



HISTORY of NY-CRC-STOP **New York Coalition of Religious Congregations** **Stop Trafficking of Persons**

In June 2005, seven sisters from the New York area representing five religious congregations attended a Conference on Human Trafficking sponsored by the USCCB-MRS (United States Catholic Conference of Bishops-Migrant and Refugee Services).

The Sisters of the Divine Compassion joined the core committee which began to meet monthly and has continued to the present with over 30+ member congregations now participating from the tri-state area. The coalition began to educate themselves and their congregations on all issues of human trafficking, and began annual workshops for religious congregations, college and high school students, community leaders, health and law enforcement officials and the general public. In 2006 during a day of discernment for the coalition, the following prayer was developed, which continues to be prayed at all our gatherings:

MOMENTS OF THE HOLY AMONG US

WE ARE CALLED and COMMIT TO...

- ❖ Tap in the root of our charisms
- ❖ Tap into and use the power of compassion
- ❖ Work with women and children and those human persons, who, through shame, conceal their necessities
- ❖ Respond to the needs of our time
- ❖ See the interconnection between our ministerial history and the issue of trafficking
- ❖ Diminish the anonymity of the 'victim' and put a human face on this issue
- ❖ Live in solidarity with these victims of the patriarchal 'powers'
- ❖ Use our power with and on behalf of these victims
- ❖ Transform violence
- ❖ Dismantle the barriers that cause and perpetuate human trafficking
- ❖ Recognize the presence of our founders and foundresses today – all at the same table

Following this meeting, the coalition expanded its invitations to congregations in the tri-state area, and there are 32 women's congregations and 3 men's congregations (representing over 8,000 members and associates) that are now active members of the coalition. Committees were established to develop goals and strategies in these three areas: Legislation, Educations and the development of a Safe House. The Legislation committee lobbies in Albany and Washington DC and works with congregations to influence legislation on both the state and national level, and have successfully strengthened laws to protect identify and protect victims, and to develop stronger penalties for perpetrators. The Education committee continues to offer annual workshops, and committee members offer workshops in parishes, high schools and colleges, for sisters and associates and in influencing major airlines, hotel chains and impacting changes for prostitution and sex trafficking at major events like the superbowl, the Olympics, etc. Knowing there was no emergency space for victims of sex trafficking to live, sisters in several convents opened beds for them, until recently after years of coalition planning, sister congregations established the first "Safe House" for victims of sex trafficking in the northeast.

The group continues to work to stop the DEMAND for human trafficking, and in the fall of 2014 will be developing plans to contact hotels and other vendors to educate staff in identifying sex trafficking victims during the 2014 super bowl events in Giant Stadium NJ. We look forward as a Divine Compassion community – to be part of the fight again human trafficking, to protect our children, women and men – from this form of modern day slavery growing locally and globally.

The Sisters, Associates and Companions of the Divine Compassion, as well as staff and students of our sponsored ministries, continue to be committed to and actively involved in putting an end to Human Trafficking.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING INFORMATION

Catholic Teaching and Human Trafficking

The Catholic Church has condemned human trafficking. During Vatican II, the Catholic Church reaffirmed its historic concern about forced labor, stating that "slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children, [and] disgraceful working conditions where [people] are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons" are "infamies" and "an affront to fundamental values rooted in the very nature of the human person."

In the 2006 annual statement on migration, entitled "Migrations: A Sign of the Times," Pope Benedict XVI deplored the "trafficking of human beings—especially women—which flourishes where opportunities to improve their standard of living or even to survive are limited."

September 22, 2012 marked the 150th anniversary of the day President Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation in the midst of the Civil War, stating that if the rebels did not end the fighting and rejoin the Union by January 1, 1863, all slaves in the rebellious states would be free. As we reflect on this monumental event in our shared history, we rejoice in this declaration that paved the way for the eventual freedom of 4 million persons in captivity. At the same time, we recognize that 150 years later, slavery still exists in the United States. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) vows to continue fighting modern day slavery, just as our brothers and sisters of conscience fought slavery in the 1860's. We ask that all of our partners and friends join the movement to eradicate all forms of modern day slavery.

Key Statistics

The United Nation's International Labor Organization's 2012 Estimate on Forced Labor provides some shocking statistics on the prevalence of human trafficking worldwide:

- Of the 20.9 million victims of trafficking and human slavery worldwide, 9.1 million victims (44 percent) have been trafficked internally or internationally.
- 11.8 million are subjected to forms of modern slavery in their place of origin or residence within their own national borders.
- 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.

Source : <http://usccb.org/about/human-trafficking/>

**24-Hour Hotline of the National Human Trafficking Resource Center:
1-888-3737-888**