December 5, 2012

To: Clergy, Religious, and Laity of the Archdiocese of New Orleans

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Once again, our city is preparing to host a Super Bowl, an event which brings joy to so many, boosts our local economy, and gives our community the opportunity to provide the hospitality for which we are so justly praised.

As a Catholic Community, it also gives us the opportunity to draw attention to a shadow side of the tourism industry: Human Trafficking. Each year, across our world countless human beings are trafficked across borders and then sold into slavery. While we may like to think that this cannot happen here and to our young people, the facts indicate otherwise. Studies show that approximately 75-80% of human trafficking is for sex. Ninety-eight percent of sex trafficking victims are women and girls. Children 17 years and under represent 26% of total victims worldwide. Events such as Super Bowl, Mardi Gras and other festivals that draw large crowds provide a venue for the trafficking of our sisters and brothers.

The Catholic Church’s passionate stand against so great an assault on human dignity is rooted in the Gospel of Jesus, and in Catholic Social Teaching, principles that The Catechism of the Catholic Church expresses succinctly: “The seventh commandment forbids acts or enterprises that for any reason...lead to the enslavement of human beings, to their being bought, sold and exchanged like merchandise, in disregard for their personal dignity.”

For more than a decade, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and the Conference of Major Superiors of Men have educated and advocated to eradicate this assault on human dignity. We stand together at this time to draw attention to this grave human evil.

Please be alert in prayer on January 11, 2013, Human Trafficking Day, and in the weeks preceding the February 3, 2013 Super Bowl. Copies of the prayer asking for the intercession of St. Josephine Bakhita, who herself was sold into slavery, are available through your parish. We especially encourage those of you who are service providers to be observant, to learn the “red flags” that help to identify a victim and then take action. These too are available through your parish, or you may wish to visit the USCCB website. May our city be a place of joy and security for all God’s people.

Wishing you God’s blessings, we are,

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Gregory M. Aymond
Archbishop of New Orleans and the Bishops of Louisiana

Sister Beth Fitzpatrick, O. Carm
LCWR Region V Chair

Brother Ronald Talbot, SC
CMSM Region IV Chair