



The Pastoral Orientation on Human Trafficking

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The Migrants & Refugees Section (M&R) began functioning on 1 January 2017. It was established by Pope Francis and is under his direct guidance for the time being. Tasked with addressing Human Trafficking as well as migrant and refugee matters, its mission is to assist the Bishops of the Catholic Church and all those serving these vulnerable groups.

Pope Francis attaches enormous importance to the plight of the millions of men, women and children who are trafficked and enslaved. They are among the most dehumanized and discarded of people in the modern world and all over the world.

At the beginning of 2015, Pope Francis dedicated his annual Message for the World Day of Peace to Human Trafficking. “We are facing a global phenomenon that exceeds the competence of any one community or country,” and therefore, “we need a mobilization comparable in size to that of the phenomenon itself.”¹

In September 2015, the Holy Father told the United Nations that evils like “human trafficking, the marketing of human organs and tissues, the sexual exploitation of boys and girls, slave labour, including prostitution” cannot be met by “solemn commitments” alone. “We need to ensure that our institutions” - and indeed all our efforts - “are truly effective in the struggle against all these scourges.”²

To address the trafficking and enslavement of human beings, during 2018 M&R Section held two consultations with Church leaders, scholars and experienced practitioners and partner organizations working in the field. Participants exchanged experiences and viewpoints, addressing relevant aspects of the phenomenon. The Church’s full response was considered, in terms of strengths, weaknesses, pastoral and political opportunities as well as enhanced coordination worldwide.

This six-months process resulted in the document titled, *Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking*, approved by the Holy Father and meant to orient the work of the M&R Section and its partners. The *Pastoral Orientations* are for use by Catholic dioceses, parishes and religious congregations, schools and universities, by Catholic and other organizations of civil society and by any groups willing to respond.

¹ Francis, *Message for the World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2015.

² Francis, *Address to the Members of the General Assembly of the United Nations*, New York, 25 September 2015.

Besides their implementation in local programs as well as collaboration at a distance, the *Pastoral Orientations* also offer key points for homilies, education and media.

The *Pastoral Orientations* are deeply grounded in the Church's reflection and teaching and in its longstanding practical experience responding to the needs of men, women, boys and girls caught up in human trafficking and in slavery, both past and present.

At Vatican II the Catholic Church reaffirmed its historic concern about forced labour, stating that "slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions where men are treated as mere tools for profit rather than free and responsible persons [...] are infamies."³ Now "the Catholic Church intends to intervene in every phase of the trafficking of human beings" says Pope Francis; "she wants to protect them from deception and solicitation; she wants to find them and free them when they are transported and reduced to slavery; she wants to assist them once they are freed."⁴

Pope Francis's insistent teaching on HT provides the foundation for the present *Pastoral Orientations*. They have been approved by the Holy Father, who wants to promote "the coordination of various pastoral initiatives, both locally and internationally. The offices established by local Churches, religious congregations and Catholic organizations, are called to share their experience and knowledge, join forces and coordinate their activity regarding the countries of origin, transit and destination of those who are trafficked."⁵

The *Pastoral Orientation* do not pretend to exhaust the Church's teaching on human trafficking; rather, they provide a series of key considerations that may be useful to Catholics and others in their pastoral ministry, in planning and practical engagement, in advocacy and dialogue.

The structure of the document is very simple. After considering the legal definition of human trafficking that has been endorsed in international law, each of the ten sections of the *Pastoral Orientations* analyzes the cruel facts and challenges of one facet of the phenomenon. It then suggests a range of responses for the urgent consideration of all individuals and institutions of good will.

The *Pastoral Orientation* identifies ten main challenges to which the Church is called to respond: 1) the commodification and exploitation of human beings; 2) the demand aspect; 3) the reluctance to acknowledge human trafficking; 4) the identification and report of human trafficking; 5) the business connection; 6) the working conditions and supply chains; 7) the connection between human trafficking and migrant

³ *Gaudium et Spes*, 27

⁴ Francis, *Address to Participants in the World Day of Prayer, Reflection and Action against Human Trafficking*, 12 February 2018.

⁵ Francis, *Address to participants at the International Conference on Human Trafficking*, 11 April 2019.

smuggling; 8) the need for bolstering cooperation; 9) the provision of support to human trafficking survivors; and 10) the promotion of reintegration of survivors.

Aiming at studying and assimilating the *Pastoral Orientations* and to put them into practice, an international conference was held in Sacrofano, near Rome, from April 9 to 11 2019. The conference received 200 international participants, including Bishops, priests, men and women religious, project coordinators and pastoral agents, representatives of Catholic organizations and foundations and trafficking experts and survivors from various parts of the world.

The 3-day Conference was organized by the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development (DPIHD) in collaboration with Caritas Internationalis, the Pontifical Academy of Science, the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), Talitha Kum, the Santa Marta Group, and the Apostleship of the Sea (DPIHD).

The Conference was organized into seven working sessions. The first session focused on trafficking in persons in the context of sexual exploitation. The second session dealt with slave labour in construction, domestic work, fishing industry, high technology industries and agriculture. The third session was devoted to the close link between smuggling and human trafficking. The fourth session tackle forced marriage, servitude, begging, slavery and organ trafficking. The fifth session discussed the problems of identification, prevention and prosecution of human trafficking. The sixth session analysed programs for the protection of survivors. The last session focused on the urgent need for coordination and collaboration among the different actors: Catholics, religious organizations, NGOs, government agencies, international organizations and others.

A total of 695 proposals were generated in the course of the 7 sessions. Based on the indications of the participants, 42 proposals were identified as priority, with a sense of urgency and in a spirit of cooperation.

Copies of the *Pastoral Orientation* and of the 42 proposals have been distributed to the participants for their perusal.

Allow me to conclude this presentation by quoting the Holy Father: "Much has been done and is being done; yet much remains to be done. [...] To make its action more adequate and effective, the Church should welcome the help of other political and social actors. Engagement in structured collaborations with public institutions and civil society organizations will guarantee more effective and longer-lasting results."