

Concluding remarks of Caritas Internationalis for the Conference on the Pastoral Orientations on Trafficking in Human Beings "Releasing those who are unjustly bound" from the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for the Promotion of Human Integral Development.

Vatican City, 11.04.2019

On behalf of Caritas Internationalis and its General Secretary, Michel Roy, I want first of all to thank all the participants, some traveling from far away, for sharing and living together for a cause, each and every one bringing their experience and its specific context. There was very good energy in these past two days! And it's true: Together we are more!

The first new person I met at the Conference came to me or rather opened up to me as a survivor of the slave trade. Thank you for this! In our conversation, she told me that one of the challenges for her on her way to liberation was that some people, who supposedly should help her, revictimized her. This should make us all reflect! What is the look we have towards people ... survivors of trafficking?

There is a song sung by Mercedes Sosa, famous Argentine singer, who says: "So many times they killed me, so many times I died, however, I am here resurrecting". It is in that resurrection that we have to believe. And more! We need to give voice to the survivors of trafficking in our advocacy work!

Dr. Gianmarinero, special rapporteur on trafficking in the UN said that we have to offer something to the victims, something more than they had before. Sister Rita spoke "of new dresses." All our actions and interventions have to offer a long-term perspective to the survivors, so they are not trapped in slavery.

Offering a perspective presupposes a system of services and support. That costs, it costs money. In some countries faith-based organizations or other organizations are the ones, that offer services that the state should offer. We have talked a lot about the money that traffickers earn. We have spoken little or nothing about the budget that states make available to combat trafficking in human beings. We should monitor those budgets.

We have heard from several speakers that religion and culture influence vulnerability to trafficking. In the network of Caritas Internationalis, COATNET - Christian organizations against trafficking we have the dream of a wider interreligious cooperation. We believe that religious leaders can open hearts and minds. Pope Francis with the interreligious declaration of 2014, signed not far from here at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, has taken an important step, but we have to put it into practice more.

Finally, I would also like to remind you that this year an important event will take place, in this very same place: The Synod for the Amazon. Thanks to a recent visit to that region and Brazilian friends I learned that unfortunately the phenomenon of trafficking is strong there, historically but also because of the recent migratory flows. I hope - together with other organizations - that it is a topic that is discussed at this synod and that we can bring our rich joint experience to the event.

I end by thanking all colleagues of the Migrants and Refugees Section, my neighbors, for having taken great care of us!

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