




# THE 8TH INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER AND AWARENESS AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

*February 08, 2022, Feast of Saint Josephine Bakhita*

 The International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking  
A light against Trafficking



*The power of care  
women, economy,  
human trafficking*

## 1. Opening prayer

O God, you created us for yourself. You entrusted to us all creatures for the respectful use and maintenance. You do not admit any misuse of persons and things. The economy today, driven by the motive of maximum profit, abuses the vulnerable people, especially women and children. People are trafficked and sold. We pray that with the intercession of Saint Josephine Bakhita, the world may be set free from such evils; that everyone may, once again experience the love and freedom as your sons and daughters. Amen.

## 2. History and Context

Due to extreme poverty, caused by unemployment, unjust wages and human greed, people search for greener pastures by all means. On the other hand, the greedy rich people exploit the vulnerable people for their own benefits. So many people become prey to the traffickers who sneak them from their countries, promising good jobs. The trafficked persons are subjected to forced labour, prostitution and organ harvesting. Even many of those who had been saved from trafficking, again make efforts to leave their countries seeking better life. Sometimes even the Church institutions indirectly participate in this evil by recruiting laborers for their institutions for unjust wages.



## Resolve to End Human Slavery

The leaders of major religions signed a pledge in Vatican on the 2nd of December 2014 to end human slavery by 2020. Inspired by Pope Francis, the Unions of Major Superiors, chose 8th of February as a day of prayer and awareness against human trafficking. This day is chosen because this is the feast day of St. Josephine Bakhita. She was a Canossian nun who went through the suffering of slavery as a child, but she had maintained her faith in Jesus the just master. Pope Benedict XVI, in his encyclical *Spe Salvi*, presents her as one who, though in terrible slavery, felt already liberated by Jesus the just Master.

The theme for this year is The Power of Care-Women, Economics, Human Trafficking. It implies that the current economic system causes trafficking in persons. The Covid-19 pandemic has worsened the condition of the vulnerable people, especially women and children. The cure for the trafficking lies in creating a new economic model which cares for people and the planet. This new economic model can be realized only with the greater involvement of women.



### 3. The Bible Passage: James 2:14 - 17

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead”.

### Reflection

Saint James speaks of the necessity of practical help to the needy, beyond simple sympathy. The good faith should always be accompanied by good works. Providing food and clothing to the needy people becomes faith in action. In *Caritas in veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI has declared that the work of justice, peace and development are part and parcel of Christian faith without which one’s faith remains incomplete. Pertaining to human trafficking, our faith demands practical response to end trafficking. At the same time, our human efforts have to be accompanied by prayer. We shall work and pray for the empowerment of women and the creation of just economy to end trafficking in persons.



#### 4. Claret on the Evils of Slavery and Human Trafficking

St. Anthony Mary Claret desired to stand at the gate of hell and to stop the souls from entering the eternal fire (Aut 212). This resolve is reflected in his response to the evils of slavery and human trafficking while he was Archbishop of Cuba. Slavery was already abolished in Spain in 1820 but it was not implemented in Cuba at the interest of large landlords who were producers of sugar and coffee. Slave labour brought profit for the rich people. During the time of Claret, the Cuban law forbade the churchmen to make any public criticism of the slavery. So, Claret could not fight for its abolition openly and at the same time he did not accept the slave system. In all the ways possible, he fought for the dignity of the slaves. Like St. Paul he appealed to the slave owners to be humane towards the slaves. In his Pastoral Letter he dedicated a chapter to the care of children and slaves where he affirmed prudently and astutely, "The servants and slaves are part of the family". Fr. James Clotet has written that a poor woman came to Claret asking for money to buy a slave. To her, Claret replied categorically, "Dear lady, the Archbishop of Cuba has neither slaves nor money to buy them" (The letters of Claret p. 281-282).

#### 5. Intercessory prayers

- God our father, you offered St. Josephine Bakhita the capacity to keep to her faith in you amidst suffering. Help all those who suffer various injustices, to persevere in their faith.
- We pray for the people of both the Sudans, the land of Josephine Bakhita, that they may enjoy peace, prosperity and freedom.
- We pray for the conversion of all those who exploit and enslave the people, that they may in turn become instruments of liberation.
- We pray for all the political leaders, that they may always voice against evils of slavery and human trafficking.



## 6. Measures Against Slavery and Human Trafficking

- Pray at personal, community and ecumenical levels for the well-being of victims and the conversion of perpetrators of trafficking.
- Be aware of the signs of human trafficking.
- Organize events to create awareness among the people.
- Boycott products and companies that permit human trafficking.
- Purchase and use, as much as possible, fair-trade goods.
- Promote women empowerment programs such as education, job etc.
- Pay just wage to the domestic employees.
- Join an anti-trafficking network to influence the government as well as to counter the traffickers.
- After the model of Father Anthony Mary Claret prepare leaflets with clear message against trafficking.

## 7. Concluding prayer

God our Father and Mother, May this memorial of St. Josephine Bakhita be a reminder to the entire world about the injustices and the evils that threaten human freedom; May everyone give a prophetic voice that announces liberation and joy to all God's people. Make us believe that together, a world without slavery and human trafficking, is possible. Amen.

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