



Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time February 13, 2011 A

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

REVIEW OF THE BOOK: *STAYING FAITHFUL TODAY*

I am grateful to Mary Kay Kantz for putting together the following piece on the important issue of *Human Trafficking*

Do you know that: There are some 27 million slaves in the world today -- more than there were during the entire 400 years of the transatlantic slave trade. Modern-day slavery or “human trafficking” -- meaning forced manual labor without pay or protection in homes, farms and factories; forced sexual service; conscription of child soldiers; and trafficking for the purpose of organ harvesting -- is the second most lucrative criminal enterprise in the world today, second only to drug trafficking. This is the fastest growing business within organized crime.

While nearly every country in the world is involved in human trafficking, the United States is one of its largest marketplaces. Florida (along with Texas and New York) is one of the top three states for trafficking of women and children for forced domestic service or sexual exploitation through fraud, force or coercion. Of the nearly one million people trafficked across international borders every year, 70% are female and 50% are children, some as young as pre-school age.

Victims of trafficking are subject to rape, torture, beatings, forced abortions, starvation, forced drug addiction, and the psychological abuse of threats of the torture or murder of family members. They are kept isolated, terrified, confined, shackled, unable to communicate with the outside world.

How much do any of us know about this massive international trade in human indignity and suffering? Do we know that some of its victims may be living right in our own community, right now? To be honest, most of us are probably not aware of the existence and extent of human trafficking today.

Experts tell us that awareness plays a crucial role in the fight against human trafficking. So the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Migration and Refugee Services asked the bishops of Florida and California to pilot an

awareness campaign that they plan to launch soon on a national basis. This means that, as Florida Catholics, we have the opportunity to take a leadership role in this fight, which is rightly called the Neo-Abolition Movement. If you didn’t happen to be around to raise your voice against slavery in centuries past, now’s your chance!

For a start, read the Florida Bishops’ statement about their Human Trafficking Awareness Campaign included in today’s bulletin. Then look for the very informative articles in *The Florida Catholic* editions of January 14 and January 28, 2011. If you don’t receive our diocesan newspaper at home, look for a copy on the book racks in the church vestibule – or go to <http://thefloridacatholic.org>. Click on the “Human Trafficking Initiatives” link and the “Archived Issues” link on the homepage.

The U.S. State Department says that at least 600,000 – 800,000 people are trafficked across international borders every year. They warn that, within the United States, **anyone** may be caught in the web including legal and illegal immigrants, homeless persons, or children – anyone who is poor or vulnerable.

The Department of Justice estimates that as many as 200,000 American children may be trafficked for prostitution, pornography, or other sexually-oriented businesses every year. Until recently, most of these have been runaways or “throwaways,” teens from abusive or neglected backgrounds, often forced by their parents to leave home and live at risk on the streets. But, increasingly, children from more secure home environments are being lured into risk of trafficking by questionable social networking sites and other electronic means. It is imperative that families be aware of this very real danger.

Since most governments around the world make little or no effort to control or stop human trafficking, we need to do our part to raise awareness and put pressure on governments. Recently, a grass roots effort spread across the country to put pressure on the municipal authorities of Dallas, who chose to protect the image of their city and ignore the documented prospect that large numbers of women and children would be trafficked there for the pleasure of Super Bowl attendees. At least, this effort raised awareness and perhaps encouraged

concerned people to continue to work against the crime of trafficking.

In response to the initiative of our bishops, **Ascension** will continue to highlight the issue of human trafficking through prayer and education for awareness and action.

There will continue to be informational notices in the bulletin to help us all learn more about this issue and the practical steps we can take to help abolish modern-day slavery.

For an excellent introduction, see

<http://www.flacathconf.org/humantrafficking>.

Florida Catholic (Jan. 14, 2011) quotes the director of the Office of Respect Life for the Diocese of Venice: “Human trafficking is happening in our own communities, right here in our backyards, in our public schools, restaurants, hotels – if people knew they would be blown away. It’s happening everywhere, but if your eyes are open to it, you will be able to help.” And our Florida bishops remind us that “as you did it to the least of my brethren, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:40).

Staying Faithful Today — Fr. Alfred McBride O. Praem

Fr. McBride, an internationally recognized writer and catechist has a new book called *Staying Faithful Today*. The following are a few excerpts from the book’s introduction.

When this book first appeared in 1981, the crisis of fidelity in our culture and the church had already begun. Thousands of priests and religious women and men had abandoned their vows, and marriages and families were in crisis. Through it all, I wondered *why?* I concluded that our church and culture had not reached the tipping point in which they were able to realize the breakdown of fidelity to God, self, friendships, country, marriage, and celibacy. Of course, we were just singing in the rain or, more ominously, whistling in the dark. Our capacity for denial and delusion regarding our most precious values was—and is still today—unnerving.

Since then, our church has suffered the priest sex abuse tragedy and a scandalous failure to be celibate. And the church’s people have lost respect for authority, adopted a reckless disregard for the sanctity of marriage, and become addicted to the latest fads, including but not limited to drugs and alcohol. I believe the crisis of fidelity has now reached dangerous levels both for the church and its people, and I am convinced that the point I made in the first edition of *Staying Faithful* is now more relevant than ever. This is why I have titled this edition *Staying Faithful Today*....

New York Times writer David Brooks, in his column “The Broken Society” in March 2010, quotes prominent British writer Philip Blond:

Over the past generation we have witnessed two revolutions, both of which liberated the individual and decimated local associations. First, there was a revolution from the left: a cultural revolution that displaced traditional manners and mores; a legal revolution that emphasized individual rights instead of responsibilities; and a welfare revolution in which social workers displaced mutual aid societies and self-organized associations.

The sixth commandment says, “You shall not commit adultery.” Stated positively, the commandment means, “You shall practice fidelity in your marriages.” The high-profile adulteries among our political leaders, sports figures, and media celebrities contain a consistent picture of the stalwart wife trying to appear courageous by the side of her unfaithful spouse. I see them carrying the shame, pain, and hurt of the dream of marital love shattered. To think that a certain prominent presidential candidate betrayed his wife and continued to lie about it while she was suffering cancer stuns the conscience and arouses anger...

In my book, I will walk with you through the winding paths of today’s culture, which is ambiguous about God. In our best moments we know intuitively that stable relationships require a conviction that God exists, but even more important is the knowledge that God is a living being who thinks a lot of us. . . .

I will use stories, studies, advice that comes from others’ experiences, examples from popular and classical culture, and other forms of practical use, much as I did at the opening of this introduction to show all forms of fidelity. The book can also be used in small groups, book clubs, couples’ groups, and parish staff training. To this end, I present starter ideas at the conclusion of each chapter.

With prayer for continuous help from the Holy Spirit, let us begin this journey.

Chapters: 1) If you don’t love me you will not be faithful. 2) God’s fidelity to us. 3) Fidelity to oneself. 4) Staying faithful to one’s friends. 5) To one’s communities 6) To one’s marriage 7) To one’s priesthood.

Have a blessed week,

