



January – Human Trafficking Awareness Month Diocese of San Jose

Homily Suggestions

Introduction

These days I see careful consumers at the grocery store. They stand with a product in hand, studying the fine print that lists its contents before putting it into their grocery carts. They know ahead of time what is safe of healthy for their families.

What if all the things we buy came with such a listing of ‘contents’? These ‘contents’ would be a different kind of list – disclosing what went into producing the product at the price we pay. A clothing label might list: “produced in a sweatshop with forced labor – 14 hours per day, 7 days a week at \$2.00/hour.” A chocolate bar’s list: “made from cocoa beans, picked by kidnapped boys of the Ivory Coast; beaten if a bag of cocoa pods is dropped; paid nothing.”

An x-rated magazine with a brown paper jacket across the cover would bear a warning label: “some women and children pictured here held in debt bondage, coerced into bringing these photos to you to reduce their debt.” After reading such label, hopefully we would put the product right back on the shelf. It would be hard to live with the knowledge that what we bought actually contributed unwittingly to the slavery of the person who helped produce it.

But that is what is happening today with many of the things that have become part of our every day lives. It helps large companies get even larger – increasing their profits and keeping their stockholders happy. And concealing how the product is actually produced keeps us happy- because of the cheap price. But this cheap price comes at a very high price for so many of the world’s poor. Someone along the ‘production line’ is getting short changed when prices are too good to be true. This is where slavery (human trafficking) enters the picture. To keep production costs as low as possible, millions of people around the globe are caught in the web of slavery. We outlawed slavery in the U.S. with the 13th amendment in 1865. But after 140 years, slavery is not only alive and well, it is happening to more people that at any other time in history.

Body

Connect the reality of human trafficking and modern day slavery to the Scripture of the day.

Closing

What is our call in the face of these realities – and God’s intent for each one of us? It is a large and complex issue that can tempt us to feel powerless or hopeless. It is so easy to throw up our hands thinking there is nothing we can do. But we are also an empowered people, who could take steps to impact this devastating abuse of our brothers and sisters.

We want to know what is safe and healthy not only for our families, but for the many people who touch our lives through their labors. Their very lives are on the line!! How might I become involved in stopping human trafficking?

For additional information, visit: <http://www.stopenslavement.org/index.html>

Adapted from:

Human Trafficking: Modern Day Slavery

A Parish Resource Packet to bring about God’s intent for our world through awareness raising and action.

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