

“ONE DAY SOON”

By Rose Ann Van Buren, OP (Columbus, Ohio)

Human trafficking is a horrific crime against the basic dignity and rights of the human person. All efforts must be expended to end it. In the end, 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.

US Catholic Bishops on Human Trafficking, 2007

The enslavement of one human being for the benefit of another is not a new reality. This 21st century version of slavery reflects the shadow side of globalization – the ability to move human beings at will nationally and internationally, feeding a market of immense proportions. This trade in men, women, and children flourishes in response to the demand for services provided by forced labor and the sex trade. The number of victims is staggering. In 2009, it was estimated that over 2.5 million people were affected by a trafficking business worth \$150 billion. Poverty and lack of opportunity feed the trade in human beings. This supply and demand environment will continue until economic changes happen in developing nations and there is no longer a profit in the buying and selling of persons.

Profit from trafficking knows no boundaries. It is estimated that 45,000-50,000 human beings are trafficked yearly in the United States. Recently, Ohio made headlines in a report from the Attorney General’s office that noted hundreds were forced into labor and the sex trade in Ohio. The report recognized that Ohio is both a destination for foreign-born trafficked victims and a place of recruitment. Ohio’s statistics reflect the trafficking reality in much of the United States.

Those seeking justice for the victims of trafficking recognize that this “shocking offense against human dignity and grave violation of fundamental human rights” (John Paul II 2002) has no easy solution. Those who fall victim to traffickers often do so for economic reasons. Men and women are promised employment and housing. Parents give their children away in the hope of a better life for them. Natural disasters destroy the fragile structures that protect children; in the face of chaos and devastation, children are easily stolen and sold. (The recent earthquake in Haiti revealed the fears of a nation for its children. Haiti, one of the poorest of nations, knows its children are a commodity.)

The Dominican Family is committed to act against the evil that is the trafficking of human beings and has made it an issue of the *Dominican Call to Justice* for a number of years. The 2009-2012 *Dominican Call to Justice* [document](#) offers a Continuum of Action toward ending the trafficking of human persons. (Click the above link to find the Call to Justice online at www.domlife.org).

New Resource: Half the Sky (Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide), Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn.