



WAY OF THE CROSS

Liliana's Story: A Reflection on the Trafficking of Human Persons

“The trade in human persons constitutes a shocking offence against human dignity and a grave violation of fundamental human rights.”

John Paul II

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 30 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.

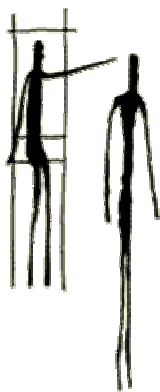
Leader/ By the sharing of His steps, may we confirm our solidarity with all trafficked people and be inspired to action.

V. We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

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

FIRST STATION

Jesus is condemned to death



The queue gets longer. She must get the job, she just must. Liliansa is ninth in line – but there are only two jobs. There are at least a dozen other women behind her. Some she recognises from other queues, other days.

The women in front begin to disperse – news travels quickly down the line. Vacancies have been filled. No more machinists required today.

Liliansa returns to her father's house, where the cupboards are empty, the floor is bare and the bitter wind whistles through the cracks in the windows.

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SECOND STATION

Jesus is made to carry his cross

Liliansa has managed to get only four days work in the last year. At 17 she doesn't have much experience of work, and without work she can gain no experience. There is little employment left where Liliansa lives.

The factory her father worked in closed over 4 years ago.

He doesn't work now. Her uncles don't work now. Her neighbours don't work now.

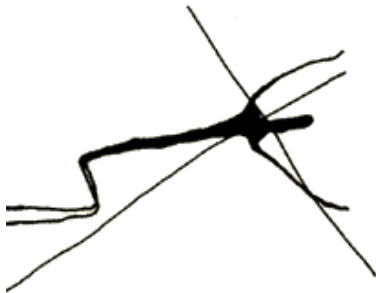
Liliansa searches for the life her father has given up on.



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THIRD STATION
Jesus falls the first time

A rusty old oil drum filled with the vitality of fire punctures the gloom. Flames warm the faces, booze warms the bones. Liliana stands among the hunched shoulders, staring at the blaze. Gaunt faces... dreamless... helpless... hopeless.



She catches a glimpse of herself in the window of a police car, as it slowly surveys the gathering. Not wishing to be too closely scrutinised, the small crowd disperses.

Liliana leaves on the arm of an unknown face – at least she won't have to go home tonight.

Leader/
All/

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FOURTH STATION
Jesus meets his mother



Her mother said she would come back for Liliana and the two other children when she was settled. All three children have long since stopped waiting, wishing or asking why.

As her youth is crushed under the burden of this harsh life, Liliana begins to understand.

It was just too difficult, too hard.

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FIFTH STATION

Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry his cross

The unknown face becomes known. Victor. He seems kind enough. He has a car. He's new in town. Would Liliana like to help him find his way around?

He's lonely, he says...

...so is she.



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SIXTH STATION

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

It might have been easier if her father had been angry, or excited for her maybe, but his voice was hollow, emptied of emotion. If she wanted to leave, she should leave.

Liliana put her arms around her father's neck – held her face close to his. She wasn't abandoning her family, she was reaching for a lifeline.

A new life with Victor would mean she could send money home, help her father with the younger ones. The old life held nothing more than echoes. Echoes of love.. family.. fun.. hope.. opportunities.



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SEVENTH STATION
Jesus falls the second time

Victor waits in the taxi – they are flying to their new lives. Imagine. Liliana kisses her father and brothers goodbye. She will see them soon – they must come and visit. She will send news. Excitement wells through the tears of parting. A whole fresh future awaits her. As she climbs into the taxi, Victor's uneasiness is lost to her dreams.



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EIGHTH STATION
The women of Jerusalem weep over Jesus

As the plane lands, Victor explains that his brother is meeting them. There is business to be attended to, things he needs to sort out. His brother will take her to some accommodation. Victor will catch up with her later.



Liliana doesn't like Victor's brother. He has cold eyes. Not dead, like her fathers', but icy cold. A tear begins, but she doesn't let it fall.

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NINTH STATION
Jesus falls the third time

Is there a place like this in every city? Drab towers, graffiti, the sound of voices raised in frustrated anger carried away on wind howling through man-made caverns. This is not much different to the landscape Liliana thought she'd left behind.



