WORLD DAY AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

30 JULY

Introduction

We invite you to join the world day against trafficking in persons on July 30 with prayers, meditation, missionary actions and listening to the victims. This year the theme is “Victims’ Voices Lead the Way” and puts victims of human trafficking at the center of the campaign and will highlight the importance of listening to and learning from survivors of human trafficking. The campaign portrays survivors as key actors in the fight against human trafficking and focusses on the crucial role they play in establishing effective measures to prevent this crime, identify and rescue victims and support them on their road to rehabilitation.

Although found in every country and every region, trafficking in persons remains a hidden crime, with perpetrators operating in the dark corners of the internet and the underbelly of the global economy to entrap victims for sexual exploitation, forced labour, domestic servitude and other forms of exploitation. According with the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020, for every 10 victims detected globally, five are adult women and two are girls. Migrants account for a significant share of the detected victims in most regions. Traffickers prey upon the marginalized and impoverished. Globally, one in every three victims detected is a child, but in low-income countries, children account for half of the victims detected, most of them trafficked for forced labour.

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Biblical Text

Hechos 7:9-10

And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into slavery in Egypt; but God was with him and rescued him from all his afflictions. He granted him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, who put him in charge of Egypt and of his entire household.

Short Reflection

The story of Joseph who was sold by his brothers to Egypt (Gen 37:18-36) belongs among the best known from the biblical accounts. Even though its happy end teaches us that God led all the troubles Joseph had to undergo for the sake of his family (Gen 45:7), the attitude of his brothers caused a serious pain to many: not only to Joseph alone, but also to their old father, and the whole family. The story discloses the long way of reconciliation and restoration of the relationships. Thus, remaining indifferent toward this kind of injustice appears inexcusable.

In this aspect, Scriptures offer us two kinds of involvement. The first one we find in the Abraham's story when his nephew Lot and his family became war booty (Gen 14:11-16). Almost certainly, it meant enslavement. In the ancient Mediterranean world, outsiders – those who did not belong to a particular society or culture – were considered legitimate targets for exploitation. Abraham organizes a rescue action and defeats the kidnappers. His involvement against the wrongdoers is direct and "military". However, today with different means, the battle in favor of the rights of the exploited ones remains on the table.

The second involvement we observe in the relation between Jesus and Judas. The latter one "hands over" his Master for money. Jesus, aware of the plans of his disciple, efforts until the end to change the mind of Judas: a friendly gesture of handing a piece of bread at the Last Supper testifies it (John 13:26). Even though in case of Judas it was vain, his approach focuses on convincing the transgressors of the wickedness of their doing.

[for a deeper insight in the theme, see the 2009 publication of SVD Generalate, "Human Trafficking: Present-Day Slavery"(IDW 9)]

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Missionary Action

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Prevention and protection: Undertake prevention activities, identify the areas and vulnerable people specially women and children and conscientize them regarding the effects of trafficking and its problems.

Awareness: The raising awareness among the risk groups through education, campaigns, workshops, etc., and making them to protect themselves against trafficking is very important. Often poverty and inequality lead to trafficking, identify the causes and educate the people with professionals.

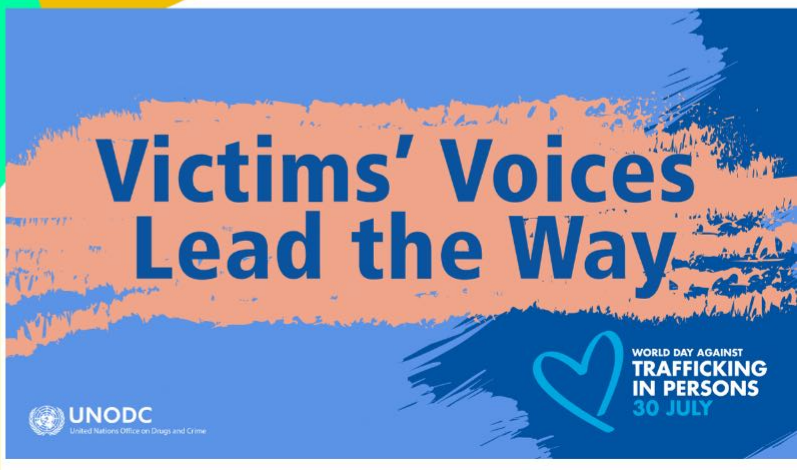
Support: Provide secure shelter for trafficked persons in the countries of destination, transit and origin (for repatriated trafficked persons). These shelters could be for all types of adult victims of both genders and their dependent children. Support them with legal help which is very much needed.

Advocacy: Political advocacy work is as important as the assistance for trafficked persons, and work towards appropriate legislation to protect them and not to exploit their vulnerabilities. Advocacy should highlight the need for eradication of forced labor and promotion of decent working conditions.

Networking: It is very important to work, both nationally and internationally, in interdisciplinary networks, where the cooperation between authorities, NGOs and international organizations collaborate together against trafficking. At the same time there is a need to network within the Church and Church-related organizations, in order to strengthen collaboration and coordination of different efforts.

Report: Find out the local situation of trafficking and prepare a good report with evidences and submit to the police or other agencies to take appropriate actions. Victims of sex trafficking and slavery are on increase, finding these victims would be very significant.

Strengthen their faith: God works more powerfully when we are vulnerable; strengthen their faith in God and provide an atmosphere of prayer, reflection and necessary sacraments. At times interfaith meetings would be helpful in some places.



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Prayer to End Trafficking

(to be recited by all)

Loving Father,
We seek your divine protection for all who are exploited and enslaved.
For those forced into labor, trafficked into sexual slavery, and denied freedom.
We beseech you to release them from their chains.
Grant them protection, safety, and empowerment.
Restore their dignity and provide them a new beginning.
Show us how we might end exploitation by addressing its causes.
Help us reach out in support of victims and survivors of human trafficking.
Make us instruments of your spirit for their liberation.
For this we pray through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

Amen.

(From USCCB handout for World Day of Peace 2015)

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