



St Francis Fraternity Vancouver, BC

Our Lady of the Angels Region
(Western Canada)

Secular Franciscan Order





A Justice, Peace
and the
Integrity of Creation
(JPIC)
Presentation

by

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**Brothers and sisters,
may the Lord give you
peace!**

The traditional greeting of
St Francis of Assisi

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

WHAT IS IT?

WHAT CAN WE DO?

In April 2008 this fraternity decided to deal with all three suggested topics in the OLOTA JPIC Action Plan 2008.

1. Extreme Poverty and World Trade
2. Resources: Water and Mining
3. Human Trafficking

One way we deal with poverty and world trade is to alleviate poverty in the global south through supporting fair trade.

We dealt with water and mining by signing D&P petitions to the Canadian Government. We opposed privatisation of water sources in the global south. We asked the Canadian Government to hold Canadian mining companies accountable for their actions.

We now turn to human trafficking.

Trafficking
of
Human Persons:
A Modern Slavery

Prayer

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R: God hears the cry of the slaves.
Blessed be our God.

I will bless God's name at all times.
God's praise ever in my mouth.
Let my soul glory in our God,
for God hears the cry of the slaves. R

Every spirit crushed, God will save;
And will be ransom for their lives;
And will be safe shelter for their fears,
for God hears the cry of the slaves . R

May God bless us with anger
at injustice, oppression and exploitation of people,
so that we may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless us with tears
to shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger and war,
so that we may reach out our hand
to comfort them and to turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless us with enough foolishness
to believe that we can make a difference in the world
and in our neighbourhood, so that we will courageously
try to do what may seem impossible, trusting in God to
give us the strength and show us the way.

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The Bishops of BC and the Yukon issued a Pastoral Letter on Human Trafficking, 12 February 2009, in which they stated:

“The international community has identified victims of human trafficking as those taken advantage of for purposes such as forced labour, forced marriage, fraudulent adoption, illicit organ trade, or sexual exploitation.”

Definition of Human Trafficking

Trafficking in human persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

TIP Protocol Article 3a (adopted by the UN, Palermo, 2000)*

How does trafficking in persons differ from smuggling of persons?

Smuggled persons, having paid the smuggler for transportation and illegal entry, are usually free once they arrive at their destination or they may be “free”, but under debt bondage.

Trafficked persons are not free

Trafficking: An overview

Numbers: An estimated 800,000 people are trafficked annually across national borders, and millions more are trafficked within their own borders.

Profits: The ILO* has estimated that yearly profits from sexual trafficking are \$27.8 billion.

This is almost as much as illegal drugs

Women and children: 70-80% of all trafficked persons are women and children. Women and girl children are the most vulnerable because of the persistent inequalities they face in status and opportunity worldwide.

Surprisingly, according to the United Nations, women are the biggest traffickers of other women and girls for the international sex trade in almost a third of countries that keep such statistics.

Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 12 Feb 2009, the first such UN report.

Who are trafficked?

TPs come from all over the world, including Canada.

Countries such as Thailand, The Philippines, China, Moldova, the Ukraine and several African countries are most affected.

Causes: poverty; globalisation of the world economy; racism and sexism; corruption of government officials, police officers and international peacekeepers; failure of society to regulate the labour market; sexual abuse; drug addiction; the sex industry and the Internet.

The Internet has been called the world's largest brothel and connects pimps, traffickers and their customers e.g.

Craig's List.

In summary: greed and gratification.

Canada

TPs are forced to work as strippers, escorts, and prostitutes and Canadian customers and foreign tourists create the demand that fuels the sex industry.* There is also evidence that TPs work in construction, sweat shops, agriculture and as domestics.

In Canada many northern aboriginal women and girls are trafficked and forced into prostitution especially in the Prairie cities. Some are as young as four years of age.

