



International Solidarity Reflection

School Sisters of Notre Dame

Shalom

Ending Modern Slavery

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Introduction

[Anti-Slavery International](#) defines modern slavery as “when an individual is exploited by others, for personal, political, social, or commercial gain. Whether tricked, coerced, or forced, the person loses her freedom. This includes but is not limited to human trafficking, forced labor, debt bondage.” Modern slavery takes many forms, all include control, involuntary actions, and exploitation. It is a global phenomenon and affects nearly 50 million people trapped in slavery worldwide, including women, children, migrants, and refugees. The climate change crisis and the new forms of slavery are related in different ways.

Call to Prayer

God, support all those committed to confronting all forms of modern slavery. Strengthen organizations to openly oppose injustice and violence and to defend human dignity. Bless missionaries serving people who live in material, moral, or spiritual poverty.

Experience

A young man, Pathamara, experienced tremendous cruelty, torture, coercion, and rejection in his life. When he was born, his father left the family. In despair and anger, his mother dropped the newborn off at the police station. Because of this, she spent time in jail. The grandmother raised the boy, who at the age of 14, was kidnapped and forced to join the rebels. He was taught how to fight and kill, first using an axe and a machete and later a rifle.

He greatly missed his grandmother and everyday village life and decided to run away. Unfortunately, his first escape failed. He was caught and brought back to the base and sentenced to death. The commander-in-chief, at the entreaty of his cousin, who had also been kidnapped and used as a private “mistress”, spared his life but ordered that he be severely punished.

Pathamara completely lost consciousness during the whipping. When he regained it, he was lying on the ground, covered in blood, in pain, with flies and various insects feeding on his body. No one came to help him or bring water or even wash his wounds. Only two weeks later, he was able to move and again had to obey orders to attack innocent people, kill, steal, etc. For two and a half years, he was in this inhuman captivity.

He decided to make another escape. His desire to be free was so powerful that he overcame his fear and had the strength to travel great distances and face tremendous difficulties. He prayed for God's protection and help. This time he succeeded.

Near home, he learned that rebels were killing people in the village. He hid in the church and slept under the altar. When the rebels left the village, he finally reached home. How happy he was that his grandmother was still alive! In a spirit of gratitude to God for saving his life, he joined the prayer group and the choir, became active in church, and continued his school education. He was my student at the Teacher Training Institute in Yambio, South Sudan. I was struck by his strength

of will and faith to throw off the chains of bondage. Pathamara, just graduated, is convinced that through education, he can form his students to live in peace, freedom, dignity and contribute to the transformation of the world.

Reflection

“Today, as in the past, slavery is rooted in a notion of the human person that allows him or her to be treated as an object.” ([Fratelli Tutti 24](#)) Slavery, in all its shapes and forms, goes against basic human rights as inscribed in the laws underpinning our societies today. Articles 1 and 4 of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) unequivocally remind us of those values: “*All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.*” In God’s eyes, each human being is a free person, male or female, and is destined to exist for the good of all in equality and fraternity. Modern slavery, in terms of human trafficking, forced labor and prostitution, organ trafficking, and any relationship that fails to respect the fundamental conviction that all people are equal and have the same freedom and dignity, is a crime against humanity.

We call on the world to heed [Sustainable Development Goal 8.7](#), and to use every form of legal enforcement and technology to end slavery, bonded labor, human trafficking, and child labor for all national and global supply chains. ([Joint Declaration of Religious Leaders Against Modern Slavery](#))

Our SSND call is to collaborate in creating a more just and human world by educating, advocating, and acting in collaboration with others for the dignity of life ([Love Gives Everything](#)). We are challenged to take up this call in the face of the appalling reality of modern slavery.

What does God want from us? “To do justice, to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Mi 6:8). Take the risk to defend the dignity of all life, release hope, and awaken joy because human dignity is the horizon of freedom, justice, and peace. This is a call from God. Through common actions, we will build viable paths to human liberty and dignity. As we become increasingly aware of the national and international reality of modern slavery, we must do justice, love mercy, and pray for God's courage and transformation to take concrete actions.

Action

Modern slavery affects everyone. How can we stop it?

- Educate ourselves, raise public awareness, and work toward abolishing all forms of modern slavery.
- Collaborate, network, and advocate with groups, movements, organizations, and other religions to prevent, heal and bring to justice the perpetrators.
- Research the supply chain of what we consume and choose fair-trade products.
- Campaign for the application of laws holding companies and organizations accountable.

Closing Prayer

God, may the perpetrators of modern slavery who spread the civilization of death be converted. Strengthen hope and restore dignity in all life. Keep the light of justice and peace burning in our hearts so that we commit ourselves to dissolve the chains that enslave people. Amen.

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