



International Solidarity Reflection

Ending Trafficking in Persons

Shalom

School Sisters of Notre Dame
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Introduction

The UN International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition is observed annually on August 23. Although the Parliamentary Act of 1833 abolished the 18th century slave trade, slavery is still part of our 21st century globalized world. It takes the forms of sex trade, forced and bonded labor, child exploitation and forced marriage. Today's UN Remembrance of the Slave Trade gives us an opportunity to ask ourselves why slavery persists in our human evolution. Why, with all the prayers and all the best efforts of humanity, do we continue to produce results such as slavery?

Call to Prayer

God, we believe that you are One and that you are at the service of all life, present in everyone and in everything at all times. Plant your wisdom firmly in our consciousness so that we become open to a larger exploration of how we have been living and how we could be living as a human family.

Experience

"Sister, please help me, help me." The black woman's fervent, tearful appeal made Sr. Eugenia Bonetti uncomfortable. The Italian sister could tell by the way the woman was dressed that she was a woman "who sold her body on the streets." Maria followed the nun into church and knelt in the last pew and sobbed.

"Her cry remained strong in me. I felt we had to do something," Sr. Bonetti said. And so, Maria, mother of three, bought and sold in Nigeria and trafficked to Italy, left the streets and started a new life. She became Sr. Eugenia's teacher, helping her to understand what was going on in the deep under belly of the global sex trade – women forced to sell their bodies for the gain of others. (*"From 13 clients a night, to freedom"*, *The Tablet*, 22 November 2008)

Reflection

1. "No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms." (*Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 4*)
2. "... all offenses against life itself, such as slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children, degrading working conditions where people are treated as mere tools for profit ... all these and the like are criminal: they poison civilization ..."
(*Church in the Modern World, #27*)
3. "There is no longer slave or free ... for all of you are one in Christ. So you are no longer a slave but a child and if a child, then also an heir, through God." (*Gal: 3:28; 4:7*)

4. The work of Sr. Eugenia and of inter-congregational ministry in Italy to rescue exploited women from the streets prompted 800 UISG members in 1997 to commit personnel and finances to end human trafficking. In March 2002, *Shalom* North America designed a process for us in NAMA to start awareness-raising among ourselves and associates. This was surely a beginning ...

(See also *Joint Declaration of USG/UISG and Caritas Internationalis, Rome, November 2007*)

Action

1. Reflect on the “best practices” involved in the 18th century anti-slavery movement.
 - Wm Willberforce, MP who brought the anti-slavery campaign to Parliament
 - Olaudah Equiano, former slave and black writer, whose novels showed that Africans had a rich and ancient culture and deserved respect as human beings
 - Elizabeth Heyrich, key figure in encouraging the boycott of sugar produced by slaves, and who composed a national list of the British public who stopped purchasing and/or selling sugar
 - Hanna Moore, who took petitions from door-to-door
 - Ordinary citizens who lobbied government, signed petitions and encouraged the wearing of anti-slavery jewelry and clothing made from Indian cotton rather than cotton picked by slaves in America
 - The Quakers, religious people, pacifists who took a stance against slavery long before the campaign went mainstream
 - The slaves in Haiti and the Dominica whose uprising against the slavery system, shook colonialism and initiated the path towards independence

What resources are in our midst for building a *Stop Human Trafficking* campaign?

2. Name all the persons who profit through a trafficking situation. What are some of our unexamined assumptions that keep this system in place? Try changing one of your assumptions for one week and see the difference this makes.
3. Visit one of these websites. www.antislaveryinternational.org, www.freetheslaves.net, www.notforsalecampaign.org, www.stopthetraffik.org

Closing Prayer

God of Life and Essence of Freedom, you have created us inherently free to share in the extra-ordinary process called Life. In our evolutionary history, humanity has created a Systems Crisis that no longer sustains life. One of these is our institution of slavery which today has reduced 27 million of your sons and daughters to dependence. Enlarge our understandings of You, of humanity, and of life so that we can produce a new way of living on our planet. Reconcile our separations for “we are all one,” and that is *wealth*.
In solidarity, AMEN.