

Federazione donne evangeliche in Italia (Fdei)

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PROSTITUTION IS NOT FREEDOM 16 days to overcome violence from 25 November to 10 December



Introduction

The arduous theme of female prostitution has been chosen by the FDEI National Committee for these 16 days in an attempt to start a reflection on this social scourge in our environments, or at least to provide initial information. We prepared for this publication also through some webinars organized together by FDEI and OIVD*.

Attention to prostitution seemed all the more urgent to us as the phenomenon took on worrying dimensions, especially because of its link with the trafficking of women and girls for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In addition, various parties are proposing the abolition of the Merlin Law, currently in force in Italy, and the introduction of new legislation that would regulate both street and indoor prostitution. To this perspective, which is already a reality in some European countries (Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, etc.), with devastating effects and an exponential increase in prostitution, we feel like Christian women that we must clearly oppose it not only for ethical reasons, but above all because we consider prostitution as a very serious form of violence exerted on the body of women by males who believe they can dominate with money, who (according to their perspective) would be inferior, as body and not a person.

We are not convinced by the position of those who support the "right to prostitution" as a form of freedom in the use of one's own body, which would be consequent to the emancipation of feminist struggles, especially since the so-called free prostitution concerns a small

percentage of women, but it also feeds the trafficking of human beings and is resolved in the reduction of a human body to a commodity and therefore to a loss of dignity of the person.

The data tell us that the vast majority of women and girls are prostituted, put on the road by force and rape, or in mega-brothels by exploiters and exploiters for their own gain; they are the victims of a situation of economic, social and cultural poverty, often raped in the family or by herds of adolescents at a young age, often enslaved by blackmail.

The unbearable lightness of the happy ending with which many films represent the events of prostitutes hide the drama of women in the flesh subjected to one of the most aberrant and humiliating forms of violence perpetrated on the female body and soul and are unbearable to those of them who have managed to get out of this diabolical circle, sometimes at the risk of their own survival.

Let's think about it, let's reflect that behind prostitution there is a problem of sexuality lived as power and not as exchange, a sick (or immature) sexuality which is afraid of the true encounter that men and women can build and live. The notebook is completed with the proposal of some films and a bibliography and websites linked to the contents of the various days.

This year the 16 Days will be translated not only in English (Annie Marcelo), but also in German (Rete delle donne luterane) and French (Nathalie Seilaz Fraschina). We thank all the volunteer translators for their difficult work.

Claudia Angeletti

* Osservatorio Interreligioso sulla Violenza contro le Donne



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25 NOVEMBER 2021

Evolution of the law from '800 to the Merlin law



Before the Unification of Italy, prostitution was a widespread phenomenon, but not subject to state control.

It was only the Kingdom of Sardinia that had introduced an ad hoc regulation since 1855 taking the French legislation as a model. The Cavour Regulation (1860) provided for the registration as public prostitutes of women over 16 who exercised the activity 'notoriously'; the obligation of a bi-weekly medical examination, registration of the exercise of prostitution in special homes in a personal booklet.

The United Kingdom also adopted the mandatory health control of prostitutes, but only in areas characterized by the presence of military garrisons. In '69 the Ladies' National Association (for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts), a women's and feminist association was founded in England, which had as its exponents F. Nightingale, H. Martineau and above all Joséphine Butler, who undertook abolitionist initiatives – with the participation of Mazzini, Stuart Mill, Hugo. It also had a filiation in Italy, where between 1974 and 1975 the Italian Central Committee against the regulation of prostitution was created.

Between 1976 and 1983 as many as four ministerial commissions presented innovative bills that remained a dead letter, until in 1991 a Regulation on prostitution abandoned any hypothesis of reform in an abolitionist sense and made prostitution in a private apartment completely legal.

This system remain substantially un-

changed in the succeeding decades.

Even during Fascism (1922–1943), the regulation and control by the police of the prostitution activity carried out in the "closed houses" (where the windows were closed to prevent the view from the outside) continued according to the modalities of liberal legislation: women's files, doctors' biweekly visit. The resolution of "houses of tolerance" creates a third way between regulation and abolitionism, also linking to international initiatives against trafficking.

In the Republican era, the Merlin law (L75/1958) which is still in force today in Italy, repealed all the previous laws on the subject, did not sanction the autonomous and voluntary exercise of prostitution, but prohibited its exercise in brothels and other specific places (hotels, dance halls, entertainment clubs); above all it created the crime of exploitation and facilitation of prostitution in an attempt to guarantee the respect and safety of women, to target individual exploiters and criminal organizations, to promote escape routes and assistance.

BIBLE VERSE

"My vineyard, my very own, is before me"
(Song of Songs 8:12)

COMMENT

The affirmation of the young lover of the Song of Songs, at the end of a love story probably hindered by laws and social conventions, in reaffirming the autonomy of the woman in living her sexuality in complete freedom, celebrates eros as a possibility of sensual fulfillment, lived in a reciprocity in which the male is not a master, but friend and companion.

PRAYER

Lord God, creator of the garden of every delight, free the women enslaved by those who exploit their bodies for their own gain and give them the opportunity to live authentic relationships of beautiful and joyful love. Amen!

QUESTION to discuss

Why don't the police intervene, except rarely, in targeting the exploiters of prostitutes?

26 NOVEMBER 2021

Devastating data



IN EUROPE

It is not easy to give precise numbers on women and girls involved in prostitution as the vast majority are victims of human trafficking, the fastest growing organised criminal activity.

The Recommendation of the European Parliament to the Council on combating trafficking of human beings of 2007 estimated the number of victims of this trafficking as 600,000 to 800,000 per year, of which 80% are women and girls, in which 98% are for sexual purposes.

In Italy there are between 75,000 and 120,000 women prostitutes, 65% sell themselves on the street.

Of the total number of prostitutes operating in Italy, 90% are foreigners, mainly from Africa (Nigeria in the lead 36%), from Eastern European countries (Romania 22%, Albania 10.5%, Bulgaria, Ukraine) and lately from China (5-7%).

About 37% of them are minors, although it is difficult to make a certain estimate, since girls tend to declare an age older than they really are.

