

Sisters Raise Awareness on Human Trafficking Issue

Last year the Monastic Council distributed a questionnaire about social justice areas that we at Sacred Heart Monastery as a community would be interested in focusing on 2016-2017. As a community we decided to focus on *human trafficking* and the Death Penalty. The Social Justice Committee was asked to assist with these choices. The monastery has begun this focus. We encourage others to become educated about this national and state problem, to be aware of one's surroundings and those who are suspicious, and to get involved in helping stop this crime.

The monastery began educating themselves on the issue of human trafficking with a community night in October. Sr. Joelle Bauer presented a power point with information on this topic. Various slides were shown with information about trafficking. It began with the statement: "Slavery was abolished 150 years ago, yet more people are in slavery today than any other time in history." *Human trafficking* is the act of tricking, luring, or forcing a person into leaving their home to work for little or no payment. There is a variety of types of trafficking yet the two main ones are labor (18%) and sex trade (79%). An example of both types may include working as an indentured servant or hotel maid or ending up in prostitution. This business generates \$32 billion in profits each year and exists in every country in the world. It is a global problem.

In the United States the average age of entry into commercial sex trade is 13 years old. The majority are girls, although boys are also trafficked. Four main people are involved in the trade: **recruiter** who lures the person, **trafficker** who transports and sells the person, **the victim** and the **trafficking industry** – those who purchase and use the victim.

The Sisters watched a video entitled, "Hidden in Plain Sight". This is about human trafficking in South Dakota and some things that are being done to combat it. South Dakotans are especially vulnerable to human trafficking because of the Indian reservations, Sturgis rally, hunting season, and the middle to west traffic pipeline of the Interstate highway.

Sacred Heart Monastery and some of the living groups have made donations to Pathfinder Center in Ft. Thompson, SD. This is a shelter for victims of human trafficking. Another local option in Sioux Falls is named Call to Freedom who "offer safe housing, mental health counseling, medical assistance, chemical dependency, transportation, and other supportive services."

The Sisters pray for the elimination of human trafficking weekly at the monastery Eucharistic celebrations and at Noon or Evening Prayer during the Liturgy of the Hours.

The Social Justice Committee is arranging for a speaker from the Avera Health System to speak at another monastery community night in the future.

Sources:

1. Statistics can be found at: United Nations Office in Drugs & Crime Website <http://www.slideshare.net/CSIWorld/unodc-human-trafficking>.
2. Quote above can be found at: <http://www.ccasa.org/where-weve-been-and-how-we-can-move-forward-in-the-fight-against-human-trafficking/>.