

THE COALITION OF CATHOLIC ORGANIZATIONS  
AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Presented by

Dr. Stephen M. De Luca

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Rescue and Restore Coalition Meeting  
Empire State Coalition  
121 Sixth Avenue  
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I'd like to thank Margo Hirsch for inviting me here today, the Empire State Coalition for hosting this event, and all the groups that are represented here as well as everyone who came out today to participate in this event. This panel discussion is very timely, as the 2008 TIP Report just came out two days ago, and the day before that, Ambassador Lagon made a presentation at the United Nations on Enhancing Multilateral Cooperation to Prevent Trafficking in Persons.

In the few years that I've been working on the issue of human trafficking, I've come across a number of groups and individuals who are dedicated to this cause, but there are few opportunities for coalitions like ours to get together and share what we're doing together. It's important that we make time to have meetings like this more often, and create mechanisms for us to share resources and cooperate with each other on an ongoing basis.

Allow me to say a few words to introduce myself. I'm Stephen De Luca. I am an attorney working here in midtown Manhattan, and I am a Christian Conciliator, helping Christians and churches to respond to conflict biblically. I have some training and experience in conciliating sexual abuse cases and in the diagnosis and treatment of sexual addiction.

I first became involved in the fight against human trafficking when a friend of mine proposed I apply for a job as special counsel for International Justice Mission overseas. As I became more aware of the issue, I collected information from Rescue and Restore and joined the Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking, which I'll refer to in short as the Catholic Coalition. In addition, I recently formed a group called NYC Lawyers Against Human Trafficking (NYC LAHT). We held our first meeting last Thursday at the headquarters of Covenant House International, and our next meeting will be July 10<sup>th</sup> at 7PM.

The Catholic Church has spoken up for the cause against human trafficking on a number of occasions. For example, in a Pastoral Letter Concerning Migration, the Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States said:

"Trafficking in persons—in which men, women, and children from all over the globe are transported to other countries for the purposes of forced prostitution or labor—inherently rejects the dignity of the human person and exploits conditions of global poverty."

His Holiness Benedict XVI, at his "ad limina apostolorum" visit to the bishops of Sri Lanka, said:

"No effort should be spared to urge civil authorities and the international community to fight these abuses and to offer young children the legal protection they justly deserve."

The Catholic Coalition consists of national and international Catholic agencies working to eliminate the scourge of human trafficking. The main purposes of the Coalition are to

- Formulate plans for combating trafficking and serving its victims;
- Promote development of services for trafficking victims and approaches to empowerment of trafficking victims;
- Dialogue with government officials and others engaged in public policies affecting this issue; and
- Devise strategies for public education, awareness-raising and grass roots action.

More than twenty Catholic organizations form this Coalition. Some are partners, and some like me are simply individuals who wish to work with the Coalition on this great cause. Each member organization has its own network of concerned citizens who can

work together to further the commitment to combat trafficking. Some of our members are also included in the New York Coalition of Religious Congregations Against Human Trafficking.

Catholic Coalition organizations engage in combating human trafficking by

- Providing safe haven for trafficked adolescents and young adults in the U.S.;
- Delivering direct services to adult and child trafficking victims in the U.S. and overseas;
- Conducting prevention projects overseas, especially in Eastern Europe, India, and Latin America;
- Providing national training and technical assistance on the issue of trafficking; and
- Meeting with government officials, including Senators and Representatives in the U.S. Congress, and representatives from the U.S. State Department's Office to Monitor & Combat Trafficking in Persons, the Department of Health & Human Services, and the Department of Justice.

The Catholic Coalition meets three or four times a year. Two of these meetings are held at the offices of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migration and Refugee Services in Washington, DC. The third meeting is held in a different geographical location and hosted by one of our members. For example, in January of this year, we hosted a Coalition meeting here in NYC at the headquarters of Covenant House International.

The Coalition is committed to its own on-going education, providing at each meeting an educational component presented by outside expert(s) on a relevant issue. For example, anti-human trafficking practitioners from Central America presented at a meeting in January. Ambassador Lagon from the Department of State presented at a Fall '07 meeting. In our last meeting a month

ago in Washington, DC, we had researchers from Georgetown University present on their findings regarding the trafficking of children.