In recent years there has been a very strong growth in prostitution via web. The prostitution market uses the internet both to advertise the offer (there are thousands of ad sites where one can choose a prostitute and make contact with her for a date), then for the existence of the phenomenon of cam girls, women/girls/children who are paid to exhibit their body without having direct contact with the customer.

Prostitution via the web today involves about 18,000 people, but if you consider those who use the web to earn only occasionally the numbers can soar.

AND THE "CUSTOMERS", WHO ARE THEY?

An estimated 9 million men in Italy are looking for paid sex.

In general, the clientele is extremely wide and varied; by economic level, by social background, by family situation.

In the case of street prostitution the client generally has an average age between 35 and 50 years, a low or very low level of education, married or with a regular partner, one or more children.

On average, the expense for regular customers is equal to 100 euros per month.

The customer via web has an average age of 25/35 years, is single, without children, and with a medium/high level of education.

The costs are very diversified depending on the "service": a relationship consumed on the street costs 30 euros. A regular customer writes on a male forum: "Those in the street, those coloured usually take 20 or 25, the Romanian 20-50 depends on the cases. In the house, it usually go from 100, up to 300-500, but some take 50 even in the house, also Italians, but it's difficult".

Then exists the exclusive market, that of the so-called escorts who ask for about 500 euros for a few hours in which the service includes also the role of occasion escort. For a weekend or a week with a "luxury" prostitute can go up to 6000 euros and more.

PRAYER

Lord, we pray for all men who have received abusive models of masculinity, that they can undertake a path of liberation from the cultural and social conditioning that pushes them to consider women as a simple instrument of their sexual pleasure. Amen.

QUESTION to discuss

What actions are possible to reduce the demand for prostitution?

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NOVEMBER 2021

From poverty to prostitution



However diverse the path of girls and women who in all times and in all places have been prostituted by men, the main feature common to all is the situation of economic precariousness, if not the real misery.

It is not a coincidence that the prostitutes on our streets are almost all from the countries of the south or east of the world, countries with a very high rate of, not only economic but social and cultural poverty. These are places where the patriarchal culture prevails (the man commands, the woman suffers), where the family pre-plans the life of girls from childhood and therefore women do not have the opportunity to prepare for a dignified future.

In situations sometimes on the verge of survival (such as those in Africa where poverty means lack of primary sustenance, water, food, housing, electricity), the only viable way to obtain an income may seem to run away from one's land to the Western countries of so-called well-being that seem to offer a way out of marginality.

In Nigeria it is often the families of the girls who agree to sell a daughter to obtain economic aid for the whole family; of course no one knows (or pretends not to know) that the money that will be earned will involve the sale of the body (and soul) of the girl for sexual performance: in fact, the prostitute is extremely despised in certain cultures.

There are women (the so-called maman) acting as intermediaries with traffickers who intervene in the negotiation: the cost of the trip plus a guarantee, like a piece of land, the house, or even a lock of hair or personal objects on which to practice voodoo, is established in case someone, on arrival in Italy, tries

not to pay, which rarely happens because either the woman is terrified of the sure retaliation on relatives or because she does not have the concrete possibility.

BIBLE VERSE

“When he lies down, note the place where he lies. Then go in and uncover his feet, and lie down”

(Ruth 3,4)

COMMENT

In few chapters, the book of Ruth tells the story of a woman, a Moabite, from a pagan and idolatrous land, who will become the ancestor of King David, great-grandmother to be exact.

Unlike his sister-in-law, both widows, she decides to stay with her mother-in-law Naomi with a free and definitive decision: “Where you go, I will go”, and “where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God” (1,16)

In Ruth's belief a rabbinic tradition sees her conversion to the God of Israel. For us she can become a positive model of transformation and inclusion, as Ruth comes to God through a human path, by listening and by the trust she has for her mother-in-law.

And if her mother-in-law, as we know, after having gleaned, advises her to “lie down at the feet of Boaz” (which for the time had a clear sexual value), certainly it is not to exploit her economically, but to transform the poverty of her daughter-in-law into a new opportunity for life and conjugal love.

Therefore, the decisive place of God's revelation is the direct and true encounter between people, and love between persons is the foundation and measure of faith in God.

PRAYER

Lord, grant us to choose and walk together the path of love and to work for the eradication of poverty (goal n.1 of the 2030 Agenda) and the fulfillment of social justice!

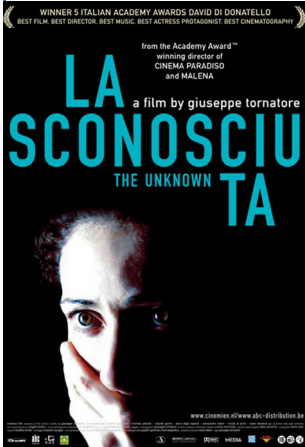
QUESTION to discuss

Why is poverty a possible cause of prostitution?

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NOVEMBER 2021

Stop the trafficking business



THE UNKNOWN

directed by **Giuseppe Tornatore**, Italy, 2006, 118' -DVD

Dramatic and complex film that takes place between reality and memories of a woman kidnapped by trafficking in an attempt to reconstruct her life

UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) reports that out of 21 million victims of trafficking, 70% are women and girls (49% women, 21% girls), among which 79% are for sexual purposes.

For traffickers and exploiters there is a huge profit: according to Havocscope (global black market information) estimates, the profit of prostitution in the world is around \$ 186 billion per year. After drug and arms trafficking, the most profitable business is that of humans. As The National Institute of Justice notes, prostitution is the gateway to sexual slavery and trafficking.

As for Italy, the first Greta report (2014, monitoring by the Council of Europe) highlights among the critical points of our country the lack of adequate mechanisms for identifying victims (especially for labor exploitation). The report calls on Italy to equip itself with a National Anti-Trafficking Plan (against sexual exploitation in particular) that expired on December 2014. Article 18 of the Martelli Law, which provided for recognition of protection for immigrant women in trafficking, was not very effective, but above all there is no real law for trafficking, in particular that of women for the purpose of prostitution.

