



DOMINICAN SISTERS OF SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

CORPORATE STANCE: OPPOSITION TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Building on our Consistent Ethic of Life stance that “we reverence the sacredness of life and address injustice in a spirit of respect, compassion, and solidarity,” we Dominican Sisters of Springfield oppose the trafficking of human persons, especially that of women and children.

We will continue to educate ourselves. We will support those efforts that work toward ending this unconscionable abuse of the community of life. *June 2014*

EXPERIENCE

Human Trafficking is the illegal transporting of people from one area to another, typically for the purposes of forced labor or sexual exploitation. Buying and selling others is slavery—illegal and morally abhorrent. Though it has been going on for many centuries, public awareness and outrage is fairly recent.

A young woman from northern Myanmar was invited to work in a Chinese factory. With few job opportunities at home, she took the offer. Instead she was trafficked to birth babies. This form of surrogacy trafficking accounts for 20% of how Myanmar women are trafficked.

Trafficking occurs at all stages of the seafood supply chain, from catching the fish to processing and shipping it for export. Due to a shortage of fishing crews, migrants are recruited by false promises. They are told they will receive a living-wage, but actually incur crippling debts that put them in a labor trafficking situation.

Abduction of women and girls for sexual slavery has been reported in many conflicts in Central and West Africa, as well as in the conflicts in the Middle East. Armed groups may also use women and girls as ‘sex slaves’ or force them into marriages to appeal to new potential male recruits. In reality, just look at where the wars are and that is where the most persons are trafficked.

With the use of online classified ads, child sex trafficking is not only on the streets, but also behind the closed doors of local hotel rooms. These are a preferred venue for the sale of children because traffickers believe they are anonymous at hotels, giving them a sense that there is little risk in their behavior.

Many involved in the anti-trafficking movement are also growing in awareness that large events that bring thousands of people together, such as the Super Bowl, World Cup, the Olympics, are venues for bringing in trafficked persons for sexual exploitation.

Human trafficking affects every country of the world. While the movement of trafficked persons is more often from less developed countries to more developed countries, all countries are affected inside their borders and across their borders.

ANALYSIS

So how does it happen? Sometimes persons are kidnapped to be trafficked. Many times, they are tricked into it, believing they are being offered opportunities for employment or education.

Other times, families sell children, desperate for funds to feed the rest of the family. Or parents may think the family member or “kind person” is really offering their child opportunities for advancement. They don’t know that the “opportunity” will result in captivity.

Once in the clutches of traffickers—

- threats of deportation,
- withholding of documents,
- threats to themselves and family in the home country,
- isolation,
- verbal and physical abuse, and psychological coercion all keep them enslaved.

The International Labor Organization and the Walk Free Foundation, in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) provide alarming statistics on human trafficking worldwide.

- (2016) On any given day in that year, over 40 million people were victims of modern slavery. This includes about 25 million in forced labor. And that forced labor includes sexual exploitation as well as forced or bonded physical labor.
- Worldwide, almost 20% of all trafficking victims are children. However, in some parts of the world, children are the majority. Another part of their data also reveals there are about 15 million people in forced marriage.

Human Trafficking ranks within the top three activities of organized crime, along with the sale of drugs and arms. It is estimated to be a 150 billion dollar industry worldwide.

Trafficking doesn’t occur as an isolated event. It happens within systems and thus needs our critical analysis. We need to look at the web of relationships, the systems, that affect and are affected by trafficking—economic globalization, poverty, violence, devastation of the natural world through climate change and war, to name a few.

REFLECTION

Scripture is very clear about the worth of each person and how we are to help those in need. God’s word empowers us to reflect and respond.

You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul and with your whole mind, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. (Matthew 22:37-39)

Truly I say to you, whenever you did it to one of the least, you did it to me. (Matthew 25:40)

Pope Francis rightly names human trafficking as an open wound on society, a scourge on the Body of Christ, a crime against humanity.

ACTION

- Join the World Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking, February 8, the feast of St Josephine Bakhita, who was sold into slavery. Once freed, she became a nun and dedicated her life to sharing her testament of deliverance from slavery and comforting the poor and suffering.
<http://www.usccb.org/about/anti-trafficking-program/day-of-prayer.cfm>
- Learn about human trafficking. U. S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking newsletter *Stop Trafficking!* <https://www.sistersagainsttrafficking.org/stop-trafficking-newsletter/>
- ECPAT USA asks hotels to train their associates on the indicators of trafficking and how to respond to it. Learn about the Tourism Child-Protection Code of Conduct: <https://www.ecpatusa.org/code>.