A second component is the in-depth reporting on individual member projects, for example, the work of Sister Helene Hayes on interviewing victims of trafficking from five countries in Asia and Europe, and from the United States.

A third component addresses opportunities to share resources and wisdom with each other, extending this into action when appropriate. An example of this is the networking to cover outreach requests in various parts of the country.

Allow me to list a few examples of what Catholic Coalition members do:

Covenant House, USCCB/MRS and other Catholic Coalition members participated at the Vienna Forum to fight Human Trafficking in February;

USCCB/MRS and others work on Capital Hill and have testified before Congress on the reauthorization of the TVPA;

The Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC) provides legal assistance to victims of human trafficking and has provided a 300-page Guide for Legal Advocates Providing Services to Victims of Human Trafficking;

Some members are dedicated to raising awareness and outreach, while others work to ensure availability of safe housing and services to victims;

We had a report in January on how to provide care for the trauma victims suffer from their trafficking experience; and

A Coalition member who teaches at St. Thomas School of Law reported in May that her faculty approved a curriculum she prepared for teaching human trafficking as a course in law school, and she was encouraged to prepare a text book on the subject.

In addition, USCCB has several divisions that work on human trafficking issues: primarily, Migration and Refugee Services, but also Catholic Campaign for Human Development, Committee on Women in Society and the Church, and International Justice & Peace.

USCCB/MRS, in support of the U.S. Catholic bishops' Committee on Migration, responds to the international phenomenon of trafficking in persons in several ways.

USCCB/MRS administers three federally funded programs that provide services to human trafficking survivors. One is a contract from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement (HHS/ORR), and two are grants from the U.S. Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime, to raise awareness about the issue of trafficking and serve the victims. And as I have mentioned, USCCB/MRS also convenes the Catholic Coalition several times a year where we are united to eliminate the scourge of human trafficking, through public education, advocacy, and services.

USCCB/MRS has programs to meet the needs of trafficked adults and children through grants from HHS/ORR. Someone identified as a possible trafficking victim, but is not yet certified as such, may also be eligible for assistance. USCCB/MRS works in

partnership with Catholic Charities programs in Oregon and the Mid-Atlantic states to provide case management services, and training for local law enforcement and service providers, through grants from the Department of Justice/Office for Victims of Crime.

There is so much more I could say. The important thing is that the Catholic Church, the Catholic Coalition and its member organizations and partners are committed to eliminating the scourge of human trafficking, and we are always willing to hear from others as to what they are doing and see how we might work together.

I would like to let you know of an event coming up a week from tomorrow that is being hosted by a Catholic Coalition member:

Next Saturday, June 14<sup>th</sup>, UNANIMA International will be holding a training session on how to address the demand for trafficking, particularly the demand for sex trafficking. It will be held at the Common Room of Cabrini Apartments located at 220 East 19<sup>th</sup> Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenues. The session starts at 9AM and will run until 2PM.

I would also like to invite you to come to the next meeting of NYC Lawyers Against Human Trafficking on July 10<sup>th</sup> at 7PM.

In closing, let me say that we should always keep in mind the power of prayer. Let us all, regardless of faith, pray daily for all those who are working on this great cause; for the victims that they be rescued and find the help they need to restore their lives; and I might say for the perpetrators too, that they may have a conversion of heart, be held accountable, and be brought to justice.

Thanks again for having me here today.

***Member and Partner Organization List:***

African Women Religious Conference  
Catholic Charities USA  
Catholic Health Association  
Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.  
Catholic Relief Services  
Commonwealth Catholic Charities  
Conference of Major Superiors of Men  
Covenant House  
Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY  
Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas  
Jesuit Refugee Services  
Leadership Conference of Women Religious  
Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns  
National Catholic Student Coalition  
National Council of Catholic Women  
School Sisters of Notre Dame/Shalom North America  
Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
Trinity College  
USCCB/Catholic Campaign for Human Development  
USCCB/Committee on Women in Society and the Church  
USCCB/International Justice & Peace  
USCCB/Migration & Refugee Services

For more information and linked resources, go to:

<http://www.usccb.org/mrs/traffickingweb.shtml>

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