



Rosary Meditations

Trafficking of Human Beings, especially Women and Children

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Let us pray with Mary, our Mother of Compassion, as we contemplate the wound of the Body of her Son, Jesus, in our world today. As Mary proclaimed in the Magnificat, we say with her: "God's mercy is for those who fear God from generation to generation." Lk 1:50

The face of the trafficking of women and children varies, but all the victims have one thing in common --they are no longer free. They are engaged in a modern form of slavery. This serious human rights violation is "the fastest growing form of transnational organized crime," reports the United Nations, rivaled only by the trade in illegal drugs and arms. There are an estimated 700,000 to 2 million persons trafficked across national borders each year. A shortened form of the UN definition of trafficking is "the recruitment of people through deception or force for the purpose of extracting sexual or other services from them."

1. Trafficked Women and Children are Foreigners

In Italy, more than 90% of present street prostitution is by foreign women. This has made prostitution much more visible and obvious as the greatest number of women and girls involved are from Africa – especially Nigeria. The "foreigners" are blamed for the 'moral degradation' in Italian cities embodied by open street prostitution. It is extremely rare that

men consider themselves responsible for encouraging prostitution because of their demands.

Eugenia Bonetti, MSC,
NGO response to CEDAW at the UN, January 2005

A foreigner to the Israelites, the Canaanite woman, whose daughter was tormented by a demon, asked Jesus “for the crumbs from the table,” for help for her daughter. Because of her faith, Jesus healed her daughter.

Mt 15: 21-28

2. Perseverance Despite Obstacles

“Instead of landing a good job in Cebu as what the recruiter told me, I became a prostitute in a brothel along the slums of Kamagayan. It never came to my mind that I will end up this way. I could not seem to accept my fate...I really felt shame before people and before my customers. I used drugs to hide my shamefulness. When I met the staff of Belen sa Cebu, I realized that there are still people who care for the welfare of prostitutes like me. I was later referred to a Nazareth Growth Home in Quezon City where I found inner peace. Meeting the staff is like seeing a ray of light and hope.”

This was a lonely girl waiting for someone to help her since she could not accept the ordeal she went through. She tried to fight the agony she was feeling deep within her heart. She was alone trying to face the harsh realities of life. She was waiting for someone to help her, and found it in an organization that

came to her rescue. She was able to gather enough strength to move on.

The woman with the flow of blood persevered in approaching Jesus, regardless of the taboos of the time. Although she had suffered much, she continued because of her faith, for which Jesus healed her from her disease and sent her off in peace.

Mk 5: 24b-34

3. The Innocent are Lost

A nineteen year old young woman from Ukraine, Marika, living in poverty, was offered a position as a waitress in Tel Aviv. After a circuitous route, which included walking across the desert, the group arrived near the outskirts of a village. “Two men showed up, to look them over – without their clothes on – in order to buy them for servicing clients, which began that very day. “That night, I felt for the first time what it was to be a whore. I had to service eight men. I felt terrible and ashamed...Over the next four months, I don’t know how many hundreds of Israeli men I was forced to have sex with...I prayed everyday that today I would be rescued. But the days just passed and passed.”

The Natashas, Victor Malarek,
pp. xi-xvi

Innocent, unable to live according to one’s human rights, the girl from Ukraine and the children slaughtered by Herod, are lost in a sea of people. Marika was trying to better herself in

order to help herself and her family. Instead she was “stolen” from her family like the innocent children taken from their parents as the soldiers searched for Jesus. Many children and young women have their lives taken from the, if not literally then certainly figuratively, due to the degradation they experience. Like Rachel weeping in Ramah, we empathize with all those who are taken from their loved ones.

Mt 2: 16-18

4. Hidden Vulnerability

“I am filthy inside and my soul is empty. I don’t know if I can live this way. Something died in me. I think it was happiness.” How can this happen to a young woman, barely 18 years old, who also was poor and uneducated.? She listened to those who enticed her with the hope of attending a cooking school, and the additional promise of work in a nice hotel. This would enable her to earn money for her family. What really happened was that her passport was burned and she was forced into prostitution.

Prairie Messenger,
March 23, 2005, p. 6

The young woman knew she had something to offer, for herself and for the needs of her family. Instead everything was taken from her and she was put in a position of sexual slavery. Jesus commented that the widow’s offering was given “out of her poverty,” a woman who gave her all. This young woman gave

of herself, for a good cause she thought. However, she was overpowered by other peoples desires for riches.

Lk 21: 1-4

5. Accompanying Those Who are Suffering

Police have broken up a German-based sex trafficking ring which offered European tourists sex with teenagers in Brazil’s poor northeast and shipped women to Europe for prostitution. The ring, led by a German businessman, allowed European tourists to go to its Web site and select the age, height, weight and colour of Brazilian women in 2,000-3,000 euro sex package tours, police said on Tuesday. When police raided the headquarters in Fortaleza, Ceara state, on Monday [10/25/04] they arrested three Germans, four Italian tourists and five Brazilian employees. Police found pornographic photos of girls as young as four provided by mothers who worked for the ring. U. N. special envoy to Brazil, Leandro Despouy, said that Brazil’s justice system often failed to investigate allegations of sexual abuse of children and teenagers in the country’s north and northeast, where sex tourism is rife. Links between judges and politicians and businessmen explained the high levels of impunity for criminals in cities in Brazil’s interior, Despouy said. As many as 500,000 Brazilian children could be victims of child prostitution in the nation of 180 million, according to the United Nations

Andrew Hay, Reuters *Swissinfo*,
October 26, 2004

Teenage girls and women are “offered up”, in humiliating and degrading subservience at the demand and profit of others. Who will stand by these suffering human beings? Mary is in the presence of her suffering Son, fully aware of what is happening to him. Many parents and loved ones do not know what has happened to their children and young women. It will require people from many walks of life to be in solidarity with these suffering people.

Jn 19: 25-27

Litany

Blessed are those who work for justice...
who take in foreigners and give them more than the crumbs from the table.

Blessed are those who work for justice...
who persevere to help people in need, despite all obstacles.

Blessed are those who work for justice...
who care for the innocent and work to obtain their human rights.

Blessed are those who work for justice...
who though vulnerable, can use their own poverty to help others.

Blessed are those who work for justice...
who offer hope and healing, care and comfort, who welcome, who encourage and who inspire.

Blessed are those who work for justice...
who open doors for acting justly, loving tenderly, and walking humbly with God.

Prayer for an End to Trafficking

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 abuse because of human greed and profit. Our hearts are saddened and our spirits angry that the dignity and rights of those who are trafficked are violated 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 with a love that is tender and good and to send the exploiters away empty-handed. Give us the wisdom and courage to stand in solidarity with our sisters, that together we will find ways to the freedom that is your gift to all of us.

We ask through Jesus the Christ, in union with God our Creator and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Prayer by Gen. Cassani, SSND