

Just News

*"I am the light
of the world.
Whoever follows me
will never walk in darkness
but will have
the light of life.»"*

(John 8, 12)



*"You are the light of the world.
Let your light shine before others,
so that they may see your good works and give glory to your father ."*

(Mt 5, 14 ;16)

Trafficking in women



COUNTER-TRAFFICKING SEMINAR

In October, 26 women religious from 33 countries throughout the world met in Rome to take on together the problem of human trafficking. The seminar was the inspiration of Sister Eugenia Bonetti from the Counter-Trafficking Office of the Italian Union of Superiors General. Sister Catherine Ferguson, SNJM, general director of UNANIMA International, was among the participants and represented the Sisters of the United States as well as UNANIMA International.

Why did Sister Eugenia set up this seminar ? She has a vision: gathering the Sisters in a worldwide network similar to the one that she started when she came back from Kenya where she had ministered for many years. Appalled, she found in Rome Nigerian women in prostitution. She also learnt that they had been trafficked to Italy, exploited cruelly by their traffickers, and sometimes killed. As she investigated further, she found that when these women were picked up by the Italian police, they were returned to their traffickers or deported back to Nigeria where they were rejected by their families. She formed a network Sisters Nigeria-Italy and then, by exchanging information as to the arrival of victims in Roma or in Nigeria, help could be given to them.

What did they do during the seminar? Informed about the situation of trafficking in the countries where the Sisters ministered, the participants learned tools to make a network functioning. Then, they moved ahead and formed their own network called *International Network of Religious against Trafficking in Persons* (INRATIP). They wrote a public statement expressing their message about trafficking in persons and chose an international steering committee to oversee the next steps of developing this network. The members of this Committee are from Australia, Nigeria, United States, Albania and Netherlands. Next meeting : January 2008, in the Netherlands to plan the next steps of building the network INRATIP. Meanwhile, individuals in the network will keep in touch with each other to share good practices and to advise each other when help is needed.

Excerpt from UNANIMA International, Updates November 2007 : <http://www.unanima-international.org/archives/updates/updates%202007/november.htm>

What is the SSA's part in the great international movement against the trafficking of women? Let us retrace the history of this commitment to discover where and how links were created for a common action against trafficking.



2001

The International Union of Superiors General (UISG) invited the women religious of the world to work together against the trafficking of women and children. The September 2002 declaration of the UISG dealing with the trafficking of women read as follows: “We pledge ourselves to implement these resolutions thanks to a system of networking among ourselves and with other existing organizations and to share our concerns within Churches and society.”

2002-2003

The Congregation of the SSA's ensured its collaboration with, among others, the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame and the Holy Names of Jesus and of Mary, to finance the creation, the planning, the translation and the presentation of “Lost in Traffic”. This theatrical play was entrusted to the Parminou Theatre Company; it was presented at the St. Anne College of Lachine in March 2003.



September 2004

CATHII (Action Committee against human trafficking internally and internationally) was born! This is when a few religious congregations, the Association of religious for the promotion of the woman (ARPW), the Canadian Religious Conference (CRC), the Association of Home Helpers of Quebec, and a Research Group of UQAM merged together to form an Action committee against human trafficking internally and internationally - - and this is how CATHII came to be. The members are the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, the Congregation of Notre Dame, the Sisters of Providence, - the three already affiliated to UNANIMA International – and the Sisters of St. Anne. The personnel of the Office for Social Justice suggested to the General Administration that the Congregation also become a member of UNANIMA International.

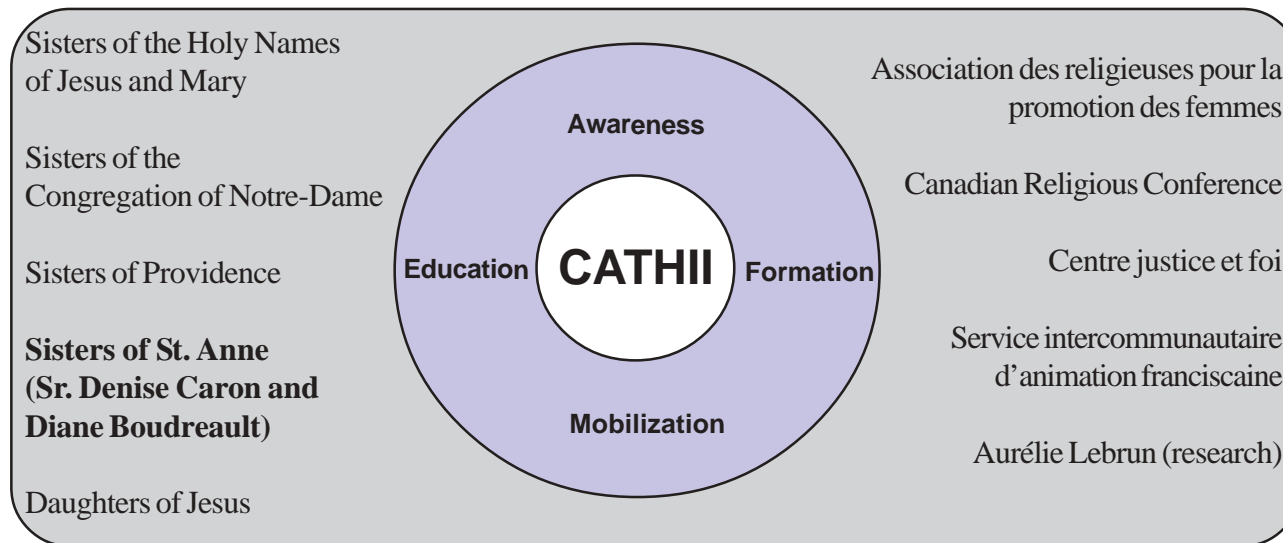


November 2004

The Congregation of the Sisters of St. Anne officially became a member of UNANIMA International. It appointed Sister Marie Zarowny as its representative on board of directors. Sister Rita Larivee replaced Sister Zarowny in the spring of 2007.

