



PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM  
DE IUSTITIA ET PACE

## ***International Day against Human Trafficking***

Press Conference, 3 February 2015

Eminences, Excellencies, Reverend Fathers and Sisters, distinguished members of the Vatican press corps:

In the name of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, I am very happy to join my fellow Cardinals in welcoming this initiative undertaken by our Brothers and Sisters of Consecrated Life.<sup>1</sup>

In his World Day of Peace Message on 1 January 2015,<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis acknowledged that “the international community has adopted numerous agreements aimed at ending slavery in all its forms, and has launched various strategies to combat this phenomenon.”

Nevertheless, “millions of people today – children, women and men of all ages – are deprived of freedom and are forced to live in conditions akin to slavery.”<sup>3</sup>

For those who cry out – usually in silence – for liberation, St Josephine Bakhita is “an exemplary witness of hope.” We – victims and advocates alike – could do no better than be inspired by her life and entrust our efforts to her intercession.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Yet I would like to mention the enormous and often silent efforts which have been made for many years by *religious congregations*, especially women’s congregations, to provide support to victims. These institutes work in very difficult situations, dominated at times by violence, as they work to break the invisible chains binding victims to traffickers and exploiters.” (Pope Francis, 2015 World Day of Peace Message, § 5)

<sup>2</sup> [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco\\_20141208\\_messaggio-xlvi-giornata-mondiale-pace-2015.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20141208_messaggio-xlvi-giornata-mondiale-pace-2015.html)

<sup>3</sup> 2015 World Day of Peace Message, § 3.

<sup>4</sup> Josephine Bakhita, originally from the Darfur region in Sudan, was kidnapped by slave-traffickers and sold to brutal masters when she was nine years old. Subsequently – as a result of painful experiences – she became a “free daughter of God” thanks to her faith, lived in religious consecration and in service to others, especially the most lowly and helpless. This saint, who lived at the turn of the twentieth century, continues today an exemplary witness of hope for the many victims of slavery. She can support the efforts of all those committed to fighting against this “open wound on the body of contemporary society, a scourge upon the body of Christ” (2015 World Day of Peace Message, § 6).

The Holy Father went on to recognize – and he invites us all to recognize – that “we are facing a global phenomenon which exceeds the competence of any one community or country. In order to eliminate it, we need a mobilization comparable in size to that of the phenomenon itself.”<sup>5</sup>

The *International Day against Human Trafficking* next Sunday, 8 February, is a mobilization of awareness and prayer on a global scale. Yes, our awareness must expand and extend to the very depths of this evil and its farthest reaches ... from awareness to prayer ... from prayer to solidarity ... and from solidarity to concerted action, until slavery and trafficking are no more.

On 2 December, Pope Francis hosted leaders of the Anglican and Orthodox Churches and of other great religions (Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim) in the Vatican for the signing of the Joint Declaration of Religious Leaders against Modern Slavery.<sup>6</sup> So may our prayer be ever more ecumenical, ever more inter-religious. As we join hands, in prayer and in action, to overcome human trafficking and modern slavery, may God help us to become more genuinely brothers and sisters.

Thank you.

Cardinal Peter K.A. Turkson  
President

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<sup>5</sup> 2015 World Day of Peace Message, § 6.

<sup>6</sup> The text of the *Joint Declaration of Religious Leaders against Modern Slavery* is available at [www.globalfreedomnetwork.org/declaration](http://www.globalfreedomnetwork.org/declaration). Pope Francis, *Address* at the Ceremony for the Signing of the Faith Leaders’ Universal Declaration against Slavery, 2 December 2014: “Modern slavery – in the form of human trafficking, forced labour, prostitution or the trafficking of organs – is a crime against humanity. Its victims are from every walk of life, but most are found among the poorest and the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters.”