

**PRAY** Jesus,  
you show us that our angers  
often point out wrongs that  
must be set right. Give us the  
courage to speak out and act  
as you did. Amen.

3rd Sunday of Lent



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# SPiRIT

by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn

**S**rey Rath is a self-confident Cambodian teenager whose black hair tumbles over a round, light brown face. She is in a crowded street market, standing beside a pushcart and telling her story calmly, with detachment.

When Rath was fifteen, her family ran out of money, so she decided to go work as a dishwasher in Thailand for two months to help pay the bills. Her parents worried about her safety, but they were reassured when Rath arranged to travel with four friends who had been promised jobs in the same Thai restaurant. The job agent took the girls deep into Thailand and then handed them to gangsters who took them to Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia. Thugs sequestered Rath and the other girls inside a

karaoke lounge that operated as a brothel. One gangster known as “the boss” explained that he had paid money for them and that they would now be obliged to pay him.

Rath was shattered when what was happening dawned on her. The boss locked her up with a customer, who tried to force her to have sex with him. She fought back, enraging the customer. “So the boss got angry and hit me in the face, first with one hand and then with the other,” she remembers, telling her story with simple resignation. “The mark stayed on my face for two weeks.” Then the boss and the other gangsters raped her and beat her with their fists.

**T**he girls were forced to work in the brothel seven days a week, fifteen hours a day. They were kept naked to make it more difficult for them to run away or to keep tips or other money. The girls were never allowed out on the street or paid a penny for their work.

“They just gave us food to eat, but they didn’t give us much because customers didn’t like fat girls,” Rath says. The girls were bused, under guard, back and forth between the brothel and a tenth-floor apartment. The door of the apartment was locked from the outside. One night, some of the girls went out onto their balcony and pried loose a long, five-inch wide board from a rack used for drying clothes. They balanced it between their balcony and one on the next building, twelve feet away. The

## Half the Sky



**100,000—300,000:** The number of children sold for sex in the U.S. each year

Around the country, law enforcement agencies are changing the way they deal with children trafficked as prostitutes. Instead of defining them as criminals and charging them with prostitution, police and courts treat them as victims and refer them to agencies that can help them.

**12-14:** The average age at which girls first become victims of prostitution

**75 percent:** The proportion of girls engaged in prostitution who are working for a pimp

**11-13:** The average age at which boys and transgendered youth become victims of prostitution

**Sources:** Justice Department, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Demi & Ashton Foundation

board wobbled badly, but Rath was desperate, so she sat astride the board and inched across.

“I was scared,” she says. “But I was even more scared to stay. We thought that even if we died, it would be better than staying behind. If we stayed, we would die as well.”

Once on the far balcony, the girls pounded on the window and woke up the surprised tenant who let them out the front door. They found a police station and stepped inside. The police first tried to shoo them away, then arrested the girls for illegal immigration. Rath served a year in prison and then she was supposed to be allowed to go back to her own country. She thought a Malaysian policeman was escorting her home when he drove her to the Thai border—but then he sold her to a trafficker, who peddled her to a Thai brothel.

**R**ath's saga offers a glimpse of the brutality inflicted routinely on women and girls in much of the world, a problem that is slowly gaining recognition as one of the paramount human rights problems of this century.

Amartya Sen, the Nobel Prize winning economist, has developed a measurement of gender inequality that is a striking reminder of the stakes involved. “More than 100 million women are missing,” Sen wrote in a classic essay in 1990, spurring a new

**In the United States, many children who end up in prostitution have run away from sexual abuse at home or been “thrown away” by their families. Sex traffickers prey on their vulnerability. “Romeo” pimps lure girls in with declarations of love and a safe place to live. The children are most often trafficked over the internet, making the crime harder to track down and prosecute.**

field of research. Sen noted that in normal circumstances women live longer than men, and so there are more females than males in much of the world. Even poor regions like most of Latin America and much of Africa have more females than males. Yet in places where girls have a deeply unequal status, they vanish.