The lift shudders to a halt. Victor's brother makes a call from his mobile in a language Liliana doesn't understand. Apparently they must wait a while. Finally the door opens. Two men brush by, one offers a smile – but it's not a nice smile.

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TENTH STATION
Jesus is stripped of his garments

Victor's brother takes her bag and removes her passport and the photos of her young brothers. She protests. He does not speak. There is an older woman in the doorway now. Who is she? Liliana is bewildered – what is going on? Where is Victor?

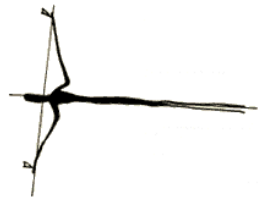


The woman takes her by the wrist and leads her in to the small flat and sits her down at a small formica table in the stark kitchen. The door closes. The woman is talking to Victor's brother in the hallway. The bare light-bulb reminds her of home. Confusion seeps into every corner of Liliana's mind. This time the tears fall.

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ELEVENTH STATION
Jesus is nailed to the cross

The woman returns. The words reach Liliانا's ears.



She

Victor is a business man. He has paid her fare to this new life.

must now repay the favour. They have photos of her family, she wouldn't want anything to happen to them, would she? She

has to pay. Come on now, she's not totally innocent.

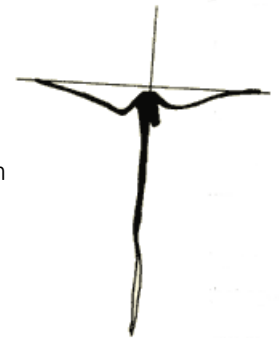
This wouldn't be the first time and she has nothing else but her body to offer. Victor will provide 'customers', food and shelter until the debt is paid off.

She will join another girl already living and working in the flat. Liliانا tries to get up from the chair. The woman's fist strikes her cheek. Blood mingles with tears.

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TWELFTH STATION
Jesus is raised upon the cross and dies

The brutality of her first week becomes the mundane monotony of months. Liliانا no longer looks in the mirror – the scars on her body are obvious – what she cannot bear is to look into her own eyes. The windows of the soul they call them. Liliانا can't find her soul – her own identity – herself. She inhabits a hazy world of syringes, closed curtains, rough hands... lost to a numbness haunted only by fear and isolation.



Her eyes are dead and inside she is dying.

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THIRTEENTH STATION

Jesus is taken down from the cross
and placed in the arms of his mother

Liliana stumbles into the room she shares. A girl offers the comfort of a cold cloth to Liliana's swollen face and puts an arm around her distorted, fragile figure.

Liliana's last customer has gone but the pain of his punches has not. He has visited before...has been aggressive before... has hurt her before. He does not appreciate her protests. He pays good money.



The bruising is extensive. Her whole body is covered. It can take no more. It gives up.

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FOURTEENTH STATION

Jesus is laid in the sepulchre

Liliana's broken body is taken from the empty flat covered in a clean white sheet. The neighbours don't know what was going on next door, at least that's what they tell the police. The police can find no identification – no papers, no passport... nothing to tell them who she was or where she came from.



A young man steps forward from the gathered crowd. He's had suspicions, he lives upstairs. His wife works for the local doctor, she's had suspicions. They didn't know who to tell... they didn't know it would end like this.

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All/

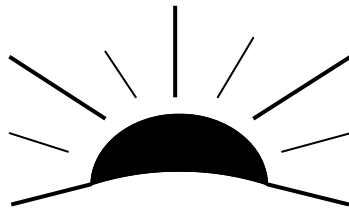
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FIFTEENTH STATION
Jesus rises from the dead



Although no-one knew her name, Liliana's story made the front pages.

Another flat, another estate, another day. A young woman, wrapped in a blanket, is rescued.



Leader/ Inspire us, Lord, to work for a future where everyone will feel the power of redemption and resurrection so that all people may walk in the light of new life and renewed hope.

All/ Amen. Amen.

The graphics that accompany Stations 1-14 are used with kind permission of the artist Mark Sullivan, they originally appeared in the booklet "Stations of the Cross: I Am There," They can also be found on the website www.americancatholic.org

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