



International Solidarity Reflection

Human Trafficking

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School Sisters of Notre Dame

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Introduction

The movement of people across boundaries is part of a collective human experience. There is an element of this experience that must be eradicated: the trafficking of human beings through the use of fraud, force, and coercion for the purpose of forced prostitution or forced labor. Now, in the twenty-first century, this practice reaches every corner of the globe, from Asia and Africa to Europe and the Americas.

Call to Prayer

Catholic Conferences of Bishops in many countries have spoken out on this issue, calling upon their governments to work together to apprehend traffickers and destroy trafficking networks. They call on all of us to raise awareness about its devastating impact on vulnerable people, to identify victims of human trafficking, and rescue them from these situations.

Since 2001, School Sisters of Notre Dame have accepted and supported the Declaration of the International Union of General Superiors (UISG) which states: “We publicly declare our determination to work in solidarity with one another, with particular attention to the trafficking of women.”

Experience

Walk with Jennifer who was twelve years old and on her way to school when she was kidnapped. “I had just put on my school uniform and was about to eat breakfast, when some men from the rebel army came and asked my mother whether we had a radio. When she said “No,” they forced their way into our hut and forced me to go along with them.” Jennifer is one more than 30,000 children who have been abducted in northern Uganda to act as child soldiers, laborers, and sex slaves for the Lord’s Resistance Army.

Walk with Ama Maria who is 9 years old. Ama Maria’s father sold her for \$130 to men who brought her to Kenya. “They promised me that I would go to a good school in Kenya and help a woman to clean her house. When I got there, I was beat very hard. They lock me in a room and they bring men in who do hurtful things to me. If I try to refuse, I get many beatings and no food. If I am nice to the men who visit me, then I get food. I cry every night because I want to see my mother.”

Reflection

Good and provident God, compassionate and loving Creator of all, we come to you on behalf of the millions affected by human trafficking in our world today. God of Wisdom, give freedom to those who are bound by the chains of modern-day slavery. Awaken a sense of justice, respect, and compassion in any persons whose actions contribute to the enslavement of their vulnerable sisters and brothers.

Let us reflect on the ancient words of Psalm 130.

Out of the depths I cry to You!

In your Mercy, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications! . . .

I wait for You, my soul waits, and in your Word, I hope;

My soul awaits the Beloved as one awaits the birth of a child,

Or as one awaits the fulfillment of their destiny.

Action

Within the next few weeks, consider:

- Researching St. Josephine Bakhita, Sudanese slave – turned nun, who lived in Italy, was canonized in 2000, and is being considered as the patron of victims of human trafficking.
- Searching for ways to network with other religious women or local NGOs to raise awareness and to educate the others about modern day slavery at global and local levels.
- Engaging students, both boys and girls, in gender-equitable education.
- Reflecting on our demand for cheap products—coffee, shoes and clothing, fresh vegetables and fruits—which supports slave labor.
- Investigating some of the following web sites for more information and resources:
 - Christian Organizations Against Trafficking in Human Beings ([COATNET](#));
 - UN [Blue Heart Campaign](#) of the [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime](#);
 - United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking ([UN.GIFT](#));
 - [UNICEF](#) protecting children against trafficking;
 - [Invisible Children](#) programs.

Closing Prayer

O God, our words cannot express what our minds can barely comprehend and our hearts feel when we hear of women and girls deceived and transported to unknown places for purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labor because of human greed.

Our hearts are saddened and our spirits angry that their dignity and rights are being transgressed through threats, deception, and force. We cry out against the degrading practice of trafficking and pray for it to end.

Strengthen the fragile-spirited and broken-hearted. Make real your promises to fill these our sisters and brothers with a love that is tender and good and send the exploiters away empty handed.

Give us the wisdom and courage to stand in solidarity with them, that together we will find ways to the freedom that is your gift to all of us. Amen. - *Gen Cassani, SSND*