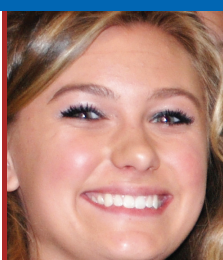
Discrimination in wealthy countries is often a matter of unequal pay or underfunded sports teams or unwanted touching from a boss. In contrast, in much of the world discrimination is lethal. In India, for

example, mothers are less likely to take their daughters to be vaccinated than their sons—that alone counts for one fifth of India's missing females—while studies have found that, on average, girls are brought to the hospital only when they are sicker than boys taken to the hospital. All told, girls in India from one to five years of age are 50 percent more likely to die than boys the same age. The best estimate is that a little Indian girl dies from discrimination every four minutes.

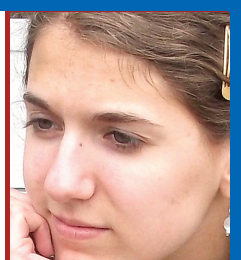
The global statistics on the abuse of girls are numbing. It appears that more girls have been killed in the last fifty years, precisely because they were girls, than men were killed in all the battles of the twentieth century. More girls are killed in this routine “gendercide” in any one decade than people were slaughtered in all the genocides of the twentieth century.

In the nineteenth century the central moral challenge was slavery. In the twentieth century, it was the battle against totalitarianism. We believe that in this century the biggest moral challenge will be the struggle for gender equality around the world.

**T**he owners of the Thai brothel to which Rath was sold did not beat her and did not constantly guard her. Two months later, she was able to escape and make her way back to Cambodia.



Learn about the unique potential of 600 million adolescent girls to end poverty for themselves and the world at [girleffect.org](http://girleffect.org).



# SUNDAY GOSPEL

3rd Sunday of Lent

## Temple sellers anger Jesus.

**NARRATOR 1:** The Jewish Passover was near. Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the Temple he found people selling oxen, sheep, and doves, and money changers sitting at tables.

**NARRATOR 2:** Jesus made a whip of cords and drove them all out of the Temple—sheep, oxen, moneychangers. He poured out their money and overturned their tables. He spoke to those selling doves.

**JESUS:** Take these doves out of here. Stop making my Father's house a marketplace.

**DISCIPLE:** This is like the scripture says, "Zeal for your house consumes me."

**OFFICIAL 1:** What sign can you show us authorizing you to do these things?

**JESUS:** Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.

**OFFICIAL 2:** For 46 years this Temple has been being built, and you are going to raise it up in three days?

**NARRATOR 1:** He was talking about the temple of his body. When he had been raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this to

them, and they came to understand the scripture and the words Jesus had said.

**NARRATOR 2:** While Jesus was in Jerusalem during the Passover festival, many came to believe in his name, for they saw the signs he did.

**NARRATOR 1:** For his part Jesus would not entrust himself to them because he knew them all.

**NARRATOR 2:** Jesus needed no one to give testimony about human nature. He knew what was in the human heart.

John 2.13-25

Upon her return, Rath met a social worker who put her in touch with an aid group that helps girls who have been trafficked start new lives. The group used \$400 in funds to buy a small cart and a starter selection of goods so that Rath could become a street peddler. Rath outfitted her cart with shirts and hats, costume jewelry, pens and small toys. Now her good looks and outgoing personality began to work in her favor, turning her into an effective saleswoman. She saved and invested in new merchandise, her business thrived, and she was able to support her parents and two younger sisters. She married and had a son, and began saving for his education.

Rath's eventual triumph is a reminder that if girls get a chance, in the form of an

## QUESTIONS

- 1 What angers you about girls being sold and brutally treated?
- 2 Why do girls vanish?
- 3 Why are girls not the problem but the solution?
- 4 What do you know about human trafficking in the U.S.?
- 5 Why does Jesus cleanse the temple? Who challenges him?
- 6 What temple will be raised up in three days?
- 7 Where is the temple of God today?

education or a microloan, they can be more than baubles or slaves; many of them can run businesses. Many of these stories are wrenching, but keep in mind this central truth: Women aren't the problem but the solution.

