands, saying: 'It was hell, a living hell all the time.' He has yet to learn that he is HIV positive.

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FOURTEENTH STATION

Jesus is placed in a tomb.



We wrapped Jesus' body in a shroud and placed Him in a borrowed tomb. We wrap trafficking victims in a shroud of compassion, kindness, love and care. Someday they will be resurrected and restored. We will journey with them till all the pain is driven out and each one experiences the joy and dance of Easter Morn.

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