From the BC & Yukon Bishops' Pastoral Letter:

“Persons trafficked trans-nationally into Western Canada are frequently from Asian countries and may arrive under lawful pretexts as visitors, students, refugees, family-class immigrants or temporary migrant workers. Having been deceived and unaware of their true fate, they fall victim to ongoing exploitation at their destination.”

How are they kept enslaved?

The Bishops say:

“Traffickers often maintain this cycle of exploitation through physical confinement; rape, physical assault and abuse; alcohol and drugs; financial control such as debt bondage; threats of harm to the individual or others; and abuse of the legal process, by seizing identity documents and instilling fear of deportation or arrest. Cultural and linguistic differences can also increase a person’s vulnerability. Some individuals manage to

Consequences

TPs are physically and psychologically damaged. They may suffer from depression, shame, lack of self esteem, drug addiction, bodily injury, disability, STDs (including Hepatitis B and HIV/AIDS), a higher risk of cervical cancer and murder.

These consequences affect their family, and especially their children.

THE CURRENT SITUATION IN VANCOUVER AND VICTORIA

Vancouver City Council, in a proposal currently before the past council, supported by a number of civic groups and politicians, may consider the legalization of prostitution and the establishment of brothels.

Victoria is going ahead with a Brothel. Producers of a forthcoming Global TV documentary state that there is no public opposition. A Petition has been circulated amongst Vancouver 'abolitionist' groups requesting signatures.

Source: Anglican Diocese of New Westminster, Feb 2009

THE LINK BETWEEN TRAFFICKING AND PROSTITUTION

Studies show that where legalization has been introduced – Germany, The Netherlands, parts of Australia, and Nevada, USA - it has led to a dramatic increase in all facets of the sex industry.⁵

With legalization the number of impoverished, foreign women trafficked into the sex trade in those jurisdictions has increased dramatically.

Furthermore, legalization has not put an end to the involvement of organized crime in controlling the prostitution trade.

Where legalization has been introduced, the illegal sector has dwarfed the legal sector.

Based on other countries experience, what would be the effects of the legalisation of prostitution?

- the number of foreign sex-workers, many from poor countries and many under-aged, would increase
- related illegal activities would increase
- prostituted women and girls would continue to report experiencing severe violence

In addition, given the recent experience of other large-scale sporting events, there would be an anticipated peak in the sex trade around the 2010 Olympics.

The Legal Status of Prostitution in Canada

Canada's legal response to prostitution has been to criminalize various activities associated with prostitution, though prostitution itself has never been illegal.

The following are prohibited by the Criminal Code of Canada:

- Running or occupying a bawdy house [s 210]
- Transporting a person to a bawdy house [s 211]
- Procuring or living off the avails of prostitution [s 212]
- Obtaining or attempting to obtain the sexual services of someone who is under the age of 18 in exchange for money, clothes, shelter, or anything else of value [s 212.4]
- All forms of public communication for the purposes of prostitution [s 213]

How is the Church reacting to Human Trafficking?

“The Catholic Church repudiates unequivocally this trade in human persons as "a shocking offence against human dignity and a grave violation of fundamental human rights."⁴ The Catechism explains unambiguously that the "seventh commandment forbids acts or enterprises that ... lead to the enslavement of human beings, to their being bought, sold and exchanged like merchandise, in disregard for their personal dignity" (no. 2414).”

BC & Yukon Bishops' Pastoral Letter

“The Second Vatican Council described as infamies
"whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman
living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation,
slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children;
as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men
are treated as mere tools for profit.” ”

BC & Yukon Bishops' Pastoral Letter

“Defence of the dignity of the human person is a basic principle of Catholic social teaching.”

“Catholic organizations across the world are fighting human trafficking from the highest levels at the United Nations to the very streets and ports where trafficked persons are victimized.”

Franciscans International has worked at the UN, and Franciscans Youth International is active.

In Canada, the CRC, SFO, CWL and Knights, among others are active.



What can we do?

