

THEMES 2007 - 2008

Congregation

Trafficking in women

To fight against the demand for trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation



Provinces

Esther-Blondin



Notre-Dame-du-Perpétuel-Secours



Saint Joseph



Saint Marie



Immigration

Trafficking in women




Trafficking of women once again? Yes. This was the answer given by 850 Superiors Superiors at the Plenary Session of the UISG gathered in Rome in May 2007. As the members of the International Union of Superiors General are becoming more and more aware of the scope and complexity of this dossier

chosen as a priority in 2003, they are once again challenging us. Among some of the topics discussed, they included this reality and are inviting us to “read the signs with the eyes of God and with our women’s hearts”, and to “seek a prophetic response to the distress of millions of immigrants and displaced persons, of **children and women victims of human trafficking** seeking a more human life.”

We cannot turn a deaf ear to this convocation. We are well aware that the reflection made by the SSA’s regarding this theme has already given rise to many prayers and actions in the Congregation in solidarity with the victims of this global scourge. We have also witnessed that our collaboration with various organizations committed to this cause has created an unprecedented impact. We are still receiving echoes of commitments here and there that are filled with hope. This indicates that we must keep up the good work, because together, we are progressing! Did you know that...

- The Norwegian political parties have come to a consensus on a draft bill that will criminalize the purchase of sexual services rather than targeting women victims of prostitution? (cf. : List of communication CATW-L). This success is no doubt the result of patient groundwork by lobbyists and noted speakers such as Gunilla Ekberg whom hundreds of us heard in Montreal. Can we hope that this solution, which was once only applied in Sweden, will snowball to the rest of Scandinavia, Europe, and eventually reach us across the Atlantic?
- In last June, the Honorable Diane Finley, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, today introduced new measures to help assist victims of human trafficking brought into Canada from abroad. The new measures extend the length of the temporary resident permit (TRP) for victims of human trafficking to 180 days, up from 120. This extension also allows victims to apply for a work permit. The victims can also receive health-care benefits, including medical treatment and counselling services. Even the fees for these initial resident and work permits will be waived.
- In United States, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act expire in October. The bishops urged congress to intervene. “This legislation should be reauthorized adequately funded, and aggressively implemented,” said Bishop Barnes, of San Bernardino, California, chairman of the episcopal Committee on Migration. He notes that “as many as 700,000 persons are trafficked globally each year”. In his statement Bishop Barnes precised that “bishops want to call attention among Catholics and others of good will” and stated

“we must work together — church, state and community —

- to eliminate the root causes and markets that permit traffickers to flourish; 
- to make whole the survivors of this crime;
- and to ensure that one day soon trafficking in human persons vanishes from the face of the earth.”

Is this not what we have been working for during the last three years?

We must continue to take action supported by prayer

Prayer
Information
Petitions
Lobbying
ETC...

because there is still plenty of work to do...

As proof . . .

- More than twenty-five religious congregations and their collaborators have taken a collective stance against trafficking. Will we join this group in the near future?
- In Nigeria, a dream begun in 1999, became a reality. A shelter opened recently its doors for the repatriated victims of trafficking. Many agencies in Africa and Europe contributed to realize this project. Among them, The Union of Major Supriors of Italy and the Dutch Foundation of Religious against Women Trafficking in Netherlands. Construction and furnishing for the house were made possible with the collaboration of Caritas Italy, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Italy an the Mission Achen. But the work has just begun, the rehabilitation and integration of the returnees, all of whom have been exploited and carry with them a deep sense of hurt and emotional and psychological trauma. (Stop Trafficking, September 2007, Vol. 5, No 9, p. 5)
- Las Vegas has become magnet for the exploitation of women. According to the psychologist and researcher this city is “the epicenter of North American prostitution and sex trafficking”. It’s the place where women and girls by the tens of thousands are chewed up by the vast and astonishingly open sex trade.” The prostitutes are ruthlessly controlled by pimps, cluv owners and traffickers. The legions of Asian women in the massage parlors and escort services did not come flocking to Vegas from suburban U.S.A (Extracts from *Telegram&Gazette*, Sept 6. 2007). Draw your own conclusions...
- At the present time, Canada has better laws or measures to track down traffickers and to protect victims of trafficking in human beings. But in practice, things are different... Several cases, which could have been reported, prove that there are too many police agents who do not follow the law ; nor do they use the measures put in place or inform the victims of

their rights and the services that could be offered to them in Canada. This is the reason why four Korean women were arrested in a massage parlour. The four are supposed to have said that they were there voluntarily and that they wanted to be deported. Without making any further investigations, the police saw to their deportation. In Korea, the Korean government made an investigation and discovered a network of seventeen traffickers who had exploited these women victims of trafficking. If the police had made further investigations, they would have discovered that they were victims.



