



**In the Footsteps of the Crucified:
Torture is Never Justified**

Facilitator Packet

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Sample Materials

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In the Footsteps of the Crucified: Torture is Never Justified

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We are grateful for the permission to include photographs throughout this module by Linda Panetta. Linda is a photojournalist whose work focuses on cultural, environmental and human rights, with a particular emphasis on conflict. Linda is the founder of *Optical Realities Photography* and coordinator of the Jean Donovan Community Peace Center, which hosts the Mariposa Outreach Project, a mentoring program which supports survivors of torture and their families. She can be contacted at linda@OpticalRealities.org

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A NOTE FROM JUSTFAITH MINISTRIES

“Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you!’ Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side.’”
John 20:26-27

Thank you for your willingness to undertake this difficult journey that investigates the brutality of torture and its implications for people of faith. As *Followers of the Way of the Cross*, we walk in the footsteps of the tortured founder of our faith.

Despite the fact that our Christian teachings are unequivocal in denouncing this desecration of God’s children, the practice of torture abounds in our all too often violent world. The silence of so many Christian people concerning the practice of torture by governments and insurgent groups around the world implicates us all.

This module seeks to uncover the practice and effects of the cruel abuse of our brothers and sisters. It exposes participants to the realities and effects of torture, and in so doing, informs and challenges each person to raise his/her voice against this inhumanity and to reach out in support of its many victims.

Please note that this module is not for the faint-hearted! The subject matter is difficult and will require reverence, patience and perseverance on the part of everyone. Just as Jesus invited Thomas to reach in and physically touch the wounds of torture, the Gospel message compels us to open our eyes and let ourselves be touched by the wounded that we might cry out with them for the healing that brings an end to this abhorrent practice.

The Staff at JustFaith Ministries



In the Footsteps of the Crucified: Torture is Never Justified

A MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHOR

In the Footsteps of the Crucified: Torture is Never Justified aims to address a critical issue of our day – torture – to encourage Christians and people of good will to offer a critical response based on human dignity and the teachings of our Judeo-Christian traditions. It is important that people of faith know that torture is a crime against humanity – according to International Human Rights Conventions – and that it is held to be intrinsically evil by the social teachings of the Catholic Church. Under no circumstances is it ever justified. The aim of this module is not only to focus on the reality of torture, but also to emphasize inspiring examples of faithful and prophetic witness against torture by survivors and human rights groups as well as other Christians and concerned citizens.

There is an important debate occurring in our society today, and it concerns not only what was done by officials of our country to justify and practice torture, but even more, who we are as a people. Can we move forward without looking back? That is a crucial question that we must answer. More than sixty years ago, in his closing arguments at the Nuremberg Trials, Chief Justice Robert Jackson said: “We must never forget that the record on which we judge these defendants today is the record on which history will judge us tomorrow. To pass these defendants a poisoned chalice is to put it to our lips as well. We must summon such detachment and intellectual integrity to our task that this trial will commend itself to posterity as fulfilling humanity’s aspirations to do justice.”

Catholic Christians are fortunate in having a firm ground on which to stand. As the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church (No. 153)* tells us: “The roots of human rights are to be found in the dignity that belongs to each human being.” Human dignity reached its fullest expression in Jesus, who, despite being tortured in the cruelest manner and put to death, offered his life for our sake, so that we might live in the fullness of new life. That new life calls us to hope in times of fear and anxiety, to love our enemies and defend the innocent, to act in solidarity with the vulnerable and excluded, and to heal the wounds that torture and war have inflicted. To do so, we must always use just means and never, under any circumstances, justify or practice torture.

The U.S. Catholic bishops, in their 2007 statement *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, expressed this conviction very clearly: “Direct assaults on innocent human life and violations of human dignity, such as genocide, torture, racism, and the targeting of noncombatants in acts of terror or war, can never be justified.”

The Content

This eight session module, *In the Footsteps of the Crucified*, follows closely a document developed in mid-2008, *Torture is a Moral Issue: A Catholic Study Guide*. This document was a collaboration between the Catholic members of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture and the Office of International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

The module dedicates two sessions to each of the four principle concerns of the *Torture is a Moral Issue* study guide:

- Building a Culture of Life as an antidote to a culture in which human dignity often goes unrecognized is a key element of Part 1 (two sessions).
- Bringing the Virtue of Hope back into a society pervaded by fear and anxiety is a key element of Part 2 (two sessions).
- Striving to Become a Genuine People of the Beatitudes is a key element of Part 3 (two sessions).
- Participating in inter-religious dialogue, fasting for justice and peace, praying for enemies, Overcoming Evil with Goodness, and advocating for the abolition of torture are key elements of Part 4 (two sessions).