Janice, 21, from Nigeria

Now I can say that it is God who has sustained me. But it was never very easy. God helped me when I refused drugs, when wine made me vomit. When I closed my eyes so as not to die. When I tried to help the “newcomer” who came from my land. “Why do you do this? What do you want?” And I saw fear and distrust in their eyes. I just wanted to stay

human. I just wanted that in our shitty life, we try to help each other endure everything. So in the evening I wanted to look in the mirror and clean my body and... my soul.

BIBLE VERSE

“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”

(Hebrews 13:5)

COMMENT

There are dozens of verses in the Bible that promise God’s presence at our side. What a privilege! What an encouragement!

It doesn’t depend on our attitudes, or our spirituality, or our wealth, or our age, or anything else. There is nothing we can do to deserve God’s presence.

He is at our side because he loves us and, since he is the God of love, he cannot but love us.

Sometimes we feel that He is far from us. We find it hard to feel his presence and it seems that he has abandoned us. But just as we know that the sun is there even if it is momentarily hidden by the clouds, the Lord our God is present, even if the difficulties of our lives may momentarily hide it.

As we read in the previous verse, He will never abandon us.

My prayer for you is that may you take this promise personally.

“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

(Matthew 28:20)

QUESTION to discuss

Do we know how to pray, remain human and respect ourselves as the last of the prostitutes?

PRAYER

Thank you Lord for being with us every day of our lives. May we feel your presence and see you at work in our lives. Continue to make us trust you, even when we think that you have distanced yourself from us. Thank you for your love. Amen.

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NOVEMBER 2021

Prostitutes on the street



They are part of the “furniture” of suburban, miserable and deserted streets. They are prostitutes, most are black, some blonde and slender strike, they come from the countries of the East. Their bodies are exposed, almost naked summer and winter. Their salaries are ridiculous: we are talking about figures from 30-50 euros. It is a phenomenon that has established itself, which we witness helplessly and often indifferent and which, except for a few raids especially for propaganda purposes, proliferates undisturbed by the police. This flourishing of “exposed prostitution” is now 90% linked to human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. A very serious crime that proliferates undisturbed in Italy as in many European countries. The many associations that are committed to mitigating the damage to women, (religious but also secular realities) fail to attack the real problem: the condition of slavery in which these women find themselves, their vulnerability to drugs and alcohol and the risks of disease, suicide and psychological stress. Too few manage to free themselves from this condition.

MAJA, GHANAIAN, 21 YEARS OLD

I have been free for 6 months after paying my “debt” with my maman. I spent more than three years on the road hating my life every day. I tried alcohol but luckely it made me sick. What can I do now? I don’t want to become a maman myself, although my friends told me I’m stupid: “You earn a lot without doing anything”. I also have to learn to dress differently. I met a Methodist pastor as I am, he told me he can help. Won’t it be the same trick as they did to me in my country? I don’t sleep at night.

He tells me that I can leave Palermo, do something else. I would like to be a nurse. I’ll make it. Meanwhile, he found me a place to sleep in an institution. For now no tricks. I told him about the voodoo they gave me in Nigeria. He told me. “But you are a Christian, how can you believe it?” “But it works..!” I replied! I hope tomorrow will be another day and so are those that will come.

BIBLE VERSE

The fear of man brings a snare , But he who trusts in the Lord will be exalted. (Proverbs 29,25)

COMMENT

Voodoo, many of us frown hearing this word. It is a religion with many profiles. Today it is mainly associated with dolls with pins on or the trafficking of African women subjected through the fear of irritating some traditional spirit. Instead we do not realize how many realities we are deceived and enslaved, how many pacts we make in our lives. False prophets don’t stand still, they just don’t do what they promise. They promise happiness, prosperity, but they produce fear and terror. From these realities, very different from each other, Jesus frees us, frees us from the fear that too often has power over us. His word makes us free, because it loosens the tentacles that paralyze us.

PRAYER

God, our cure, You are my refuge and my strength, my God, in whom I trust! Your faithfulness will be my shield and armor. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the plague that wanders in the darkness. You are my refuge. Amen (from Psalm 91)

QUESTION to discuss

Why does our society not know how to welcome prostitutes who want to get out of the loop and prepare other job opportunities for them?

30

NOVEMBER 2021

Prostitutes in legalized mega-brothels



L'APOLLONIDE - SOUVENIRS DE LA MAISON CLOSE

directed by **Bertrand Bonello**

France, 2011, 122'

A vivid fresco of life and functions of the houses of tolerance at the beginning of '900. The personal tragedies of women change little compared to today.

In 2002 Germany legalized prostitution and since 2017 a law in defense of prostitutes wants to improve the condition of “sex workers”. It provides for the registration of prostitutes, the possibility of paying social contributions and having access to the health service, an authorization for brothels. But many of these assumptions are not realized. Most prostitutes work illegally without any protection (an estimated 40,000 registrations compared to 200,000 up to a million women prostitutes in the undeclared sex market). In brothels, whether authorized or not, women are exposed to a dramatic situation.

In fact, in the last 10 years there has been an industrialization of prostitution, which produces an income of 14.5 billion euros a year: the 3,500 brothels registered in Germany, for example, are flanked by as many illegal brothels, many of enormous size (entire buildings), where buses full of sex buyers also arrive directly from airports. Germany, called “the brothel of Europe”, has become “hell on earth” for women. About 1.2 million men buy sexual services daily.

The debate about whether to prohibit prostitution and/or penalize buyers is turned on: public opinion in Germany does not seem to know about the phenomenon in its painful form, also due to a strong pro-prostitution lobby.

While it is agreed to ban the prostitution of minors, it is thought that adult women can choose freely. But this is contradicted by many psycho-social and economic researches.

Dr. Ingeborg Kraus, a psychotherapist who

has been involved for years in the care of women prostitutes, exposed to rape, victims of violence, argues that “the main objective of the law, which wanted to bring women out of darkness, has totally failed (...) the German state, normalizing prostitution and ensuring a total decriminalization of sex buyers has contributed to a huge increase in demand. The behavior of sex buyers is increasingly perverted and violent and totally dehumanizing. The message to “customers” is clear: there is a “right” to buy sexual acts and “services” in a completely legal way; you can buy a woman and piss in her face, do gang rapes, or force her to swallow sperm and in the “menu” of brothels are offered even more horrible services (which are not listed here).