November 2007

Actual members of CATHII



... and good collaborations take place at the national and international level

UNANIMA
INTERNATIONAL
(New York)
**SNJM, CND,
SP, SSA, FJ**

The religious congregations, members of CATHII, are members of UNANIMA International, while SIAF is a member of Franciscans International. CATHII is therefore linked directly to two NGO'S recognized by the UN.

FRANCISCANS
INTERNATIONAL
Droits humains
(Genève et New York)
SIAF

The bishops of the United States have urged the Catholics to fight against human trafficking. In Canada, the CRC considers this cause as one of its priorities.

For the SSA's this theme has been the subject of particular attention for more than three years. Next spring the sisters and SSA associates will be invited to join efforts to support the anti-demand campaign organized by UNANIMA International.



Immigration

The SSA Social Justice Concern in Saint Marie Province has chosen **immigration** as second theme for this year. Faithful to this option, the Committee has endorsed a special holiday event, Las Posadas, the Immigrant Journey of Mary and Joseph. The event will be held on Sunday, December 16, 2007 at 3:00 PM, in and around the Boston Common. (The info below is taken from the Massachusetts Immigration and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA).

What is Las Posadas ?

Las Posadas (Spanish for “The Inns”) is a yearly tradition for many Catholic Christian Latin Americans, symbolizing the trials which they believe Mary and Joseph endured before finding a place to stay and where Jesus could be born. The ritual procession involves groups of adults and children going from house to house singing a traditional song requesting lodging (posada). Traditional celebrations hold that the pilgrims will symbolically ask for lodging at three or more different houses, but only the final one will allow them in. This is followed by the singing of traditional Christmas songs and a party for the children, including a piñata (basket of ...).



How Can a Celebration of Las Posadas Help Build Support for Immigrants? The story of Mary and Joseph’s search for shelter,

and the harsh response of many U.S. citizens, is the story of immigrants finding their way in a hard land where the door is constantly shut on their hopes and efforts. It can be a call to conscience for believers who revere this story to more directly address issues which help the lives of immigrants. This celebration can deepen the commitment of all people of good faith to assist these modern day “pilgrims” in their struggles.

If the Province has chosen this theme, it is because it believes that it is closely linked to trafficking. How?

Most of the time, the victims of trafficking are considered as immigrants, either because they have been stripped of their papers, or because they have crossed borders with false documents. Therefore, it is for this reason that they can be deported back to their own native country if they are stopped by the police. “U.S. Federal trafficking legislation has only been in existence since 2000. It provides stricter penalties for trafficking and gives victims a variety of benefits, including a special temporary visa for three years. The victim can get medical counseling, psychological counseling and emergency shelter. However, the catch is that the victim must testify against her traffickers—something that most girls, out of fear, will not do

Moreover, pressure must be placed on the federal government to protect and aid the victims of trafficking without penalty. These women and children are not prostitutes. They are victims of human rights abuses and must be treated as such. Otherwise, all of the clamor over illegal immigration in the U.S. is nothing more than political hot air.

Excerpt from an article by John Whitehead, Sex Trafficking : The Real Immigration Problem, *The Rutherford Institute Website* (4/10/2006)(www.rutherford.org)

Did you know that ?...

- In the United States, the state of Wisconsin is moving toward Anti-Human Trafficking legislation. Other states already have such laws. The state of Massachusetts has filled a bill, but it is presently awaiting funding from the MA Senate Ways and Means Committee.
- The Canadian government reacted to the 12th report of the permanent committee for the status of women entitled « From indignation to action to put a stop to the trafficking for sexual exploitation in Canada ». This document confirms that “this crime must clearly and strongly be suppressed”. It also states that steps have to be taken and that collaborations are necessary to overcome this plague... but nothing further...
- At the beginning of November, the members of the Social Justice Committee of the St. Joseph Province participated in a workshop on the trafficking of women.
- On November 15, representatives of the inter-ministerial committee of the Quebec Government met people interested in setting up housing for victims of trafficking. Sister Denise Caron of the Office for Social Justice attended the meeting organized by the CATHII sub-committee for housing.
- The Social Justice Committee of the Esther Blondin Province invited Ms. Lucie Lépine, well-known Quebec biblical scholar, to facilitate a day of reflection on social justice at the heart of Christian life and religious life. This day will be held at the Motherhouse on December 8.
- Sister Rita Larivee, new delegate of the SSA Congregation at UNANIMA International met, on last November 19, with the personnel of the Social Justice Committee and Sister Céline Dupuis. The purpose of this visit was to evaluate the situation regarding the anti-demand campaign in which the SSA's will be invited to participate.



*Merry Christmas
and
Happy New Year!*



**Deadline for articles
for next bulletin :
March 1, 2008.**

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