

ONLY CHILDREN ALONE

Each Nativity has to be a joy. Life overlooks again compelling and joyful, giving us a future. Everyone cheers up and prepare himself to celebrate the parents and the newcomer. For a moment suffering and problems are left behind and the courage to go on is found.

Later on, as the sip of wine that warms up and comforts has been drunk, one comes again to look around and the reality gives us a resounding slap.

At this time of the year a certain "Child" comes to mind, the one that was sent by his Father, as said, to redeem us and to invite us by his example not to repeat the same errors again.

In what way the world's society has put into practice the sacrifice of the only child of Him who created the world?

After millenniums, in what way men and women has adapted coherently themselves for embrace and put into practice this memorable teaching?

Are we able to place ourselves in front of the mirror that cannot lie, and examine us attentively?

Let's make together a brief and partial round up around the world with a special attention to children and let's ask ourselves why there is injustice and whom it does benefits.

The bishop of Puno (Peru) says that: "today we Christians succeed to disguise the birth of Christ, forgetting the reality and the context in which he was born, because we don't want Jesus to put to embarrassment our live". Mons. Jorge Pedro Carriòn Pavlich adds: "Similarly, now we don't want to see that it is God that has become man for us. We follow the commercials - spiced brioche, rockets, chocolates, presents, alcohol for celebrate Christmas, but the Child Jesus is not there. We are undergoing such a strong social and economic pressure that we forget to admire the Child Jesus".

In his diocese there are more than 200.000 children who have been exploited and forced to work in mines and constructions, in transport or agriculture.

WORK EXPLOITATION OF THE IGNORANCE. CHILDREN AND EDUCATION

According to the UN, the number of children who lives in countries damaged by conflicts and who don't go to school is around 29 millions. More than half of the 54 millions of children in school age around the world have no education access and live in countries in a state of war and destruction. Syria, the Central African Republic, Mali, Democratic Republic of Congo are just some examples of the recent period. Just Syria has more than one million children refugees.

All over the world there are about 215 millions children that are working, most of them doing full-time job, with no possibility to go to school or play. This is according to the numbers of the International Labour Organization.

There is also the other side of the coin like for example the native children in Mexico who don't want to speak their native languages for fear of discrimination.

According to a research done by the faculty of Anthropology of the University of Veracruz, this phenomenon reflects the lack of integration of the native populations during the process of education, development and growth of Mexico.

There are 600 millions female adolescents living in developing countries around the world and most of them live in poverty, are victims of gender discrimination or are subject to different kinds of violence, abuse or exploitation.

All of them are really vulnerable and often drop out of school limiting by this the possibility to find a decent job and to have independence. Thus they become more and more subordinate to their own torturers.

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Female adolescents in Brazil of the ethnic groups: tariana, uanana, tucano and barè have found the courage to report their torturers, helped also by a nun who has been working together with the native populations of Amazonia since 1984. She risks her life every day to protect these children. In Amazonia a girl of 10 or 12 worth little Euros, sometimes like a pack of candies or a t-shirt. The police stores the reports of the mothers, that usually deal with powerful white men. The children are usually threatened and forced to flee far away.

CHILDREN AS SPARE PARTS

The police in Great Britain is now investigating a criminal band of foreign children traffickers. This came up to the light when recently there has been the case of a Somali girl kidnapped in her country and brought to Great Britain for being used as organ donor on the black market. The traffickers exploit the high organ demand and the vulnerability of the children. According to the NGO End Child Prostitution Pornography And Trafficking who protects children's rights from prostitution, sexual tourism and all other forms of sexual exploitation of minors, the number of the victims of human trade in Great Britain have had a significant growth of more than 50% compared to the last year. The police announced that there were 371 girls that have been exploited as sexual slaves. Most of them coming from Vietnam, Nigeria, China, Romania and Bangladesh. Into this number there are also 20 English children. In case the traffickers are captured they risk prison for a maximum of 14 years!

CHILDREN AS CANNON FODDER

They run away, if they can, from zones of conflicts and wars where they are often used as children-soldiers. There are a lot of them who have been received on the coasts of Italy, exhausted by hunger and thirst, and needing a psychic help to recover from the violence. The immigrants received in Italy by sea from January to November 2013 are 40,244, 5,273 of them are women, 7,928 children, 1 of 5.

Lampedusa is the landing place for 14,088 immigrants. The region of Syracuse have received 3,599 children. It is ten times higher the number of children arrived in Italy in the same period of

the year in 2012. Most of them are from Syria. They escape from the war because they have lost their houses and jobs and often even their families and friends. But the most shocking fact is that the number of children not chaperoned has increased from 1,841 to 4,954. They are 13 to 17 years old male children coming from Egypt, Somalia and Eritrea and the most significant group is from Syria. They have faced the trip or the escape on their own.

In Mexico every 36 hours a child is killed by the worst form of violence.

In the first quarter of this year, have been registered 767 assassinations of children from 0 to 17 years old. These cases are all connected to the struggle between government and organized crime, who uses children for their aims.

Seven children out of ten are killed with firearms and 80% of the cases remained unpunished. The criminal bands exploit 15/20, 000 adolescents.

As we wrote on the memorial tablet on the port of Manfredonia: "Liquid fingers strangled your dream, open hands will gather your future", so I want to offer you a poem by Erri de Luca.

SURVIVORS

In the channels of Otranto and Sicily

Immigrants without wings, men from Africa and from the East
are drowning in the trough of the wave.

One every ten trips is tangled up to the bottom,
the pack with the seeds is scattered in the drill
hollow out by the anchor and not by the plough.

The mainland Italy is a *closedland*.

They let them drown denying.

It was not my intention to make you feel sad and spoil the holy day, I just wanted to make you think about it.

Who is the drown here? May be it's our own conscience? So this year let's not write the usual silly "letter" to the Child Jesus, but let's write instead a letter full of good intentions to ourselves. Who knows, may be for someone it will provoke the right effect.

Child Jesus has happened to be more fortunate than millions of children that suffer indescribable violence. At least, even as an refugee, he had his parents with him to protect him from evil in the world. After hundreds of years we still ask ourselves how many children are envy of his humble cattleshed!

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