According to Kraus, prostitution can only be practiced in a state of pathological dissociation, endured only with alcohol, psychiatric drugs and hard drugs. Many prostitutes present serious health problems, depressive states, panic attacks, constant abdominal pain, lack of smell, gastritis, various infections, constant pains in the pelvis due to the hard blows inflicted by men during penetration, lacerations in the private parts as well as a state of anesthetization of emotions such as fear, shame, joy, hope ... In one word, prostitution constitutes a serious denial of human rights. (<https://www.trauma-and-prostitution.eu>).

MARIE MERKLINGER, GERMAN SURVIVOR OF PROSTITUTION

“If no one bought women, no woman would think of selling the abuse of her body. I remember it very well, the moment when I decided to offer the abuse of my body and sold it. And I remember crossing a limit within myself. Now I know it was the first time I dissociated myself because I felt that I was changing my body, as if I was watching myself cross a line. But I would never have surpassed it if there hadn't been buyers, because it's certainly not something you do for fun. It has nothing to do with fulfilling female sexuality.”

QUESTION to discuss

How much do we realize that hiding the bodies of women prostitutes in homes and hotels is a hypocrisy of a society of whitewashed tombs?

1°

DECEMBER 2021

Prostitution and Aids



The WHO (World Health Organization) puts prostituted women at the center of the population most at risk of HIV (regardless of trafficking and regardless of whether they are legalized or not). A recent survey carried out in 50 countries showed that 12% of prostitutes live with HIV and that the risk of contracting HIV is 13.5 times higher due to economic factors and power dynamics. For example, they may receive more money from heterosexual males if they do not use condoms even when they know they are HIV positive.

It is the dynamics and inequalities of power that make it difficult to negotiate the use of condoms and that put women's health at risk in every situation.

The latest studies indicate that women prostitutes are not those who transmit HIV, there is a greater risk of contagion from the client to the woman, in fact, among them the use of condoms is widespread.

The risk of HIV is directly linked to gender-based violence.

BIBLE VERSE

"If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman[...]"

Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." (Luke 7:39 & 50)

COMMENT

The Gospel shows us how Jesus challenges a social order that stigmatizes and excludes.

Aware of the human drama without today's hypocrisy of those who continue to justify prostitution as an inescapable fact, or worse, as an adventurous stage of male formation, Jesus puts an end to this criminal affair, turns history upside down by identifying himself and identifying his mission with the victims of patriarchal power; announcing to them the kingdom of God and at the same time denouncing a system that generated and generates violence, sexual and emotional rape.

Today as in the past, most women prostitutes are poor women mainly present in the cities where they lived and live in brothels or houses or sidewalks near our homes or churches. They are usually slaves, helpless young people, poor people sold or loaned by their parents, rented out by their own husbands, divorced and widowed, single mothers. The latest. These are the ones that are told in the letters of the prostitutes to Senator Merlin, or the girls of the "10200", as the railwaymen call them, from the train number that they take every day, departing from the Cuneo station at 4.21am and arriving at dawn in Porta Nuova. Jesus participates in history, presents us with an alternative practice to that already created, a social alternative that challenges us as a critical salvation.

PRAYER

God, do not allow our gaze to look the other way. You invite us to cast our eyes on the deprived, to have courage to block the way to the wicked who exploit them. Amen

QUESTION to discuss

How much we underestimate the abuses and violence that men perpetrate on prostitutes who have serious consequences on their own health?

Those who collaborated in the creation of this notebook:

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2 DECEMBER 2021

Drugs and prostitution



The turnover of prostitution has been growing continuously since 2011, with worrying increase (up to more than 5 BILLION euros + 11%), alongside that of the consumption of drugs including alcohol, increased by 22.6% and reached over 16.2 BILLION.

The connections between drugs and prostitution are very close: many women start prostitution to get money for drugs; others begin to take drugs at the same time with prostitution, because they are forced by the traffickers themselves to easily keep them in a state of awe and addiction, or to overcome the trauma of the road.

Drugs, of itself risky for health, increase the risks for prostitutes: their “disinhibitory” effect can lead them to accept sex without the condom, as if to lower the degree of self-control with respect to the “client”, who can take advantage of the woman to spend more time and/or undergo more violent sexual practices.

The most common drug is cocaine, which are mainly brought by customers and/or offered as a bargaining chip for sexual relations. Therefore, the social marginality of prostitution often ends up associated with the marginality of drug addiction, possibly even more harmful to the dignity of the person.

Prostitutes on the street also make great use of alcohol, cheaper, easily available, not punishable and “controllable” according to the consumers, and not perceived as a psy-

chotropic substance.

Alcohol also appears to boost the harshness of life on the street, to endure the cold, socialize and ward off anguish, fear, fatigue. In fact, it produces addiction, physical, social damage and discomfort. In the end, there is the so-called “grey market” of psychoactive drugs which are cheaper than cocaine.

BIBLE VERSE

In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.” (Exodus 16:2-3)

COMMENT

Opressed and persecuted in Egypt, yet able to nourish in abundance, slave to the situation that keeps them alive, the people of Israel are like a drug addicts who fear more the withdrawal symptoms of widespread discomfort, than a non-effective dose. Crushed by addiction, they don’t even notice what leads them to death, and forget the cry of pain they just hurled.

But God has listened, and answers, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you” (Ex. 16:4). To the bitter and violent scream of addiction, he responds with abundance. Where slavery insinuates scarcity, abundance creates freedom, but this entails responsibility, and the slave would do anything to escape it. In order to get out of all slavery, we must stop seeing the shortage and accept abundance and the responsibility it entails. On the other hand, we will have the abundance of God, which overflows.

