Poverty – The Mortal Sin of Modern Times

A story …

An ominous morning call sends shivers down the spine: “Sister, please come and take my baby and give it up for adoption.” The voice belongs to a young woman who was trafficked and brought back home.

Her poverty was her curse. She believed the words traffickers who tricked her, saying that she could get a job as a maid with a large salary. She was rescued and send back, but she entered into an abusive relationship, bearing two children. This is her third child – she has no energy nor resources to bring the baby up. Thus, comes the plea: “Take my baby and give it away.” She makes the most painful decision for a parent and child, but she needs someone to adopt and feed the child.

Like any other mother, this woman wanted to have her baby with her, but there is a deep fear in her maternal heart: "How can I feed this child while all of us starve every day?"

The womb-to-tomb ordeal for those in the margins

We look at the face of the baby girl, only two days old. No one wants her, not even her mother. For those in poverty, life is an ordeal. Womb to tomb, life is merciless. They are conceived by parents who do not want them. They look for the support of strangers to survive. Thankfully two generous souls adopt that girl.

The Bible poignantly proclaims: “Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you.” (Is: 49:15)

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Yes, poverty and exploitation mutilate the human heart. Children downtrodden in poverty. Children unwanted even by their mothers. Children trafficked. Children abused. Children dying of starvation. UNICEF gives a bleak figure: Every day nearly 20,000 children die of starvation and malnutrition. Every year nearly 7 million children die of starvation. What is a greater sin than seeing a child starving? Poverty is the mortal sin of modern times.

This is new year. A new decade. The dawn of hope. Let us pray that we enkindle hope in the hearts of girls and young women like the one gave her child away.
Reflection:

Pope Francis is a strong advocate of economic justice (Evangelism Gaudium) and environmental justice. (Laudato Si). His prophetic voice rises against those who bring immense suffering to the innocent. The lost and the least of the Kingdom, as articulated in our RGS charism, needs more attention today.

1. What challenges do we face in this “uncaring world” as we pursue our mission of reaching out to the least and the lost?

2. Young girls are commodified in the market economy. Poverty forces thousands to fall prey to traffickers. How can we really raise this issue as a moral and ethical and even religious issue?

3. The market economy is merciless and thrives on the innocence of the poor. Every human being is made in the image of God, a temple of the holy Spirit. How can we change systems in order to protect the vulnerable from those in power?

Power of Empty Hands

Oh, Mary Euphrasia Our Foundress, when you dreamt of a new world, you had neither great wealth nor power. You believed in the power of empty hands with hearts full of love and a faith that can move mountains. As RGS of the 21st century we face huge hurdles. Give us the courage to face the poverty with the same inner energy that animated you at every moment. This prayer we ask through Jesus our Lord – Amen

Prayer prepared by Jacinta Duong
Province of East Asia