

HUMAN TRAFFICKING CONFERENCE IN ROME CO-SPONSORED BY ST. THOMAS LAW

On May 18, the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See and the St. Thomas University School of Law Graduate Program in Intercultural Human Rights co-sponsored a conference, *Building Bridges of Freedom: Public Private Partnerships to End Modern Day Slavery*, in Rome, Italy. An international audience of over 200 diplomats, government and U.N. officials, and religious leaders learned about the evils of human trafficking and why a partnership between religious and charitable organizations, governmental entities, and business is essential to combating it.

United States Ambassador to the Holy See Miguel Diaz (a proud graduate of St. Thomas University – Class of 1988), Ambassador at large Luis CdeBaca, who directs the State Department’s efforts to combat trafficking,

and Representative Chris Smith (R – NJ) were among the U.S. government officials who spoke. From St. Thomas, our University President, the Reverend Monsignor Franklyn Casale, delivered the closing remarks for the conference, Professor Roza Pati both helped organize the conference and chaired a panel on the role religious organizations and NGO’s can play in combating trafficking and helping victims, and Dean Douglas Ray chaired a panel of international business leaders discussing the role that international business can play. The topic is an important one. Across the world, millions of people each year are trafficked into lives of forced labor, sexual slavery, or indentured servitude. Most often, victims are lured from poor countries to Western Europe, the U.S., and other developed countries by false promises of jobs and a better life. When they arrive at their destinations, their travel documents are confiscated and they find themselves forced into substandard living conditions and 20 hour work days of forced labor or prostitution. The problem is multinational and a major criminal enterprise. UNICEF estimates that up to two million children a year are brought into the global sex trade and the ILO estimates that the world imports and exports billions of dollars worth of products made through forced labor.

The theme of the conference was the role of partnership in fighting this multibillion dollar multinational criminal enterprise. The religious, governmental, charitable and business leaders participating developed several strategies that will help in this fight and many productive partnerships were forged that will inspire others to both combat trafficking and recognize the need to care for its victims.



Some of the panelists and moderators in the human trafficking conference in Rome, including Dr. Roza Pati, Executive Director of the Graduate Program in Intercultural Human Rights (front row, far left), Congressman Jim Smith (R – NJ) (front row, second from left), U.S. Ambassador to the Vatican Miguel Diaz (front row, far right), U.S. Ambassador-at-Large Luis CdeBaca (back row, second from left), and Dean Douglas Ray (back row, far right).

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