

## Tumaini

The Encyclical Laudato Si has invited me to reread in a contemplative way our relationship, in reference to the planet Earth, among us and with God.

Laudato Si explains the theme of the care of our common home from different points of view I would like to deepen one of them: the care of myself, my body, the temple of the Holy Spirit, where God dwells among us (**1 Corinthians 6, 19**) in connection with modern slavery in today's world: Trafficking in Persons (TiP), the refugees, the vulnerable people, and those who live in the peripheries of our society.

In our days, human dignity has been threatened and put at risk as a consequence of indifference, individualism, globalization, and economic growth among other things.

To start with, I would like to quote the text of the book of Genesis cited by Pope Francis **"Yahweh asked Cain, Where is your brother Abel? I do not know, he replied. Am I my brother's guardian? What have you done? Yahweh asked. Listen! Your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground..." Gn. 4, 9-11.** The question that God asked Cain in reference to his brother Abel, is existential in our missions today "Where is your brother?"

Where is my brother and sister: victims of human trafficking, refugees, impoverished, marginalized, humiliated, oppressed, and so on (cfr. No 91, 123).

It is not easy to find a solution to these realities which are so urgent, where individualism and competitiveness dehumanize the dignity of human beings, but we can approach those who want to defend and protect their dignity against any kind of violation and threat, to make ours their daily struggles in a qualitative way.

I feel called once more to encounter my brother and sister in order to make his or her journey my own and to contemplate God, the God of life, who seeks to live and make life emerge where it seems life has no meaning. Yes, my brother, my sister is the one that is crying out to be attended to in a holistic manner, that is, not only to be provided with material things but also to receive what promotes his or her being in the society, to stand on their own. Therefore he or she stands on his or her own not only to recognize his or her own dignity but also to defend it against any system that pretends to reduce it into a commercial object.

Nowadays the human being is seen as a commercial object. Who are those who buy, and why?

Individualism is affecting our lives to the point that we forget where our brother-sister is.

I come back to the question: *Where is your brother? As the blood of Abel is crying out* and this reminds me of the last verse of the Hymn of Lauds, Thursday of the second week, in Spanish:

*¡Que se acabe el pecado! ¡Mira que es desdecirte  
dejar tanta hermosura en tanta guerra!  
Que el hombre no te obligue, Señor, a arrepentirte  
de haberle dado un día las llaves de la tierra.*

It makes reference to the desire for the end of sin, to the possibility of not leaving so much beauty, life of war in destruction. It is a prayer to God that our actions, or omissions may not make Him regret having given to the man and woman the keys of the common home, our lives.

Every kind of slavery that destroys the dignity of human beings (cfr.No.139) is for us a main reason to stand up, but not alone. Instead, we accompany the people with whom we walk patiently in a process where they are the protagonists of their history. In this way we can denounce together any attempt to reduce Life into an object that is sold to the highest bidder.

It is not rare for us to read daily that countless numbers of people disappear, mainly women and children; that many others cross the sea to reach Europe as refugees; that the countries which recently created democracy are having internal conflicts, conflicts that are causing the death of women, children and elderly. All these situations create disharmony and create a big demographic problem, as well as the breaking down of the family unit. What is the society that we are living in or building? (cfr. No 160, 179) If we have poor it is because there are those who make people poor.

There is a disorder in living the values in our society, where money and position have priority, where these have more value than the human being. We see ourselves in front of those who do not want to dialogue and to buy at any cost those who will never have a price because we have already been ransomed (*Ap.5,9*).

For some people in our society, to make common cause is no longer a principle to live solidarity and co-responsibility for what my fellow men and women are living. At the present, for many people to hear or read news about people who are disappearing or dying has become something that does not catch their attention, does not say anything to them and they prefer to create an unreal world, a lack of willingness and responsibility to help those who are crying out to get their concern. This situation is happening because the most important thing is missing in their lives, that is, the real encounter with the **EVENT: JESUS CHRIST**.

In Nairobi, it is common, to see women sitting around the streets, waiting for someone to give them a job: washing clothes, cleaning a house, cooking, taking care of children, among others. These women, trusting that in this day they can get something to put on their tables for their children, accept to go with those who hide their real intentions. When they go, the majority of them disappear. Others are raped, mistreated, and never come back to their homes. This is seen by everybody, but civil society has not yet got involved in solving this problematic situation.

In addition, it is possible to see children smoking, sniffing, drugs addicts or drunkards; they do so to avoid being hungry, or because they do not have a family that provides for their needs, or carry out their responsibility towards them. It is important to point out that the lack of policies of protection for children and young people carries as consequences their becoming easy prey for those involved in trafficking.

Some of these victims (children), go to the house of people that are considered of a high economic status, to do jobs such as to play with their children, to cut grass, to clean; but in reality they find a prison; they suffer violations and abuses, they are beaten and mal-nurtured without the possibility to escape or to ask help. Some suffer the removal of their organs and they are even used in sexual pornography.

Again, the political system is very weak and insufficient in facing these issues.

It is evident that criminal organizations work more effectively: **“...For the children of this world are more astute in dealing with their own kind than are the children of light.” Lc. 16,8.**

Moreover, many times “*culture*” (cfr. No 200), is used as a shield to justify practices that go against human dignity. (circumcision of women, forced/arranged marriages, dowry, human sacrifices, witchcraft with the blood of albinos, etc.). There, the Seed of the Word is ready but it cannot grow.

The care of our common house, in some places, is still in its beginnings. The process of Evangelization is still young in Africa, in comparison with Europe and Latin America, even though we are working in awareness about the care and protection of the human dignity.

As has been described, we face a problem with different points of view but at the same time there are possible solutions. These solutions come from the impulse that we experience when we see those people hoping to be rescued, valued, which makes us think that it is possible to network and unite efforts. Therefore, to look for possible collaborators in this networking, knocking their doors, windows, is part of the creation of awareness about the problem, a way to eradicate any kind of slavery and degradation of the human being.

Even though there is indifference, human degradation and interior emptiness, we can also see, the interest of many young people, agents of their own lives, who are seeking to be bridges of information to regenerate Life. They put themselves at the service of others in their work and ideals to create a different society that respects and protects life, where everybody has a place and an opportunity. These young people encourage us to see the future with optimism and hope. This group is working in prevention and protection against Trafficking in Persons (HAART)

<http://haartkenya.org/>

We can see a good number of persons who are working to eradicate TiP, the modern slave. NGO's commitment to build a society without TiP are creating awareness at different levels, and we are part of them in this work (cfr. No 202, 205).

There are other initiatives with the religious Congregations. A few months ago we participated in the Coalition (consecrated women and men and lay people) who want to give a response to TiP. We will work in four areas: Prevention, Protection, Persecution and Police and Cooperation with other likeminded organizations. Our goal is to eradicate TiP. We are at the beginning, but we want to be a seed of Life and Hope.

There is no doubt that we feel challenged with the high percentage of victims of the system, the inconsistency of "values" that the actual society imposes, lack of opportunities for the youth, divergence between rich and poor, lack of serious and constant commitment of the members of the parishes. But at the same time we continue believing in the effort of simple people in their daily life. This helps us to remain with a firm hope that death has no power on us. The constant encounter with the Word of the Lord gives us the right direction in networking and continues weaving a prophetic style of life in today's world.