The Pope Dedicates Via Crucis Celebrations to Migrants

Roberta Cutillo (April 19, 2019)

Tonight, on Good Friday, the Pope dedicates the traditional Via Crucis (Way of the Cross) celebration held at the Colosseum, to the plight of migrants and victims of human trafficking, the “new crucified; victims of our closures, of powers and legislations, of blindness and egoism, and above all else, of our hearts hardened by indifference.”

The celebrations of the Via Crucis [2], which recall Jesus’ journey from the moment of his betrayal and capture to that of his crucifixion, take on an additional meaning on the night of Good Friday [3], as Pope Francis [4] draws a parallel between this Biblical plight and the one endured today by migrants and other victims of power and self-service.

At each of the 14 stations of the cross, the Pope recites a meditation written by the head of the 'Slaves No More' Association, Eugenia Bonetti, [5] an 80-year-old missionary who has devoted her life to helping the victims of human trafficking and sex slavery.

These meditations are strong and to the point, calling out governments, legislations, all those who

are in power to stop the suffering of their fellow humans but choose to remain indifferent. “Deserts and seas have become the new cemeteries of today,” one of them reads, “there are no answers to these deaths. There are, however, responsibilities [...] while governments argue, locked inside the palaces of power, the Sahara fills with the skeletons of people who have faced pain, hunger, and thirst.”

Through God, Bonetti invokes the people holding positions of power, asking them to listen to those who are suffering, “those without a home, the young without hopes, without jobs, and without perspectives.” She also brings up “the immigrants forced to live in shacks on the margins of our societies, after having suffered unspeakable hardships,” noting how these are “unsafe camps, burnt and destroyed along with the dreams and hopes of thousands of men and women.”

The missionary also discusses the tragedy of human trafficking, the issue to which she has devoted her life. “Everything is for sale,” she condemns, “even the bodies of children.” The meditations point out how we are all responsible for what is happening, how indifference is the real enemy. This also means that we have the power to change the situation.

Bonetti urges everyone to welcome diversity because ‘the other’ is “not a problem, but a precious resource for our blinded cities.” and recognizes the volunteers and NGOs who “during these last months, have risked their lives, particularly in the Mediterranean Sea, to save those of many families in search of safety and opportunity.”

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