Christians enter into public discussion of the great issues our society faces because they hope to contribute—in the light of faith—to resolving these issues. In preparing this module, it was recognized clearly that the times in which we live and the issues we face are tough. Nonetheless, we were led to ask the following question: “In these challenging times, is it still possible—even in the face of serious threats—for a people and a nation to defend and conduct themselves in ways that consistently demonstrate respect for human dignity and that put the Gospel into practice?”

Two basic convictions give shape to this module:

- Torture is a moral issue, one that deserves to be understood and addressed by all Christians.
- An atmosphere of fear and desperation within society opens the door to the torture and abuse of prisoners, but there is much Christians can do to help create a new atmosphere within society – an atmosphere in which respect for human dignity rules the day.

The Structure

The curriculum is challenging, both in content and in what it asks of participants. It is hoped, however, that at the end of the eight weeks participants will be inspired by examples of moral courage and their own understanding of Catholic social teaching and of the Gospel to respond to this difficult and troubling issue of our times.

Each session lasts approximately two and a half hours and includes a prayer, plenary and small group discussions on the week’s themes and assigned readings, and voluntary sharing of journal reflections. Sessions also include viewing and discussing a film.

Each member in the group will receive a Participant Packet with the assigned readings. There will be three to four short readings each week and these readings will provide a foundation for the following week's session. Participants also will be asked to keep a journal in which they will reflect on the readings and write down questions that they might be grappling with each week. These reflections and questions will help animate the group discussions as well as provide a rich journaling experience for each participant.

The Method

The module is designed for small groups limited in size to ten participants. Facilitators are encouraged to read through all eight sessions and the supplemental readings before the group convenes for the first session. Since facilitators are also participants they will also be using the Participant Packet.

The primary job of the facilitator is to guide the sessions, encourage participation, invite frequent evaluation of the group's experience, and make adjustments to the module if needed.

Participants will be asked to focus on the subject of torture in light of Catholic social teaching and particular Christian virtues – human dignity, hope, love of enemy, and solidarity – and to reflect on these and other themes in small groups. Each session also includes inspiring examples of Christian responses to torture by survivors and human rights advocates alike. These examples are meant to engage participants in thinking critically about our own history and to move people toward action.

I want to acknowledge the contributions of Virginia Farris and Walter Grazier from the USCCB and Rich Killmer from The National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT). It is also my hope that this module will contribute to the fine work that organizations like JustFaith Ministries, NRCAT, Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (TASSC), Witness Against Torture, and the School of the Americas Watch are doing to educate a Christian audience to the evil that torture represents and that the faith-based resources and inspiring examples move participants to respond in faithful and prophetic ways to end torture.

Scott Wright, November 2009

Design of the Module - Excerpts

Thank you for taking on the task of facilitating the discussions and study of this critical, powerful, distressing and painful subject. *In the Footsteps of the Crucified: Torture is Never Justified* centers on readings, videos/DVDs and discussions with both the whole group and small groups. Discussions should be facilitated in a way that keeps the group focused on the topic of each session while also acknowledging the pain and deep sadness that might be evoked from the resource materials.

There are suggested discussion questions provided throughout the module, most of them designed to get participants to deeply and seriously consider the moral implications of torture in our world. As a facilitator, you should feel free to share your own feelings and, at the same time, know that you **do not need to know the answer to a question in order to ask it**. The primary goal is to have an open dialogue in order to come to new or deeper understanding of the issue.

Facilitators might even want to make a covenant of understanding with the group early in the first session. A statement or covenant that you could adapt or copy and use outright is provided in Session One and is also in the Participant Packet.

Timing of sessions

Each of the eight, 2 ½ hour sessions is based on six blocks of time. These are:

	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Minutes*</i>
Block 1	Introduction Goal of Session Opening Prayer/Reflection	15
Block 2	Weekly theme discussion Plenary Small group	30
Block 3	Discussion of <i>The Blindfold's Eyes</i> Plenary Small Group	30
Break		10
Block 4	Video	40
Block 5	Video Discussion	15
Block 6	Preparing for next session Closing Prayer and Meditation	10
	Total Time	150 minutes

**There are some variations in certain sessions based on content*



Prayer

Prayer is an integral part of all JustFaith Ministries programs. Each session begins and ends with a prayer experience, and all prayers are clearly laid out in this document.

