

A reflection on the lecture on Modern day SLAVERY – Human Trafficking: Church's Response to this Social Evil

As Christians we are always exhorted to live and emulate Jesus as good disciples as we find written in John 13: 35. This can be a challenge for us in the society and it is so. We are living in a world that experiences injustices of all kinds and crimes to humanity. In the past Friday of the 02nd August, the SJTI, in collaboration with the OIKOS group had a public lecture on Human Trafficking presented by Fr. Michel M.Afr.

From the question posed by the topic of the day, what is our response? I know that we would want to talk of demographics and statistics but it is the very thing we are told to forget because we are actually dealing with the issues that involve the human person and not a statistic. With all honesty the Church has had conflicting response over the centuries. But we need to thank the Second Vatican Council for its voice against this evil.

From this we are sure set to respond to what is actually happening in our today's world. We are faced with a 27 million number of people who are trafficked across the globe than compared to the 12 million of those who were shipped across to the Americas during the Slave Trade. The question to ask, given these numbers, what is the role of the Church in trying to address this current issue. It came out that in actuality many Sisters Congregations are the ones, who are actively engaged in trying to do their best in addressing the issue. But this is not about trying to find out who does the best work, but rather what are we called to do as Christians.

Through Christian charity we are keepers of our Brothers and Sisters who are in need of our help. The Missionaries of Africa (Whiter Fathers) have done a great deal from the beginning of their foundation to answer to this need. Their beloved founder was involved in the abolishment of Slave Trade. In other words I am exhorting other to join hands with them and try to help our Brothers and Sisters who are in need. Those who are taking from their own countries to work as sex workers, domestic helpers and even slavery. One of the disconcerting facts is that this is a modern day slavery that makes more money than drugs, because a person can be resold a dozen times. In South Africa such persons who are found guilty of this crime of human trafficking will be fined an R 1, 000 000.00 or a life sentence or both. This is to show how serious this is and it is against the basic human rights of freedom.

It is a call we are to answer, not by words but by actions. Like for instance in the surroundings you are living in, are you aware of anyone who might be in such a situation, or are you suspicious of something of this kind? It does not have to be a huge scale work but every little bit count one survivor is better than no survivor at all. Thus my dear fellow Christian Brother and Sister pray with me this prayer by the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) so that this work may be of God and not ours, because if it ours then we are bound to fail in a way.

O God, our words cannot express what our minds can barely comprehend and our hearts feel when we hear of men, women and children deceived, transported to unknown places, forced into prostitution or other forms of labour for the financial gain of traffickers – their slaveholders. **Our hearts** are saddened and our spirits angry that their dignity and rights are transgressed through threats, deception and force. We cry out against the degrading practice of trafficking and pray for it to end. Protect all victims and survivors, especially our young and vulnerable. **Let your tender love** and care surround all present victims and survivors of trafficking. Deliver them, O God, from their perpetrator's hands. **Give us the courage** and wisdom to stand in solidarity with them, that together we will find ways to the freedom that is your gift to all of us. Amen.

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