Human Trafficking – Part II: A Winnipeg Example

The last newsletter dealt with the issue of human trafficking and an invitation to young persons to become involved.

The number of trafficked human beings in Canada is increasing rapidly and has to be stopped! Many of those young girls who are forced into prostitution come from an aboriginal or mostly eastern European background.

A common method that traders use to get their victims is "recruiting" aboriginal girls who come to the city and hang out at the big malls. In Winnipeg those places are Portage Place or Polo Park. Sometimes the recruiters are young men who make friends with those girls and pretend to care about them by supporting their settlement in the city. Unfortunately the girls don't know that the only aim those guys have is to have the girls fall in love with them and start to trust them as their 'boyfriends'.

For that reason Micah House Catholic Centre for Social Justice intends to start a youth project to combat human trafficking. We have to do something to help victims amongst us! The first aim is to found a group of young people to raise awareness. We are of course happy for any further suggestions and support. Hence I want to encourage every young person who is interested in combating human trafficking to register for our group and do something instead of watching! Anything is better than doing nothing and I am sure that we are able to help!

Not For Sale!
A conference on Human Trafficking
At St. Charles Church
320 St. Charles Street. on Sun., Feb. 20, from 2 to 4 p.m. What are the issues? What is being done? How can WE help? A question period and coffee will follow. Doors open at 1:30. Admission is free. For information contact Florence at 889-4941

Canadian Footwear calls for gently used shoes for those who need them

Do you ever think about how many miles you put on a pair of shoes and in what period of time? What if you didn't have a vehicle for transportation and you had to walk to all locations? Many people in the inner city are in that situation. They spend their days walking to and from wherever they need to go – grocery shopping, medical appointments, government offices, libraries. Shoes don't last as long when you're walking that much.

Canadian Footwear has a project to help with this need. They ask customers to bring 'gently worn' shoes to their stores which they then take to Siloam Mission where those who need shoes are able to obtain a pair.

On the lighter side

You know you're getting old when:

- your children start looking middle aged.
- you're cautioned to slow down by the doctor instead of by the police.
- your back goes out more than you do.

Catholic Centre for Social Justice

UPDATE

MICAH HOUSE
ACT JUSTLY + LOVE TENDERLY +
WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD

February, 2011

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

The motto of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is "To Serve in Hope". There are at least two parishes within the city of Winnipeg which have Saint Vincent de Paul Society Conferences – St. Timothy in St. Boniface Diocese (40 active members) and St. Vital Parish (fewer than 10 active members) in Ft. Garry. The mission of this organization is to:

- visit the Poor in their homes
- see Christ in anyone who suffers
- come together as a family
- have personal contact with the poor
- help an all possible ways

To this end they provide food, financial help, furniture, visits to the sick, Christmas hampers, medicine (at times), and donations of time to various other groups. Both parishes have active Youth Groups. St. Timothy provides mittens and scarves to the needy at Christmas and helps with the hampers. St. Vital parish also gets the students from St. Maurice School involved in helping the Sisters of Charity and at Villa Rosa.

Membership in SSVP is open to all who commit to the Mission of the Society and its Values, and are interested in developing their spiritual life. Vincentians attend meetings, pray with and for each other, visit the poor, and serve in any way they can as "no work of charity is foreign to the Society". More information is available at: www.ssvp.ca.

Reflect, discuss, take action

Mary Barrett has taken over the challenge of putting together the Micah House Newsletter. The format and content may be a little changed. The articles are succinct and challenging. It invites everyone to reflect, discuss and take action. Every parish exists to love God, neighbour and self. How that love is expressed varies for different congregations. Each parish has a specific gift or talent in service to others depending on its location, environment or history. The challenges enunciated in this Newsletter could be a call to a specific part of the Body of Christ.

Which part of the Body of Christ best describes your parish? Is this part identifiable to the community?

