

## Veronika, fcJ



### Why be involved with prostitution??? Or how do I, as a sister, come to sit in a bar?

Together with two ladies from a Pentecostal Church I visit institutions in Munich where women are prostituted. Once or twice a week we visit in turn different places, so that every month we go back to the same institutions. This helps us to slowly build up the confidence between the women, the owners or guardians of the houses and us. On one evening we met between 50 and 70 women and offered them each a flower and a Bible quotation in their own language; in the weeks before Christmas we distributed 600 small presents of toiletries and cribs, stars and plenty of Bible quotations.



For the last 9 years I had been working with SOLWODI, Solidarity with women in distress, where I encountered hundreds of women, mostly from Africa, who had been trafficked and forced into prostitution. I heard unbelievable stories, I was shocked to the depth of my soul and wondered how women can bear it. I found out, they can't – they are traumatized for the rest of their lives unless they get professional help. Visiting places where women are prostituted in Munich is a new world for me. Most women come from Romania and other Eastern European Countries. I do not know whether they are trafficked or forced into prostitution. They tell us that they come to earn money: for their families, to send their children to school, only for a short while, then they want to get out.

I attended a Christmas party in one of the places where ladies are prostituted. The Romanians sang a famous Christmas Carol with great emotion. I shared this experience with the FCJs in Romania, asking them to remember the Ladies when they will sing the song. A few days later Ruth, fcJ writes the following:

*"We were dressing our tree tonight and opening cards as we put up the decorations and we read your card together. We were very moved at what you wrote about the Romanian song which was sung with great gusto. It is one of the most traditional and sacred carols here – and in fact we had just practised it before we opened your card. Tomorrow we are inviting friends and having a kind of Advent/Christmas service with carols and some reflection and then a bite to eat – so we shall be singing it again and then on Christmas eve and Christmas day – it will certainly be sung so prayers will be coming for your ladies!!!"*

The big question remains: How can we prevent women coming? Information in the home countries is not enough. Unless the women get help to find work in their own country, in Germany or other countries, this “paid-for rape”, as one woman named it, will continue.



It was at the Chapter of 1988 that we first started talking seriously about “Women”. We talked about inclusive language. I nearly went up the wall at that, because I had just come back from the research mission in Asia. In India I had seen a pregnant woman at a building place, climbing up a ladder, carrying a bucket of wet concrete on her head! We were talking about inclusive language! I came from another planet. Inclusive language is now a given, the other planet has not changed very much. The concern about women stayed with me. “Women” still are a huge question, in all countries, also in Germany. The third Millennium Development Goal of the United Nations reads: promote Gender Equality and empower women. We are far from it. Women raise questions in society and in the Church. Pope Francis has started a commission on the Diaconate for Women and he has elevated Mary Magdalene to the rank of APOSTELIN. This is hopeful but not immediately helpful for the women in prostitution, for those who are victims of trafficking and especially for the women and children who have experienced the most horrid forms of sexual exploitation.

**“ In such a situation what can I, at 77 years old, do? The same, as I have been trying to do for years since I understood what my mission as a Faithful Companion of Jesus is. Our Foundress said: Follow Christ to the foot of the Cross... and beyond.**

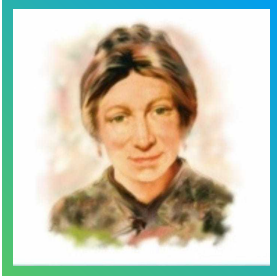
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Like Mary Magdalene, walk with Jesus, take part in his pain, to the foot of the Cross, and be present on Easter morning, witnessing new life. Yes, He is alive! Sounds simple, and it is. Translated into ordinary language: be a companion to those who suffer and bring new hope, new life. No, I cannot get prostituted ladies out of their situation. In the end, they must decide that themselves. But I can bring a smile to their face, I can give them a flower, I can show them warmth, affection. I can make them feel: you are a person to be respected, you have dignity, you are precious, like everybody else you are a temple of the Holy Spirit, you are loved by God. I won't necessarily say it like that. But the Lady who, after I had embraced her to say goodbye, broke out into tears and said: “she means it, she really means it”, knew that she was loved in truth. Is it not terrible that we (in Germany and other countries) have a system in which prostitution is allowed? And then we despise these ladies, look down on them and make dubious jokes, ignoring totally their inner struggle with guilt, shame and fear.



*“Ecce homo” – “This is my body”!* There is a place in a bar in a brothel for a Faithful Companion of Jesus.

**After all, Christ is there long before I get there. I just try to give him a human face... again. The rest is His doing!**



“ As long as we are closely united by the bond of charity nothing need trouble us. ”

*Marie Madeleine d'Houët*

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## Faithful Companions of Jesus

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