The Opening Prayer follows a simple format involving 3 components: scripture, symbol and reflection. The Closing Prayer will revisit the symbols, invite everyone into a simple ritual, and offer an invitation for ongoing reflection.

Note: Facilitators may choose to ask for volunteers to do the opening and closing prayers. This option is included in the “Preparing for the Next Session” section, but you are free to organize it differently. Some of the reflections and readings used in these opening and closing prayers are also included in the Participant Packets for their ongoing journaling and reflection.

Some participants may be intimidated or uncomfortable with public prayer. Inviting participants into a welcoming space that fosters an attitude of reverence helps people to feel at ease and comfortable and can do much to deepen the bonds of community and enhance dialogue. Invite all in the group to put aside other things and enter prayer as a place where they become one community – unhurried, fully present and attentive.

Opening prayer should always be one of the first activities for each gathering. Avoid the temptation to make long announcements or preempt prayer with a lot of directions about the exercises or discussions that lie ahead. Facilitators should set up the space before the group arrives so they are ready to welcome participants as they arrive.

The closing prayer should be the last activity of each session. Avoid making additional announcements, continuing with business, or group discussion after this closing rite. The purpose of the culminating prayer is to re-gather and re-focus the group. This prayer provides the opportunity to bring the session to a prayerful completion, especially in situations where discussion was heated or where activities or questions were not fully addressed. Facilitators should be attentive to the ending time and avoid overlooking or short-changing this time of prayerful togetherness.

The prayer experiences, designed to compliment this difficult journey, include rituals, symbols, readings, reflection questions and silence. Please be attentive to the direction and the flow of prayer. Pausing in silence is an indication of reverence before the tragic realities the group will reflect upon.

The prayers will bring the group to the foot of the cross, to behold the world through the eyes of the tortured. You will be directed to darken the room and use candlelight or other indirect lighting. Given the physical nature of torture, you are encouraged to follow these instructions and to use the rituals and symbolic objects suggested.

The prayer illustrates the following eight stations of the torture of Jesus. Each station correlates with the experiences of torture victims today.

Ongoing Support

The JustFaith Ministries office is available to assist you throughout this program. While we have attempted to make the materials as user-friendly as possible, you may want some additional information or have a group process concern. Please do not hesitate to contact either David Horvath (david@justfaith.org) or Mary Wright (mary@justfaith.org) or call the JustFaith Ministries office at 502-429-0865. Also, additional support and supporting information are available from the other organizations involved in the creation of this module:

National Religious Campaign Against Torture
110 Maryland Avenue NE, Suite 502
Washington, DC 20002
Phone: 202-547-1920
www.nrcat.org

Torture Abolition and Survivors
Support Coalition International (TASSC)
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Washington, DC 20017
Phone: 202-529-2991
www.tassc.org



In the Footsteps of the Crucified

OUTLINE SAMPLE
SESSION ONE: Acknowledging our Guilt:
The Ghosts of Abu Ghraib



Schedule for this Session

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Minutes</i>
Introduction	15
Opening Prayer/Reflection	
Group Introductions	25
Module goals, group and facilitator guidelines	10
Weekly theme discussion	
Plenary	10
Small group	10
Discussions of book	5
Break	10
Video	40
Video discussion	15
Preparing for the next session	5
Closing Prayer	5
Total Time	150 minutes

Note to Facilitators for Sessions One and Two

Session One Outline and Notes

Welcome and Opening Prayer (15 minutes)

Introductions of Participants (25 minutes)

Goals, Group Guidelines and Role of Facilitator (10 minutes)

Weekly Theme Discussion (20 minutes)

... suggestions for conducting small and large group discussions during this block of each session of the module. Remember that “starter” questions have been included in the Participant Packet as well. Facilitators may want to develop an entirely different format for use during this “theme discussion” block of time (see page 7 of the Facilitator Packet).

Plenary discussion (10 minutes)

Small Group Discussion (10 minutes)

***Discussions of The Blindfold's Eyes* (5 minutes)**

Break (10 minutes)

Video – (40 minutes)

Video Discussion (15 minutes)

Preparing for the next session (5 minutes)

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)