St. Paul the Apostle

Peter Burgoyne on "what form love takes in our parish"

- showing kindness in the workplace, neighbourhood, in the parking lot
- visiting the ill in the hospital
- visiting the ill/shut-ins in their homes
- volunteering time at parish functions
- remembering in prayer those who suffer mentally and physically
- financially supporting Development & Peace, Agape Table, Chez Nous

St. Margaret Parish-Little Britain

- Deal/inform ourselves about local social issues e.g. we have had an aboriginal storyteller. This spring we've invited Nigel Bart to speak to us about mental illness and Artbeat Studio, a studio for artists with a mental illness.
- help with a soup kitchen in Selkirk and have become part of a coalition of agencies addressing needs of the community.
- Our Place-Chez Nous donations of toiletries, socks, knitted articles, etc.

St. Charles Parish

On February 20, 2011, from 2 – 4 pm St. Charles will be hosting a conference on Human Trafficking. Guest Speakers will be Joy Smith MP, Shelley Glover MP and Lesley Sacouman. This will give information on what is currently being done and what remains to be done. Take the time to inform yourself about this very real problem in our city, province, country and indeed, the world.

The Cost of Money Transfers

Western Union, one of the world's largest money transfer companies charges a percentage of the transferred funds for their service. The World Bank recommends the percentage not exceed 5% of the total. Western Union does not comply. In 2009 Western Union's CEO was paid $8.1 million!

Many migrant workers use the service to send money home to family. The money they've worked for is decreased by the high percentage. Western Union funds charities which helps them look like a good corporate citizen. Are they? Perhaps a campaign by the general public will compel Western Union to use the World Bank guidelines. Sign a petition at www.avaaz.org or send your own email directly to Western Union. In Winnipeg there is an alternative to using Western Union: AMAL EXPRESS, 333 HARGRAVE ST. They are following the UN guidelines.

Food banks are a reality

Food banks have been a reality in Canada for decades and the need continues. The working poor need food banks because their wages are insufficient to meet their needs. Those who are unable to work find social assistance inadequate. What is it that society needs to do in order to eliminate food banks? Who is responsible for looking after the poor? Charitable groups? Governments? Society? Large Corporations?

How/what else could/should these various entities be doing?

Should:

- charitable groups provide more assistance in donations of foodstuffs?
- governments provide more affordable housing, tax credits, lower utility rates?
- society stop demanding tax cuts?
- large corporations engage their employees to form a charitable department?

Perhaps the Federal Government could be asked to provide brochures dealing with good nutrition as well as money management. These brochures might then be made available to food banks throughout the country. Winnipeg Harvest is building a new facility on their current location. They are planning to have a kitchen where they can teach cooking, nutrition, etc. Red River College has agreed to help with this project.

A culture of inequality

Frances Russell, in her *Winnipeg Free Press* (Dec.22/10) column states:

"Throughout most of the 20th century, western democracies challenged entrenched economic and financial power and took great strides to reduce entrenched economic and social inequity [inequality]. That ended abruptly in the mid 1970s."

Russell points out that changing the word 'inequality' to 'poverty' makes it easier for the wealthy and for governments to consign poverty to private charity.

Has inequality been brought about by the tax cuts the public demands and by globalization? Can/should any of those things be changed? Will there be an increase in the middle class in developing nations because of increased employment? Does that bode well for human rights issues in those nations? What needs to be done to change this culture of inequality here at home and abroad?

"The focus of people who really want to make a difference should be to encourage those looking for a hand up to seek out those opportunities and instilling the sense of personal responsibility and accountability needed to see them through. Better to instill confidence in a man than to rob him of his dignity by incessantly pounding the notion he belongs to a certain class of victims." Robert Marshall: WFP Sept. 18/10 (*What 'root' causes crimes of the rich'*)

What are some of those opportunities?

What can we as followers of Jesus do regarding these situations? Do we need to band together to develop ideas to build low-income housing? Should we use land available within the city to encourage the growing of food, and to invite those who require that food to help in this work? Would the socialization that a common task engenders help us to get to know more about the lives of the poor? These might be topics you, your friends, your organizations and even your work colleagues can discuss. There are always good ideas that come out of such brain storming sessions. One idea builds on another, and new ways of looking at reality may result in taking action which otherwise would not have happened.