



Justice for Women

Tapestry Thread

Devotion for Week 4 - October 23, 2022

By The Rev. Monica Weber

The goals of the Tapestry team's examination into the sin of Human Trafficking are to increase awareness of this horrific violation of human rights and sanctity, and to recognize the systemic social instability that contributes to trafficking. Victims who are trafficked for commercial sexual activity or cheap labor represent the most vulnerable of populations: persons experiencing homelessness; runaways fleeing violence and abuse; LGBTQIA+ persons cast out by their families; victims of addiction; refugees; and those with mental illness.

Human Traffickers intentionally target the most vulnerable populations: these victims often have no place to go, and no one to reach out to, making them easy targets for predators who entrap them with offers of money, shelter, food, clothing or drugs. Families of victims frequently don't know that their loved ones have been trafficked: communication may have been cut off for months after a final blowup or the 'last straw.'

Human trafficking victims face unthinkable circumstances, but their misery can be compounded in ways we may not even consider. Trafficked young women may have zero access to birth control, and those who become pregnant in America no longer have universal access to abortion, due to the reversal of *Roe v. Wade*. Victims may be forced to carry an unwanted pregnancy to term without prenatal care or proper nutrition, or worse, they may be subject to back-alley abortions at significant risk to their life and health.

The ELCA is not pro-abortion, but rather pro-choice. As a denomination, ELCA Lutherans believe in the sanctity of all life, yet we also hold the conviction that, "Christians are united in Christ through faith with both the freedom and obligation to engage in serious moral deliberation." We recognize that abortion is an issue that requires fervent prayer and honest discussion. We acknowledge that as Christians who depend on the unconditional grace of God, we should never judge another person for making decisions that may be medically or personally necessary, no matter how painful those decisions may appear to be.

The ELCA's Social Statement on Abortion reads, "*We deplore the circumstances*





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that lead a woman to consider abortion as the best option available to her. We are moved particularly by the anguish of women who face unwanted pregnancies alone. The panic and isolation of such pregnancies, even in the best of circumstances, can be traumatic. Poverty, lack of supportive relationships, immaturity, oppressive social realities, sexism and racism intensify her sense of powerlessness. The prospect of having and caring for a child can seem overwhelming.” We pray for all trafficking victims, especially those who are pregnant; we pray for victims forced into clandestine abortions and returned too soon to work, to profit their captors.

God of all life, our hearts grieve the senseless devastation of human trafficking. We grieve the social sins that perpetuate this tragedy; we confess our complicity and failure to advocate for social justice for the most vulnerable among us. Hear us, Lord, as we pray for trafficking victims, that you may keep them safe and lead them out of captivity. Hear us, Lord, as we pray for families of victims and their communities, that they may seek to enact change to prevent this terrible sin against your people. Hear us, Lord, as we pray for victims forced to abort their unwanted pregnancies by unsafe means, without access to medical or psychological care. Hear us, Lord, as we pray for victims forced by their captors to carry an unwanted pregnancy to term. Come, Holy Spirit, fill their hearts with your peace and presence, Amen.

Sources:

- Introduction to the Abortion Social Statement, 1991 ELCA Churchwide Assembly: https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Abortion?_ga=2.7272882.1858266470.1662848031-1600987595.1662848031
- Abortion Social Statement, 1991 ELCA Churchwide Assembly: https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/AbortionSS.pdf?_ga=2.198545583.1858266470.1662848031-1600987595.1662848031

