

INVISIBLE CHAINS:
BREAKING THE TIES OF
TRAFFICKING IN HUMANS

Symposium

November 12, 2004

THE PRESIDENT'S WELCOME ADDRESS

REV. MONSIGNOR FRANKLYN M. CASALE*

You are very welcome to St. Thomas University School of Law to participate in this Conference this morning. We are addressing a special and important issue today. I consider it a privilege and an honor that those of you who have been working so hard on this field have come to share their experience and expertise with us. I welcome Ambassador Jim Nicholson, Ambassador John Miller, Sister Eugenia Bonetti, Terry Coonan, Doug Molloy, Ms. Kay Buck and distinguished members of various legislatures and governments of the State of Florida and the mayors who have come. I also recognize the members of the Board of Trustees of St. Thomas University. And I recognize you, our students. You are the reason we are all here in the first place at St. Thomas University, and you are the reason why we hope that what we do here today will have enormous ramifications as you go out into the world as professionals to tell the story.

* President, St. Thomas University; B.A. in Humanities, Seton Hall University; B.A. in Sacred Theology, Catholic University of America; M.Div., Immaculate Conception Seminary. Msgr. Casale has previously served as the Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Newark, New Jersey, and he is active in a wide range of community activities. He also sits on the boards of a number of prominent local organizations. Nationally, Msgr. Casale is a Commissioner of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges, and member of the Governing Board of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities.

It is a great sin against human dignity to deceive and enslave those who wish to emigrate in search of a better life, yet so many people across our nation are subjected to horrible working conditions, not only in our nation but in the world. Often these people are even forced to work, which is in itself immoral, just for the sake of survival. That is why we are fighting against human trafficking in all of its forms. These conditions of many people seem, at first blush, to be a problem of centuries past or only of “third world” nations. It is difficult to accept that these situations still exist in our country, the United States of America, in the 21st century. To confront them we must increase our own awareness to these tragedies, and we must work to remedy them. It is a sign of the times that today there is a great sensitivity to this issue involving human dignity.

Finally, there is, globally, a greater recognition of this evil of human trafficking and the need to do away with it. And yet our society is ambivalent on the question of human trafficking and inconsistent in defining the principles of how to address it. The course of human life and human dignity is not yet secured in the United States of America.

I am so gratified as the President of St. Thomas University to hear of the involvement of so many organizations locally and nationally in working to combat human trafficking through many approaches, in raising awareness of the issue among the general populace, and in identifying with, and assisting, certain victims and preventing the continued exploitation of others. All this is a work worthy of human solidarity, and St. Thomas University is proud to join in. I pray for all those who are victimized by human trafficking and for the families they have left behind when they made plans. As this day begins, I would like to pray on your behalf that God will bless our endeavor.

God, you have made all humanity in Your own image and have given us a share in Your likeness. Help us to recognize that image and likeness in all people. Make us aware especially of those who find themselves subjected to inhuman conditions and who are unable to live in freedom. May we always remind the world through our words and especially through our actions of the dignity You have given us and our responsibility to safeguard that dignity on behalf of

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all. Guide us to protect the rights of all who have been victimized. May they and their families be protected from harm. May they be granted freedom from their oppressors and may they be granted a full recognition of the dignity which is theirs. Guide our nation, our state, our cities and all our people and organizations to work for an end to human trafficking and all types of injustice as we seek to advise your children and as brothers and sisters of one another. We pray this in Your holy name. Amen.