1. Demand stricter sentences for convicted traffickers
2. Oppose legalisation of prostitution
3. Support protection of TDe.



Why should we demand stricter sentences for traffickers?

There have only been two convictions so far in Canada since 2005 when the Criminal Code made trafficking an offence.

Let's consider these two cases.

Imani Nakpangi, the first person in Canada convicted of human trafficking involving a minor, in Brampton, Ontario, received a three year sentence for the trafficking of a 15 year old girl. He made over \$350,000 sexually exploiting her over two years before she was able to escape.

His sentence? Three years in jail for human trafficking and two years for living off the avails of prostitution.

But with credit for time served in pre-trial custody, Nakpangi spent less time in jail for exploiting the girl than he did prostituting her.

Last year, the second person convicted in Canada, Montreal resident Michael Lennox Mark, received a two-year sentence, but with double credit for the year served before his trial, the man who horrifically victimized a 17-year-old girl over two years spent only a week in jail after his conviction.

Do you think the punishments fit the crime?

A private member's Bill C-268 to increase the minimum sentence to five years for trafficking persons under 18 years of age is sponsored by Joy Smith, MP and is expected to be presented to Parliament in early March 2009. Since the protection of children is not a partisan issue, Mrs. Smith hopes to have the support of all parties for her Bill.

What can we do to help the bill become law?





We can do four things:

1. Today we can sign the petition to the House of Commons supporting Bill C-286.
2. We can write to our Federal MP.
3. We can write to the Minister of Justice.
4. We can write to the Prime Minister.

Handouts are available to explain how to do this.



To oppose legalisation of prostitution we can join forces with others who are working to this end.

We can attend a meeting 6 pm on February 19, 2009, at the Convent of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, 3025 Nootka Street, Vancouver (1 block east of Renfrew but best approached by the rear through the parking lot of St. Jude's Church).

There will be a presentation and time for questions. Partners in the ecumenical and interfaith community will be asked to sign a letter stating their concerns regarding the legalization of prostitution. A draft of that letter will be available at the meeting.

Please RSVP to Norrie norrie@smartt.com by February 15, 2009, to let her know if you can attend.

Who from this Fraternity will attend?

We need a copy of that letter so we can sign it as a Fraternity!

Support protection of TPs.

The Canadian Council of Refugees (CCR) has drafted a Proposal for Legislative Amendment to Protect Trafficked Persons.

The CCR is an umbrella group of over 180 organizations across Canada which advocates for refugees, and related human rights issues. The Proposal was drafted after gathering input in cross-country workshops, and the formation of a national anti-trafficking committee to study the situation.

The CCR is seeking endorsement for its Proposal.

This Fraternity could consider supporting this proposal.

PRAYER

God of freedom and love, we are saddened to know that several million people are trafficked into slavery each year.

And that the effects of contemporary slavery are felt in every one of the 180 countries where Franciscans serve.

As daughters and sons of St Francis and St Clare we are tormented by this reality that will leave devastating repercussions for generations to come.

Our hearts grieve for what our minds can barely comprehend, particularly when we hear of women, men and children who are deceived and transported to unknown places.

We recognize this sexual and economic exploitation occurs because of human greed for money and gratification.

We are sorrowful and our spirits angry that human dignity is being degraded through deception and threats of force.

Help the violators to be transformed and enlightened to realize the scope of their unjust actions.

As Franciscans who serve the poor in a spirit of peace and justice, help us to protest this atrocity and work against the demeaning practice of human trafficking.

God of life, strengthen those whose hearts have been broken and lives have been uprooted.

Give us the light, grace, and courage to work with you so that we can all participate in the goodness of creation.

Fill us with the wisdom and courage to stand in solidarity with the victims so that we may all enjoy the freedoms and rights which have their source in Jesus Christ. Amen



Original from Franciscans Youth International
adapted from a prayer by Sr Genevieve Cassani and adapted by
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PAX ET BONUM