



A Rome Conference on Human Trafficking

What a surprise when I received a telephone call from the Diocese of Regina in the Province of Saskatchewan asking if my name could be submitted as a candidate for an international conference on human trafficking! Since names had to be sent in without delay, I accepted. However, at that moment the caller specified that she was not sure if she still had time to submit names.

An even greater surprise came two weeks later, when I received an e-mail from the Sector for Migrants and Refugees from the Vatican Dicastery for Integral Human Development inviting me to the conference to be held April 8 - 11. Armed with all needed permissions, I accepted and began my preparations.

We all are aware that Pope Francis has shown a serious concern for the fight against human trafficking. In 2018, the leaders of the sector for Migrants and Refugees, in collaboration with those who fight against human trafficking, drafted a document entitled: **Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking**. Here is a link you can check if you wish to read the text or see some videos on the subject: <https://migrants-refugees.va/trafficking-slavery/>

The purpose of this year's conference was to study these orientations and make proposals in view of their implementation. We were some 200 participants from all parts of the world, in language groups of 9 - 10 participants (French, English, Italian and Spanish). On April 7 and 8, we had 7 intensive sessions where each group shared its proposals on each theme and then prioritized three. With the priorities of each group, five proposals were retained. In the evenings we had other activities; prayer, sharing, information, etc. Our days were quite full!

On April 11, we went to the Vatican for a press conference where the proposals were presented. We then had an audience with Pope Francis who affirmed to us his commitment to the cause and the deep motivations underlying his commitment. He thanked us for our work. Each had the joy of shaking the Pope's hand and sharing a few words.

What an extraordinary experience! I received new energy in seeing all that is being done throughout the world to fight against human trafficking. I also received a whole new perspective of Church. I was in dialogue with so many persons who share my passion!

I am deeply grateful for having had the opportunity of participating in this conference and I thank all those who made it possible.



- Sr. Pauline Gagne, SCO