

## Meeting and Documents on Human Trafficking

May 22, 2019

Dear Brother Oblates,

Brad has asked me to share with you what transpired during the meeting on Human Trafficking sponsored by Talitha Kum (Japan) where I also serve as a member of the steering committee (we function under the umbrella of J-Carm which is the episcopal commission for migrants and refugees). The meeting was held in Tokyo last May 17th. Talitha Kum Japan organizes study sessions in different places (past ones were held in Tokyo, Nagoya, Koriyama, etc. The next one will be in Sapporo) to learn about human trafficking both on the international and national levels.

In Japan, there is a government-sanctioned program under the guise of “technical training program” or “foreign student program” which are but insidious cover up for allowing recruitment and employment of foreign labor without the benefits of labor standard laws. In short, Japan has an acute shortage for labor and while it does not allow unskilled foreign labor, the government let them come in and work at different factories, farms, construction sites on “technical trainees visa” or “student visa.”

Thousands of foreigners who work in Japan to augment the shortage of laborers have to go through recruiters in their countries and in Japan. Needless to say, they fall victims of unscrupulous recruitment groups that leave them in huge debts that they are unable to pay and work under very harsh working conditions without workers’ protection.

In recent years, young people from Vietnam have been supplying the shortage in the labor market but the biggest number are from China, followed by the Philippines and the Latin American countries.

The meeting in Tokyo underlined Pope Francis’ passionate concern for the plight of victims of human trafficking worldwide calling them “the most dehumanized and discarded of people in the modern world,” and calling human trafficking as “an atrocious scourge,” “an aberrant plague,” and “an open wound on the body of contemporary society.”

The urgent appeal of Pope Francis was made by no less than the Regional Coordinator for Southeast Asia and East Asia of the Vatican dicastery (department) for Migrants and refugees, Ms NAOKO MURAYAMA (she is born of a Japanese father and a Filipina mother) who was the main speaker at the meeting in Tokyo. She is based in Manila and travels very often around her areas of responsibility. She gave a very enlightening presentation on the topic and echoed Pope Francis’ concern for the victims of human trafficking and the evils of the trade.

The meeting was well attended by different Church-based groups, NGOs and individuals helping migrants especially around the Tokyo-Saitama-Yokohama areas.

Attached are 3 important documents that you can study and use especially on the parish level.

They are also a good follow-up after our last Spring Meeting in Fukuoka which was also on Human Trafficking.

Please pay special attention to document containing the “20 Pastoral Action Points.”

Thank you.

Wency OMI