PRAYER

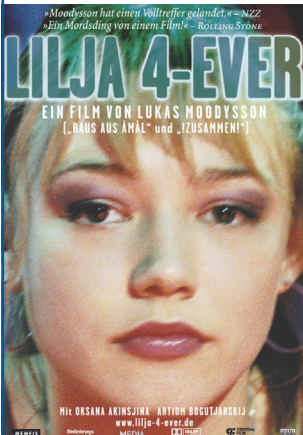
*Lord, erase from our eyes
scarceness, give us the
strength to embrace your
abundance, and the courage
to proclaim it, so that slavery
and dependence may be defeated.
Amen.*

QUESTION to discuss

Of what is the sign that the prostitutes use drugs?

3 DECEMBER 2021

The escalation of violence from childhood to maturity



LILJA 4EVER

directed by **Lukas Moodysson**

Sweden-Denmark, 2002, 109'

The descent into hell of an Estonian teenager ended up "for love" in a violent prostitution ring.

Although the concept of family has changed over time, the family nucleus is always among those "social formations, in which the personality of the individual takes place", guaranteed and recognized by art. 2 of the Italian Constitution. It is a primitive group that influences the individual to form his primary behavioral patterns and promotes a sense of stability, continuity and security.

But what happens if the family is disordered? What impairment would a boy and a girl, subjected to violence of all kinds or who witness violence against their loved ones, endure in their present and future life?

Experienced or assisted violence can disrupt the stages of development with heavy consequences, such as the development of aggressive behaviors, fears, deficits in learning and concentration, social disadvantage, lack of self-belief and own potential, eating disorders, depression.

Young girls are more easily exposed to sexual violence, and this can alter the concept they have of themselves, being appreciated only for their physique, every other characteristic of theirs, thus, tends to remain in the shadows and, in some way, inhibits itself.

Getting out of this cage is an extremely difficult thing. The survival instinct that pushes us to make choices to free ourselves does not always offer the best solutions. The girl who has an affective deficit and suffers from loneliness looks for those who pay attention to her; those who lack economic resources look for them where it is easier to find them; those who suffer sexual violence think that, not knowing how to do anything else, they could offer their body for money and freedom. This opens the

doors to find out for themselves unpredictable experiences. The risk of exposing oneself to horrible slavery is just around the corner. They fall prey to unconscionable people capable of unprecedented violence.

Those who expose themselves to such risks do not go to "make life" as it was once said, but to enter an escalation that leads to social and psychological death.

BIBLE VERSE

Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you".

(Matthew 21, 31)

COMMENT

Among the hardest things to overcome are prejudices and stereotypes. When these are directed towards people, they sometimes create irreversible damage. Christians who should have Jesus as an inspiring model, have a duty to fight against themselves to prevent these defects from becoming chronic and learn to look at people prior to their problems.

The Bible tells us several cases of prostitutes who have received divine support, and some of them have even become an integral part of Jesus' genealogy. God does not invite us to judge and condemn, but to collaborate with him to heal wounds, overcome prejudices, look at the potential of people and what they can become. Will we be able to do this by training our thoughts and feelings to go against the current?

PRAYER

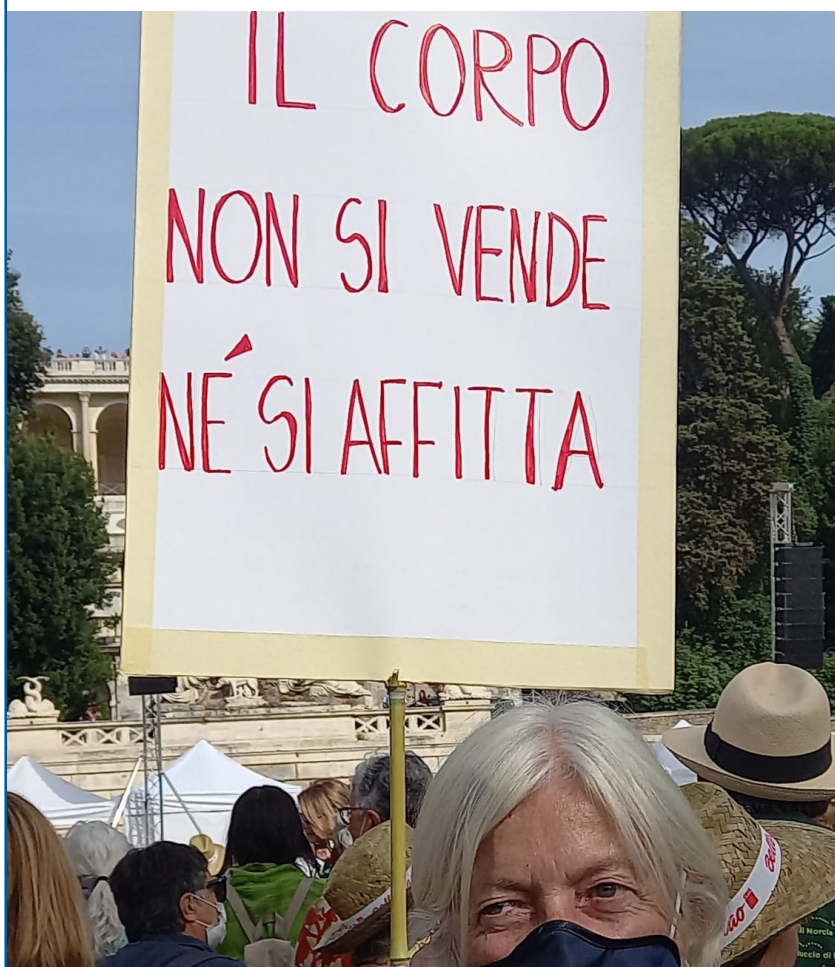
God, Father and Mother who looks at me from heaven, help me to overcome the bitterness of my heart. Who am I to condemn those I don't know? What selfishness dwells permanently within me to push me to look elsewhere without even trying to do something that resembles your work? Faced with my meanness, I can only say: Forgiveness!

QUESTION to discuss

How important is it for the future life of girls to intercept situations of assisted violence or abuse suffered?

