

World Day of Prayer International Committee Meeting

Seeking wisdom to care for God's creation (Genesis 1)

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Talking Wisdom and Care @10 – Report

Situation of Roma People

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Throughout the conversation, we learned about the life, tradition, culture and faith of my people – the Roma people. We live on all continents of the world, even though the conversation focused on the Slovenian Roma and the Roma from the former Yugoslav republics.

We learned that we are very similar in despite of our differences. That made the workshop very successful, because we were able to break down a number of prejudices and stereotypes applied to the Roma.

Background

The Romans are supposed to come from India, but according to one theory, their origin is in the province of PANDŽAP, which is confirmed by the word PAUNCH, which in the Roma language means five. Other theories, place the origin on the province HINDUKUSHA. Large migrations started around the 9th century, but the cause is still not fully understood. The migration took place in three directions: across Russia then continue to the north and west; - Turkey and the Balkans; and the direction to Hungary. Ireland's Roma are the only Roma travelers originating from Europe and not India.



The Roma in Slovenia are concentrated in four locations: Dolenjska, Prekmurje - where I am from, Gorenjska and Kočevje. Roma also live in other areas, but in most cases they are immigrants from other republics of the former Yugoslavia.

How many Roma live in Slovenia? According to demographics in 2002, there were 3246 identified as Roma, and 3834 people chosen Roma language as their mother tongue.

According to humanitarian organizations, the Red Cross, the Caritas, the Center for Social Work, there are from 10,000-12,000 Roma people in Slovenia.

The life of the Roma in the past and today

The main cell was and still is a family. Most often, an extended family of grandparents, children, grandchildren and unmarried aunts and uncle live together. Despite the patriarchy, an old mother played a special role. Her opinion and decisions were respected and taken into account.

Money was mostly provided by men's work. Typical occupations were blacksmiths, horsemen, umbrellas repairers, knives and scissors grinder.

The Roma were also known as good musicians. Women were begging and dealing with fortune-telling. They were known as collectors of herbs and medicinal plants. Today these typical professions are gone.

Today

There are still stereotypes about the Roma people as lazy, irresponsible or people who do not like to work. But experience shows us a different picture. If the Roma gets an opportunity where he/she is respected, he/she will perform the work responsibly and diligently.

Education

According to the law, education of the Roma should be based on the principle of integration. At school, children are mixed together, except for only one school, which is set up right in the Roma settlement. Most

of the children are in the age of one to six years enrolled in the program of pre-school education, that is, until they enter elementary school. Divisions - departments are mixed and located in different units. In Slovenia, elementary education starts at six years of age and lasts nine years.

Education is mandatory for all children. According to Amnesty International, there is no official data, only about seventy percent of the children are expected to attend school regularly, and only about fifty percent



completed education. The reasons for this situation are different. They can be absenteeism, early maternity or marriage.

The middle school enrollment is increasing, but unfortunately the school actual attends very few Roma. Fortunately, there are quite a few Roma who can access university education and master's degrees.

Faith

The Roma have always accepted the religion of the community in which they lived. They wanted to gain the affection of the locals and at the same time avoid persecution. The Roma in Slovenia are mostly Catholic.

They believe in God - DEI. Mary - mother of Jesus has a great role in Roma's spirituality. She is the link between them and Jesus-God. However, they visit church only on special occasions: weddings, funeral, baptism, Christmas and Easter. Sundays worship is attended by only a few believers. Every year there are massive pilgrimages to Mary's center, such as Brezje, Medjugorje, Lourdes and Fatima.

Let me also mention that we have some members who are Muslim. These are mainly refugees from Bosnia and Kosovo. The number of these is growing visibly.

Women in the family and community

Despite the efforts to achieve equal status, the role of women in local environments and families is very often stereotypically determined. Roma communities are traditionally patriarchal, and the position of woman is still subordinate to men.

Traditionally, they have a concern for raising children. It requires responsibility and the management of difficult situations - for example, poverty, violence. Of course, we must not forget that many generations often live under the same roof, which may increase the possibility of conflict and violence.



The daughters begin to take over the housework at the early age, while the sons take patterns from older men's behavior. They expect that mothers and sisters take care of their primary needs and they require a better quality of life. In meeting their needs, mothers and sisters do not look at their own physical and mental health needs.

Women are often worried, about how to survive, because, she often depends on man- husband. He has money. These women are mostly isolated and encountered within the Roma communities, where the situation is similar. So, men and women take all this as a destiny to which they have been placed in a cradle and which they cannot resist and change.

The greatest possibility of change we seen relays on educated and employed women. They can break those patterns of behavior and education that they themselves may have experienced.

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