## OUR CATHOLIC FAITH

### God's covenant with Israel

**O**n the 3rd Sunday of Lent, the Church reads about Israel's covenant with God at Mount Sinai. A covenant is an agreement. It has terms that each party agrees to keep. In the covenant at Mt. Sinai God promises to be Israel's God and the people promise to be God's people by keeping the ten commandments.

This covenant establishes a relationship between the former slaves and the God whose name, Yahweh, means *I Am Who Causes to Be*. Yahweh, the Creator God who opened a dry path to freedom through the sea, promises to be Israel's liberating, loving God. The people agree to worship Yahweh alone, not to take God's name in vain, and to keep the Sabbath holy. These actions express their relationship with God. They invite us to return God's love with our love for God.

The people also promise to keep seven other commandments that express respect for each other. They promise to honor parents and elders. They promise not to kill, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness (which means lie), or covet their neighbors' property or wives.



Learn more about human trafficking at [polarisproject.org](http://polarisproject.org), [sharedhope.org](http://sharedhope.org), [caase.org](http://caase.org), [missingkids.com](http://missingkids.com).



## What do the ten commandments ask of us?

**K**eeping these ten commandments makes Israel a people who have bonds with one another and with their God. Israel's history before the covenant is a history of families and tribes. Its history after the covenant is the story of a people who live and worship by this law.

When Jesus teaches his new law, he insists that he comes not to abolish the law of Moses but to fulfill it. He urges people to deal with their anger as well as not to kill. He cautions married people not to look at other men or women, let alone commit adultery. He teaches turning the other cheek, going the extra mile, and loving our enemies.

Today, more than 3,200 years after the covenant at Mt. Sinai, Jews and Christians still keep its terms. Christians also keep the covenant Jesus makes in his own lifeblood and which we celebrate in every Eucharist.

Christians know God through Jesus in whom God becomes one of us and shows us in his humanity what God is like. Christians know God through God's raising Jesus from the dead and through the Holy Spirit in whom we live, move, and have our being.

### FAITH in ACTION

Today we can kill with nuclear weapons, steal identities, and clone animals.

- What new commandments do people need today, or what new emphases do the old commandments need?
- Which commandments, if any, are no longer necessary?
- Which work most effectively—the positive or negative commandments?



The commandments are summed up in this sentence: **'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'** Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

*Catechism of the Catholic Church #2055*  
(Romans 13.9-10)

## TEN COMMANDMENTS

- I** I am the Lord, your God, you shall not have other gods before me. What gods or idols do we worship today that this commandment should prohibit?
- II** You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. What does this commandment forbid? OMG? What if people take no responsibility when they swear by God's name or make vows?
- III** Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day. Is Sunday more than the day before school starts, the day for homework? How should we honor it? In this 24/7 world when do we rest? When do we work? When do we appreciate and worship?
- IV** Honor your father and mother. What does honoring parents require? How do people in our society honor elders and their wisdom? What authority do we honor?
- V** You shall not kill. This commandment addresses all life issues—abortion, euthanasia, murder, just war, self-defense, capital punishment.
- VI** You shall not commit adultery. Is this commandment too narrow? What about being unfaithful in other relationships? What about sexual intercourse before marriage?
- VII** You shall not steal. Can stealing be more than taking what doesn't belong to one? Is stealing ever okay? What about illegally downloading movies or music? Is greed stealing? What about paying fair wages?
- VIII** You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. What about texting rumors or plagiarism? What about masking who one really is and being someone else?
- IX** You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. Should wife be changed to spouse?
- X** You shall not covet your neighbor's goods. How much is enough? How do we not want more? What do we deserve?