



International Solidarity Reflection

School Sisters of Notre Dame

Shalom

Anti-Human Trafficking

July 2018

Introduction

Human trafficking is carried out in both rural and urban areas. People from all walks of life willingly participate in commercial sexual exploitation, forced labour, domestic servitude, forced marriages, and organ harvesting of millions of women, children, and men. Almost a third of all human trafficking victims are children, and over 70% are women and girls. This is shocking as it is more widespread than was previously acknowledged. ([Source: UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2016](#))

The feast day of St. Josephine Bakhita on February 8 and the World Day Against Trafficking in persons on July 30 call us to take responsibility for raising awareness of the situation of victims of human trafficking and for the promotion and protection of their rights. We are very aware that many people are engaged in awareness efforts to combat human trafficking. However, despite anti-trafficking awareness, some survivors are frequently re-exploited.

Call to Prayer

Jesus said, “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:32). When we pray for an end to the horrible injustice of human trafficking, it’s easy to forget our own sins that play into this atrocity. Let us acknowledge that we struggle with selfishness, lust, and greed which feed the evil of human trafficking. We pray for forgiveness for our sins and ask God to enable us to serve, love, and make a difference.

Experience

Every year, thousands of migrants pay to be trafficked from African nations through Libya to Europe. The route through Libya is a common destination for human trafficking in Africa where traffickers ply their trade openly; it is said to be very dangerous. It’s a journey of months during which victims are subjected to inhuman treatment. They are taken to detention centres, mistreated, sold and resold in Libyan slave markets, and are forced to work in the sex industry in order to pay for their journey to Italy. Many migrants are killed in the process.

Blessing, a business woman from Edo State, Nigeria was promised by a trafficker that she could make more money in Europe. She got introduced to Oveke, a broker known as pusherman, who told her to pay 500,000 Naira (\$1,400 USD) to help her reach Europe. The money was due on arrival in Libya. Blessing, with the hope that she would make it to Europe, sold her goods to get transport. Then, with four other young girls from Edo State, she embarked on a journey through Libya to Italy. The girls were moved to a different location, Auchu, to wait for their transport as the brokers prepared them for the journey. At Auchu, Oveke gave them condoms and told them not to struggle when they were raped in Libya, to just trust in God that they will make it to Europe. This was so scary to Blessing but still they boarded the overnight bus to the north.

“The doors were locked behind us,” she said. “I was happy that Oveke was not in the bus so I managed to convince one of the girls to return home with me because I was so scared of being raped. The two of us jumped off at the next market centre. We managed to book space on the morning bus back to our village. We at least are safe.”

The other three with the many people travelling to Europe continued the journey to Kano, then Agadez and from Agadez to Libya where the brokers were paid. (Source: As told to Sr. Beatrice in Nigeria. [A similar story can be found on CNN online.](#))

Reflection

On the feast of St Josephine Bakhita, February 8, 2018, World Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking, Pope Francis urged everyone, citizens and institutions, to join forces to prevent human trafficking and to guarantee protection and help for victims. The Pope noted that many migrants are forced to choose illegal channels of migration where they are submitted to abuse of every kind, exploitation, and slavery. Children and adults are deceived and taken to unknown places for purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour. He pointed out the problems in the society which make modern day slavery possible: ignorance, unwillingness to admit the issue, and hypocrisy. (Sources: [Pope Francis, General Audience, February 7, 2018](#) and [Vatican News: Pope Francis: Human trafficking is a crime against humanity, February 12, 2018](#))

How often do we encounter victims of human trafficking? Do we recognize them in our society? What have we done to help these victims?

We are called to focus on efforts to explore the various forms of complicity by which society tolerates and encourages the sex trade and exploitation of persons.

We are therefore encouraged to pray for the victims and to stand against what the apostle Paul called “the spiritual forces of evil” (Eph. 6:12) behind this human exploitation. We have tremendous power when we stand together. And even greater power when we pray to the king of kings in this matter.

Action

- Host an awareness event. For example, watch and discuss films about human trafficking with the co-workers.
- Work with the local community to help stop trafficking by supporting a victim or spreading awareness of human trafficking.
- Reflect on the issues of human trafficking in your area.
- Meet with the survivors of human trafficking and learn the signs of modern day slavery.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, strengthen us, enlighten us, empower us, and fill us with the double portion of your holy spirit, the spirit of courage and fortitude, so that we may stand up for what is just and true. Help us to be understanding and compassionate towards the needy, to love them in the way that you love them. We ask this through the intercession of St. Josephine Bakhita. Amen