4 DICEMBRE 2021

Prey of the network: selling on the web



It's hard to see teenage girls and even young girls without cell phones in their hands typing on the keyboard at supersonic speed. The blackout that occurred some time ago has put anxiety to many of them. How do I communicate with my friends? How do we chat about our loved ones? How do I tell about my fight with my mother? Cities, but also provincial centers know this phenomenon. The teachers complain about it. But there are some more problems. The infamous TIK-TOK App, with which they communicate, easily allows video exchanges, not only between friends and friends, this "magic circle" where quarrels, jealousies and often blackmails are born. Often, strangers are also inserted. Girls are increasingly pushed to competition, with those who "are cooler", more fashionable, with those who dare more, with those who have more followers.

Is it a phenomenon that we can leave undisturbed? Is it only the fault of the young women? Where did the parents go? Here there is no operational reflection. It is not enough to execrate the phenomenon, to speak ill of it, is it a question of asking ourselves what we want

to do? Are these girls aware that the exposure of the body to strangers is not only voyeurism but prostitution? Sometimes for free, sometimes for a fee from heavy blackmail: an absolutely dangerous vortex.

The upstream problem of this phenomenon is that certain media models, some cinematographic films suggest that it is a free and legitimate choice, appropriate to the contemporary lifestyle, to sell one's body or even just its image (apparently less burdensome).

BIBLE VERSE

"God wants you to be made holy. He wants you to stay away from sexual sins. He wants all of you to learn to control your own bodies. You must live in a way that is holy. You must live with honor."

(1 Thessalonians 4:3-4)

COMMENT

Perhaps the voyeurism-prostitution equivalence expressed above may seem incongruous. It is in the usual terms of sexual performance against payment. But it takes on the appearance of prostitution in the cases of girls who sell photos in sensual manner to buy completely voluptuous objects, believing that these can give them greater prestige in the eyes of peers. Certainly no one blames those who are prey to the network: at a young age they are less aware of the effects that certain actions can have. All the more, it would be necessary to educate to "possess one's own body in honor."

The problem is connected with the perception that girls(but also boys) have about themselves. This phenomenon's spreading is a mark of our time's degradation.

The apostle Paul defines the body "the Holy Spirit's temple" (1 Cor. 6,19), with these words he wants to put christians on their guard from taking on attitudes non in accordance with the status of sons and daughters of God. But beyond faith and relation with God, the Apostle's exhortation put in evidence the body's importance. A recall very suitable in our time when the body is going to lose its value of life and dignity.

PRAYER

Lord, we are witnessing a painful degradation of life as your gift. Make us careful in appreciating the gift of the body that identifies us and makes us unique creatures.

QUESTION to discuss

How to educate to affection and sensuality?

5 DECEMBER 2021

Il turismo sessuale



In the world, 3 million people travel every year for sex tourism. Unfortunately, Italy is among the countries from which most tourists with an age between 20 and 50 years old travel.

When we talk about sex tourism, we refer to those trips whose destination is chosen to reach places for meeting prostitutes or gigolos to obtain sexual services. According to data collected by the World Tourism Organization, it is estimated that 65% of tourists are occasional customers, who go to these places sporadically; 35%, on the other hand, are regular customers, who regularly move abroad in search of sexual satisfaction. They are heading to those countries that are in a state of poverty and corruption.

This sex tourism is encouraged by the taste of the exotic, the reduced costs due to the high rate of prostitution (legal and / or illegal) and the ease of access to child prostitution. In fact, child prostitution is on the rise.

Maria, 55 years old, Varese

The other day my neighbor commented that her husband has been going on holidays with friends for a few years. They go for 15 days to Cuba to fish. He tells me it's "his" vacation. She had once proposed to go there too, but her husband opposed. "Fishing is a men's thing not for women!" As he tells me about it, he winks at me. I naïvely ask why. "But don't you understand? Fish...! After years of marriage he prefers to enjoy freedom and that's okay. I go on vacation with my sister. He comes back tanned, happy to have 'fished' and the thing ends there. After all, what should I do? Forbid it? All in all he just goes fishing!"

BIBLE VERSE

"You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence".

(Psalm 90,8)

COMMENT

Along with the obvious injustices – those committed by others! - there are the hidden ones, which we do everything to keep hidden. So that they remain, we move away from the territory we inhabit, from the places where we are known. When we are at home, we show ourselves like civilized people, even church people. Elsewhere, the music changes. "It's just an escapade, a whim: no one will know." The luminous face of God asks us to do the truth even about our grey areas. And to look, in turn, at the faces of other people, those that we buy for a pair of sandals.

PRAYER

Lord, we are no longer ashamed, in a world where everything is possible, just pay!

In certain moments of lucidity, a certain discomfort peeps out, immediately expelled, because after all, we too have the right to enjoy life. And then, to be honest, if we, rich Western males, weren't there those poor girls would have nothing to live on. You, who know us intimately, look at us; and together turn our gaze to those daughters of yours, which we do not even see, only eager to enjoy their performance. And your eyes light up with love and wrath.

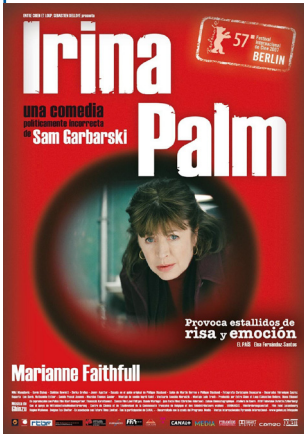
What an embarrassment! And what a relief! Because your eyes tear us off the social mask and bring us back to humanity. Teach us not to flee, to stop hiding what we consider unspeakable, without ceasing to do so.

QUESTION to discuss

Does sex tourism, far from our eyes, passed as a holiday, make it less serious especially if aimed at minors?

6 DECEMBER 2021

The dark forest of the male sexual drives



IRINA PALM

directed by Sam Garbarski

Uk, 2007, 103'

History at times of a grandmother who, looking for a way to pay for the expensive treatments of a rare disease of her grandson, discovers the strange world of male sexual drives.

“Prostitution is the oldest profession in the world.” This statement well known as false used to justify the impossibility of eliminating it. But then if it is a profession, it participates in the evolution of the forms of production of humanity, if it does not change it is an extra-historical biological datum, and therefore it is not a profession.

