VIGIL of PRAYER

International Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking

Vigil of Prayer: International Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking, February 8, 2017

How can we ignore this severe warning when we see the exploitation carried out by unscrupulous people? Such exploitation harms young girls and boys who are led into prostitution or into the mire of pornography; who are enslaved as child labourers or soldiers; who are caught up in drug trafficking and other forms of criminality; who are forced to flee from conflict and persecution, risking isolation and abandonment.

Moreover, the dividing line between migration and trafficking can at times be very subtle. There are many factors which contribute to making migrants vulnerable, especially if they are children: poverty and the lack of means to survive – to which are added unrealistic expectations generated by the media; the low level of literacy; ignorance of the law, of the culture and frequently of the language of host countries. All of this renders children physically and psychologically dependent. But the most powerful force driving the exploitation and abuse of children is demand. If more rigorous and effective action is not taken against those who profit from such abuse, we will not be able to stop the multiple forms of slavery where children are the victims.

Facts:

- Worldwide there are 168 million children in child labour. More than half of them, 85 million, are in hazardous work. (ILO)
- 20 million child workers are employed in factories that make garments, carpets, toys, matches and hand-rolled cigarettes. Agriculture remains by far the most important sector where child labourers' can be found (98 million, or 59%), but the problems are not negligible in services (54 million) and industry (12 million) – mostly in the informal economy. Most children work in farms that produce consumer products such as cocoa, coffee, cotton, rubber and other crops. (ILO)
- Asia and the Pacific still have the largest numbers (almost 78 million or 9.3% of child population), but Sub-Saharan Africa continues to be the region with the highest incidence of child labour (59 million, over 21% of child population). (ILO)
- There are 13 million children in child labour in Latin America and the Caribbean. In the Middle East and North Africa there are 9.2 million. (ILO)
- Every year, 22,000 children die in work-related accidents. 9% are in industry, including mining and quarrying, manufacturing and construction. (ILO)
- The number of children involved in armed conflicts has increased to about 300,000 over the past decade. 14 is the average age of a child soldier. 40 % of child soldiers are girls. (ILO)
- 2 million children are subjected to prostitution in the global commercial sex trade (UNICEF)

- Millions more children are likely exploited in prostitution or pornography each year around the world, most of the time lured or forced into these situations through false promises and limited knowledge about the risks.(UNICEF)
- About 1 in 10 girls under the age of 20 have been subjected to forced sexual intercourse or other forced sexual acts at some point of their lives. (UNICEF)

Message from Pope Francis:

"Dear brothers and sisters, today, 8 February, the liturgical memorial of St. Josephine Bakhita, a Sudanese Sister, who as a child had the traumatic experience of being a victim of trafficking, the International Union of Superiors General of Religious Institutes have promoted the Day of Prayer and Reflection against trafficking in persons. I encourage all those who are committed to helping men, women and children enslaved, exploited, abused as tools of pleasure and often tortured and mutilated. I hope that those who have responsibilities in government will seriously strive to eliminate the causes of this shameful scourge, a scourge unworthy of a civilized society. Let each of us be committed to being a voice for our brothers and sisters, humiliated and deprived of their dignity. Let us all pray together.

Prayer:

O God, when we hear of children and adults being deceived and taken to unknown places for purposes of sexual exploitation, forced labour, and organ 'harvesting', our hearts are saddened and our spirits angry that their dignity and rights are ignored through threats, lies, and force. We cry out against the evil practice of this modern slavery, and pray with St. Bakhita for it to end. Give us wisdom and courage to reach out and stand with those whose bodies, hearts and spirits have been so wounded, so that together we may make real your promises to fill these sisters and brothers with a love that is tender and good. Send the exploiters away empty-handed to be converted from this wickedness, and help us all to claim the freedom that is your gift to your children. Amen

February 8, 2017 - Liturgical Memory of St. Bakhita
http://preghieracontrotratta.org/

Statistics Sources:

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Marking progress against child labour - Global estimates and trends 2000-2012 (ILO-IPEC, 2013).
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http://borgenproject.org/10-child-labor-facts/
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Source: National Crime Agency (2014) UK