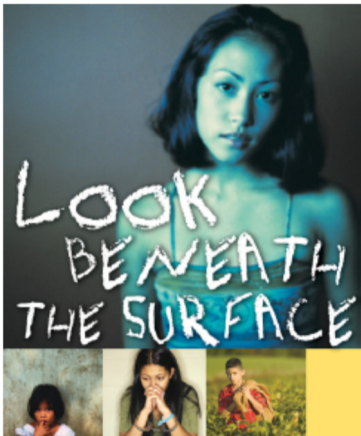


No Longer Slaves but Brothers and Sisters



Many people think of slavery as a long-abolished institution—modern society would never condone treating human beings as commodities to be bought and sold. But the reality is that human beings are still trafficked, not only in far away places, but right in our own communities, urban, rural and suburban. Human trafficking occurs when people are bought or sold for the purpose of sexual slavery or forced labor. The victims are often vulnerable youth or low-wage workers from foreign countries. Unfortunately, the victims of these crimes are often treated as criminals themselves.

In his 2015 World Day of Peace Message, *No longer Slaves but Brothers and Sisters*, Pope Francis asks us to reflect on the plight of people who are exploited as part of an economic system that benefits us.

“Today, as in the past, slavery is rooted in a notion of the human person which allows him or her to be treated as an object. Whenever sin corrupts the human heart and distances us from our Creator and our neighbours, the latter are no longer regarded as beings of equal dignity, as brothers or sisters sharing a common humanity, but rather as objects. Whether by coercion or deception, or by physical or psychological duress, human persons created in the image and likeness of God are deprived of their freedom, sold and reduced to being the property of others. They are treated as means to an end.”

Pope Francis, World Day of Peace Message, 1/1/15

- Nearly 1.5 million victims are currently laboring in conditions of forced labor, sexual exploitation and servitude in the United States, Canada and developed countries of the EU
- 55 percent of forced labor victims are women and girls, as are 98 percent of sex trafficking victims.
- Children aged 17 years and below represent 26 percent of total victims, representing a total of 5.5 million child victims worldwide.

The 8th point of the Women’s Equality Act would protect victims of human trafficking and make it easier to punish those who have harmed them. It would treat children who have been bought for sex as victims of child abuse.

The Diocesan Public Policy Committee fully supports nine points of Governor Cuomo’s proposed ten point Women’s Equality Act, which would strengthen laws on human trafficking, pay equity for women, and domestic violence among other helpful provisions. We reject the tenth point which would change New York’s current law and allow abortions through the third trimester of pregnancy for essentially any reason. New York can do better for women!

**DIOCESAN-WIDE ~ PARISH-BASED ADVOCACY
SUPPORTING WOMEN REJECTING ABORTION EXPANSION
PUBLIC POLICY WEEKEND: FEBRUARY 7&8, 2015**

Prayer to End Trafficking

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 to 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



February 8, the feast day of St. Josephine Bakhita:

International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking

Trafficking continues to exist for the same reason we once had legalized slavery: many people benefit economically from using people as commodities and people of conscience fail to pay attention and speak out. What better way to atone for and commemorate the suffering of all people who have endured slavery, than to pray and participate in advocacy?

Learn more at <http://www.usccb.org/about/anti-trafficking-program/>

“Often, when considering the reality of human trafficking, illegal trafficking of migrants and other acknowledged or unacknowledged forms of slavery, one has the impression that they occur within a context of general indifference.

Sadly, this is largely true.”

Pope Francis, January 1, 2015 World Day of Peace Message

Diocesan Public Policy priority: Women’s Equality Act

For two years in a row, passage of the 9 life-affirming points of the Women’s Equality Act has been held up by the controversial 10th point that would expand abortion provisions in New York State. The Diocesan Public Policy Committee advocates passage of the 9 points that support every woman’s inherent human dignity as made in the image of God and opposes the 10th point that expands late term abortions and would allow non-physicians to perform abortions, endangering women.

Diocesan Public Policy weekend, Feb 7-8, will be our opportunity to let our state legislators know of the importance to finally pass the nine points of the Women’s Equality Act that will truly benefit women.

For more information, contact Suzanne Stack, Life Issues Coordinator, at sstack@dor.org or 585-328-3210 x 1304 or your regional justice and peace coordinator.

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