In reality, human sexuality has evolved over time, like family organization, and it is nature and culture. Neither prostitution nor violence against women are laws of nature. Prostitution is part of the property rights over women. In the house, in the family, in the polygamous one, which ensures the lineage to the male landowner, women entered the economy of the group offering a plurality of services. The prostitute who was outside the system was entitled to an immediate consideration.

It is plausible that in a relationship of distance-submission, there has been a sexuality connected to aggression in the male and fear in the female. The affections appeared with the care of the offspring in need of a long phase of protection, for which the male was also useful, but it is the mother-child relationship that gives a positive imprint to sexuality and it is the cognitive characteristics of human beings that develop the capacities of cooperation, altruism, empathy that are necessary for survival, not male violence and female submission.

Increasingly, sexuality is characterized as a personal relationship, not only bound to procreation, while violence persists as a useless archaic appeal. This is how many

studies are expressed. Today the possibility of equal relations between the sexes favors mutual enjoyment in the relationship. Gone is the hypocrisy of blessed and reproductive sex in marriage and of what served to vent the excess of male vigor, authorized “morally” by nature, while the prostitute collected in herself the filth of the world. To let it be said that prostitution is the oldest profession in the world means to become accomplices of what it is today: male gender violence that has little sexuality, which considers women an undifferentiated, dehumanized, enslaved object.

BIBLE VERSE

“She took off her widow’s clothes[...] and then sat down at the entrance to Enaim[...] When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face [...] he said, “Come now, let me sleep with you.”
(Genesis 38:14-16)

COMMENT

When Tamar, desperate for the lack of HER descendants, waits on the road for her father-in-law, Judah, veiled, according to the custom, does not get money from him, but asks as a pledge objects that belong to him, intimate, that refer to the house, to that complicated family group, with sterile males or who reject the custom of Levirate. Judah’s wife died, like a part of the lineage she had procreated. For both, Judah and Tamar, that encounter breaks the social rules and together brings back to domesticity, for both it is an opportunity to have a descendant or increase it. Judah’s restlessness, his fear at the news of his daughter-in-law’s pregnancy, reveals family customs that are changing. Judah, discovering that he had had domestic intimacy with a woman who should have remained a stranger to him, recognizes that his responsibility in this sordid story is more serious than that of Tamar and transforms his initial judgment of death into a rehabilitation of his daughter-in-law (“she is more righteous than I” Gn. 38,26)

The fecundity of Tamar, who will give birth to twins, shows that getting out of traditions can be vital.

QUESTION to discuss

Can you decide to become a sex worker in everyone’s best interest?

7 DECEMBER 2021

An anthropological gaze on prostitution



To revisit the roots, it is good to understand the phenomenon of prostitution from an anthropological perspective. Françoise Héritier, a feminist anthropologist, provides us with valuable tools to reconstruct a genealogy oriented towards a female perspective: he writes, “The differential value of the sexes and the male domain are based on the appropriation by the male gender on the fertility power of the female gender and by the fact itself on the enjoyment of women’s sexuality”, enjoyment that is not only censored by patriarchal culture, but which often remains alien to the awareness of women themselves.

Héritier continues: The consequence of the appropriation of female fertility is the necessary struggle between men to obtain such possession.

This struggle to obtain child-producers has various consequences, including:

- the splurge of virile power, which can be converted into elevated forms, that is, inherent in male superiority in the field of Knowledge;

- the belief shared by all humans that the male drive is “natural” and must not be repressed, so it is tolerated or justified even when the man humiliates, offends, violates a woman’s body and wounds her deeply in her Self; the struggle results in an exclusive agreement between men, a “civilized” pact: it consists in exchanging daughters and sisters, whose bodies they are the owners; an exchange that will create the basis for suppressing conflict and establishing sociability, a passage - according to the sexist logic - from the regime of nature to that of culture; the bodies of women handed over to other men will be the bodies of silent, modest, honored women brides; a second “non-civilized” pact, a sort of “unpresentable relative”, joins the first and is complementary to it: «... Every woman’s body on which no appropriation is exercised by someone recognized as the owner

[...] potentially belongs to every man, to satisfy his sexual drive. Abduction, rape, prostitution are therefore substitutes for civilized exchange to appropriate, at least temporarily, women’s bodies for sexual use and the pursuit of pleasure.

This structure is superimposable to the analyses of Carole Pateman who, approaching the matter from a philosophy of law’s point of view, expressed with determination that “prostitution is part of the practice of the law of male sexual right”, and that therefore it is the political system itself that contains the germs of female enslavement. These upstream reflections are decisive to grasp how much the prostitution system is not an indecent outgrowth, a disturbing discourse separated from the rest of the economy of symbolic goods, but is based on that differential value of the sexes and male domination that is at the origin of social organization. And that it is a necessity has been affirmed by theologians.

St. Augustine immortalized the paradigm of prostitution as a lesser evil, a model that became the lintel of the moral codes of Christianity. St. Thomas retraced his steps: “Prostitution in the world [is] like slime or cloaca in a palace. Remove the cloaca and you will fill the building with pollution. Remove the prostitutes from the world and you will fill it with sodomy; therefore Augustine says that the earthly city has made the use of prostitutes a lawful immorality.” The metaphor of the sewer had an extraordinary fortune, since it was then taken up by nineteenth-century scientists, especially by hygienist doctors, in whose pronouncements there are phrases such as: prostitutes are inevitable as sewers, keys and garbage deposits. They boasted of bringing the light of progress, coming out of clerical and moralistic obscurantism. Their discourse – nourished by cruel experiments on the bodies of prostitutes – was a powerful device mystifying reality; the truth was that he equipped himself with aberrant sanitary devices, police and forced imprisonment in public brothels and syphilis. Trafficking in human flesh, denounced Elisa Salerno, champion in the defense of betrayed, enslaved women, and indomitable in the invective against the double morality also practiced by the clergy.

1. Françoise Héritier, *Maschile e femminile. Il pensiero della differenza*, Laterza, Bari, 2006-4a ediz.

2. Carole Pateman, *Il contratto sessuale. I fondamenti nascosti della società moderna*, Ed. Moretti & Vitali, 2015

8 DECEMBER 2021

Current reform proposals in italy



CALL GIRL

Directed by **Mikael Marcimain**,
Sweden, 2012, 140'

Two girls are pushed into the circle of high-end prostitution also frequented by politicians who... by day they face legislate on customs.

