**An invitation to members of male religious congregations and societies to take action against human trafficking**

We are two men who are actively involved in raising awareness of the global issue of Human Trafficking as members of a group called APT - Act to Prevent Trafficking ([www.aptireland.org](http://www.aptireland.org)). APT highlights, raises awareness and advocates against the evils of Human Trafficking with a special concern for those who are trafficked for sexual exploitation. While the greater majority of APT members are women religious, it is critical to understand and communicate the human trafficking for sexual exploitation is not just a women’s issue. The reality is that the drivers of this crime are men who purchase the sexual services of trafficked women. Additionally, the majority of human traffickers are men.

It is so important that we men raise awareness around human trafficking especially among men and boys; and that we put our weight behind campaigns like Ruhama’s “We don’t buy it” (<https://www.ruhama.ie/we-dont-buy-it-campaign/>), which tries to dispel some of the myths around human trafficking and prostitution:

*“Every day, all across the island of Ireland, up to 1000 vulnerable woman are trafficked and forced into prostitution simply because of the lies we tell ourselves, the myths we pretend are true and the awkward justifications we allow ourselves to believe. Prostitution is abusive and degrading. The only people to really profit are criminal gang*s” (<https://wedontbuyit.eu/>).

Past pupils’ networks of male congregations and diocesan schools could be harnessed to raise awareness around the corrupting influence of pornography, and of the fact that it is now a crime for men to purchase sex, in person or on-line.

As missionaries we realise that the source countries for trafficked people are most often countries where our members work and/or have historical links. Some of our members have experienced at first hand the shocking damage wrought by human traffickers not only on individual women and girls but on their families and communities. We are inspired and challenged when we see the heroic work being done in Ireland by so many of the women religious Congregations, and by their members who are working in the ‘source countries’ to prevent women and girls from being trafficked and to rehabilitate those who have been rescued from this modern-day slavery.

As one small response to this challenge, St. Patrick’s Missionary Society (Kiltegan) has made human trafficking one of its two priority justice issues and are opening a rehabilitation house in Kenya for trafficked women and girls. We would like to hear about similar initiatives by other male Congregations, and to encourage the leadership and members of men’s Congregations and male members of lay missionary organisations to be actively and visibly involved, at home and abroad in this urgent and intensifying ministry.

We need your support in hearing and responding to ‘the cry of the poor’. Men and boys around the world desire moral leadership and role models in seeking and end to contemporary slavery.

Please consider joining us at APT.

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