



COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Closing Remarks

Bishop Patrick Lynch, Chair of the Office for Migration Policy

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I would like, first of all, to thank Cardinal Turkson, Cardinal Veglio and Bishop Joseph and all the staff at the Pontifical Council for Peace and justice for hosting this event. Your preparation and participation was crucial to it's success. I would also like to thank all who participated in an active way by giving input, by leading a group or by acting as secretary to a group. I am sure you will forgive me if I mention two people in particular – Julie Etchingam for the way she moderated the day so professionally and so sensitively and Sophie whose courageous personal sharing touched our hearts in a very powerful way. Lastly, I thank all of you for coming and participating. The fact that you did attend means that a network has already been created.

One of our aims for this conference was to create and strengthen the links between Church representatives, NGOs, law enforcement agencies, embassies and representatives of religious orders in order to better facilitate cooperation in combating trafficking. It is important therefore so see the conference as part of a process and not just as an event. With this in mind we will make available as soon as possible all the reports and suggestions for such a process.

Today our discussions focused on three areas – prevention, pastoral care and re-integration. Education and raising awareness are central to the work of prevention. The Church through diocesan and parish structures, through priests, religious and pastoral workers and through Justice and Peace groups can reach many people making them aware of the tragedy and extent of human trafficking. We discovered today that there are some excellent resources available to help us in this task.

The first challenge in pastoral care is to recognise and affirm the good work being done already. I would like especially to mention the great work being done in this area in the U.K. and throughout the world by women religious. The provision of a safe environment is crucial if good pastoral care is to be provided. We need to harvest the good practice and good work that is being done by disseminating the information regarding providers of care, by asking the I.O.M to update their directory and by supporting the organizations that provide good care. We also need to encourage and remind governments to develop the necessary strategies to provide that care by implementing the relevant E.U. directives. Thirdly we need to help 'first line respondents' - priests, doctors, leaders and chaplains to ethnic communities, embassy staff - to be alert to the signs and responsive to the suffering of those who are trafficked but also informed as to where help can be sought.

While re-integration was recognised as a process it was also recognised that it is crucial that from the outset the legal status of the victim is quickly and satisfactorily resolved. Again it is only in a safe environment can this journey (which involves healing the wounds of the past but also developing the skills, the confidence and sense of hope for the future) begin. A key principle in guiding strategies for pastoral care and re-integration is that the process itself is shaped by the needs, the aspirations and the hopes of those who were trafficked. Another key element in the process is the importance of inter-agency cooperation and collaboration. One outcome of this conference might be to model that practical cooperation.

Finally, I would encourage people to pray - to have a day of prayer for those who were trafficked and for those who work to combat human trafficking. My suggestion would be on the feast of St. Josephine Bakhita. St. Josephine Bakhita is the Sudanese saint who at the age of nine was kidnapped and sold into slavery. She suffered terribly at the hands of her kidnappers so much so that she forgot her birth name. Her

kidnappers gave her the name 'Bakhita' which means 'Fortunate'. At the age of 35 she managed to come to the Italian Consul and his family and was eventually brought to Italy where she was entrusted to the care of the Canossian Sisters in Venice. It was there she came to know and experience God's love. She became a Catholic in 1890 and made her final profession in the order in 1896. For the next fifty years she led a life of simplicity prayer and service, especially as the doorkeeper in the convent, always showing kindness to everyone especially the children in the street. In her final years she suffered from sickness and the haunting memories of the beatings and flogging she received whilst in slavery. She died in 1947 and was canonized in October 2000.

St. Josephine Bakita – Pray for us.

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