The spread of the phenomenon of trafficking has reopened the debate on the effectiveness of the laws currently in force in the various States in the field of prostitution. In Italy this has led to a questioning of the Merlin Law considered outdated and disastrous, resulting in a series of bills filed in recent legislatures. Their examination shows that the resurgence of the prostitution phenomenon, linked to the international illicit trafficking of bodies, is invoked to introduce a new regulation of prostitution.

The trafficking-related sex trade, however, is condemned as connected with delinquency and organised crime, and not as a violation of women's human rights and dignity.

Violence and rape seem to be attributable only to the criminal management of prostitution and not linked to prostitution itself, to the purchase of sexual services that, conversely, find their legitimacy in the most consolidated clichés and stereotypes: prostitution cannot be eliminated, it is part of human nature, it is the oldest profession in the world! Prostitution therefore becomes despicable only when it is not the result of a free choice, but is "forced", that is, the result of violence or coercion.

All this in full contrast with the Preamble to the UN Convention New York on March 21, 1950 which combines "prostitution with the evil that accompanies it" and with the definition of the European Parliament Resolution of February 26, 2014 of prostitution as "a form of violence (...) an unequivocal and terrible violation of human dignity"!

Affirming then that prostitution is quite different from sex trafficking, leads to hypothesize forms of protection for those who want to exercise "freely" the "oldest profession in the world", today hidden in the most capti-

vating and modern term of sex work.

Moreover, keeping the phenomenon of trafficking, already regulated by international provisions, separate from that of prostitution, makes it possible to distinguish the prostitution realities by legitimizing some regulated by new laws and condemning others, those directly related to trafficking.

Most of the projects deposited in Parliament, pending discussion or repetition, are characterized by the desire to reintroduce a new system of regulation of prostitution, eliminated by the Merlin Law in 1958, now adopted by other states including European (Holland, Germany, Switzerland). They range from the proposal of a full liberalization to the reproduction of "State prostitution", from legal protections for "sex workers", qualified as real work activities in an autonomous, cooperative or subordinate form, to the regulation of erotic centers and dedicated areas, up to the reopening of prostitution houses and brothels. With a system of imposition of taxes, charges and local or national contributions, as well as the reintroduction of health and police controls, typical of nineteenth-century systems.

Exceptions to this nucleus of proposals are those aimed at introducing the so-called "Nordic model" in Italy, applied for the first time in Sweden, Norway, then in France. Model that focuses on the protection of female dignity and the protection of the female body from male violence, introducing the punishment of the client and providing for strengthened paths out of prostitution. The behavior of the prostitute is not sanctioned, as provided for in the prohibitionist systems, but only the purchase of sexual performance, through the addition of a hypothesis of crime to that provided for by the Merlin law itself.

Recently the constitutionality of this law and the "constitutional sustainability" of the Nordic model were affirmed in the constitutional court ruling of 7 June 2019, no. 141. In rejecting the question raised by Tarantini's defenders in the Berlusconi escort affair, the Court denied the existence of a constitutionally guaranteed right to prostitute oneself and found "prostitution, even voluntary, an activity that degrades and debases the individual, as it reduces the most intimate sphere of corporeity at the level of goods available to the customer".

9-10 DECEMBER 2021

Broken lives, not numbers



Carmen, Anna, Dorjana, Alessandra, Sonia, Giuseppina, Rita, Angelica, Ada, Chiara, Vanessa, Stefania, Chaterine, Shegushe, Vanessa, Silvia, Marylin. These are the names of 17 women killed from August to October 6, the date on which we write. 17 broken lives. 17 women who had the right to live, who had said enough to violence, who wanted to start a new life, close a story, even of love, ended. 83 femicides since January! Reason? Let's start from here. Why don't men accept the end of a story? What drives them, perhaps after years of beating, not to accept that a woman says enough? What leads them to this extreme act? They are men of all ages, from young boyfriends to old pensioners. "Normal" men who work, who have a social life, men who are not crazy or drugged or depressed. What is the abyss that swallows them? The desire for power? Revenge? Of defeat experienced as the fault of the "other"? What are their last thoughts and what do they want to achieve? We must start from here. And it is urgent. It is not enough to condemn femicides: we must change the culture that provokes them.

WHO ARE THE VIOLENT MEN?

"This is a question that risks leading us astray even if it arises from a just, important need, that of shifting attention from violence as a women's problem, to violence as a male issue. However, the construction of the category of violent men brings with it the separation of these men from the shared male culture from which violence itself is born. Instead, we need to relate "men who act or who have acted violence" to the way males have learned and/or chosen to be men. Male violence is a way of being in relationships or escaping them; it is a chosen behavior that expresses a mentality, a way of thinking; it is a power relationship in which imbalance is used to debase, control, erase the existence of someone else: a woman."

BIBLE VERSE

...but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

(Romans 12,2)

COMMENT

Paul's words to the first Christians of Rome invite them to a change of mentality, "not to conform to this world", to overcome the values and behaviors induced by the dominant culture. This is what Claudio Vedovati also emphasizes in one of his texts years ago to address the problem of gender violence. Pathologies should not be sought, but there is a need for a profound change that leads to a review of man-woman relationships, in the family, in society, in the workplace. Paul invites the Romans to change if they want to follow Christ, to set up their lives in a new way. This invitation of Paul applies to all of us, to radically change the culture of domination in daily man-woman relationships.

PRAYER

Lord, our God! We now lay before you all our sorrows, our mistakes, our mistakes, our transgressions, our afflictions, our revolts and our bitterness, our whole life that you know better than we do. Help us to give hope to families broken by a violent death, help us not to judge those who cause this suffering, but to commit ourselves - with the strength you give us - to promote a change that already begins with us women and men.

* Claudio Vedovati, *Violenza e libertà. Il cambiamento nelle relazioni* - in AA.VV. a cura di Alessandra Bozzoli, Maria Merelli, Maria Grazia Ruggerini, 2013, Edesse edizioni

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QUESTION to discuss

Are there common cultural bases in murders against women?