Following a report published on February 2, 2007, by a group of intergovernmental experts who met under the sponsorship of the United Nations, a United Church minister wrote, “the alarming scenarios (described in this report) concerning the effects of climate change on people, animals and plants should be an incentive to do all we can to reduce the gas emissions that have a greenhouse effect and to find ways of helping populations that are already affected by bad weather, drought, floods and rising sea levels” (cf. *Aujourd'hui Credo*, March 2007, p. 22). But in fact, what is meant by greenhouse effect and global warming? What are the links between these two elements?

Provinces

Some provinces have chosen to reflect on a second theme or again, they will remain attentive to what is happening in their milieu which to commit themselves where needed.

Justice News will develop these themes by using the material that the provinces will send in. This material can be based on information linked to the dossier, the description of an activity or an article on the subject... *Just News* will also keep its eyes open to find elements that can be of interest to you.

The cover page illustrates the themes chosen by the provinces. In future editions of *Just News*, the provinces will be identified by these symbols if need be. The present issue deals with the **environment** and **climate change**. This topic will be at the heart of the reflection made by the sisters and associates of the Esther-Blondin Province (Quebec) during the first quarter.

The greenhouse effect is a *natural* and *necessary* phenomenon. In fact, the surface of the earth is warmed by the absorption of warm infrared rays and natural gases in the atmosphere that provide an average temperature of 15°C (64.4°F); without this greenhouse effect, the average temperature would be 18°C below zero (-3°F). As for global warming, this is directly related to a drastic increase of greenhouse gases caused by humans (carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, methane, etc.), which destroy the ozone layer and are extremely detrimental. The greenhouse gas which causes most problems is CO₂ because of its presence in great quantities, its capacity to absorb infrared rays and its stability. It has an unlimited life span (Taken from “4 *mains*” a CDN Social Ministry quarterly bulletin, article by Nga Ho Duc, p.3).

Motorists and oil industries are often blamed, but are they the only guilty ones? Let us look at our own backyard to see how we too could reduce the emission of greenhouse gases simply by changing our habits.

Here are a few suggestions taken from the above article

- put the cover on the pot when boiling water;
- thaw foodstuffs in ambient air;
- use the dishwasher and the washing machine only when they are full;
- put insulating tape around doors in winter;
- open the window blinds early in the morning to take advantage of the sunrays.

Can you add more suggestions? ...



Until last spring, Sister Marie Zarowny represented the Congregation of the SSA's on the Board of UNANIMA International. No doubt you will remember the story of an experience the UI allowed her make last spring when she accompanied two Haitian women to the 51st Commission of the United Nations on the Status of women. As Sister Marie is now provincial leader of St. Joseph Province, she is unable to continue her involvement with UI because of this responsibility. Our sincere thanks for the service she fulfilled with generosity and effectiveness, as usual.





The Congregational Leader, in Council, chose Rita Larivee to fulfill this responsibility. Rita is a staff member and chief editor of the *National Catholic Reporter*. Her studies and background experience will be a precious contribution to the UI. The Congregation will once again be very well represented on this Board where sixteen congregations have sent a delegate to UI. Most of the members are from the United States and Canada. Altogether, these congregations represent approximately 16,000 members committed in a wide variety of ministries throughout the world.



UNANIMA International Board

After attending her first meeting, Sister Rita sent a report to the Social Justice Office and these are a few of the points she mentioned :

- In the last few years, UI has been working on trafficking of women and children.
- Last year, UI started preparing an educational program to put an end to this type of demand which is the greatest form of modern slavery.
- This pedagogical material, which will be ready at the beginning of 2008, will be sent to all the religious congregations and their colleagues.

Why attack the demand? It is because those who work with victims have realized that women victims of trafficking experience such trauma that it is almost impossible for them to be reintegrated into a normal social life. This scourge has to be stopped by trying to reduce the profits that encourage this type of exploitation. Prayer, workshops and government action will be the means used to promote this objective throughout the world.

**Deadline for articles
for next bulletin :
November 23.**

To contact us

Denise Caron, s.s.a.
Diane Boudreault
Phone : 514-637-3783, extension 216
Fax : 514-637-6864
E-mail : ssajust@ssacong.org