



# INTERNATIONAL DAY OF AWARENESS AND PRAYER AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING

## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF AWARENESS AND PRAYER AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING – 8 FEBRUARY 2015

In today's globalized world, the daily commercialization and widespread exploitation of life for profit blind us and prevent us from recognizing every person as our brother and sister and not as a source of gain. From the beginning of his Pontificate, **Pope Francis** has strongly denounced the trafficking of human beings, calling on all to fight the traffic and look after the victims. Let us make the Holy Father's plea our own, as in his message for the 2015 World Day of Peace proclaimed, *"Slaves no more, but brothers and sisters!"*

"Human trafficking is a crime against humanity. We must unite our efforts to free the victims and stop this increasingly aggressive crime which threatens not only individuals but the basic values of society and of international security and justice, to say nothing of the economy, and the fabric of the family and our coexistence".

Pope Francis, 12 December 2013

### The phenomenon

**Human trafficking is surely the worst example of slavery in the XXI Century.**

This concerns the whole world. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), roughly **21 million people**, often very poor and vulnerable, are **victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, forced labour and begging, illegal organ removal, domestic servitude, forced marriages, illegal adoption** and other forms of exploitation. Each year, around 2.5 million people are victims of trafficking and slavery, and 60 percent of them are women and children. They often suffer abuse and unspeakable violence.

On the other hand, for traffickers and pimps, this is one of the most lucrative illegal activities in the world, generating a total of **\$32 billion a year**. It is the third most profitable "business" after drugs and arms trafficking.

### What has the Church been doing

For many years, the Catholic Church, and in particular the congregations of women religious, have been working in many parts of the world to raise awareness of this scourge, to prevent trafficking, to denounce traffickers and exploiters and, above all, to help, protect and liberate the victims. Thanks to Pope Francis, more attention is being given to the issue of human trafficking, and this has also resulted in concrete actions and initiatives promoted by various Vatican Departments.



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Therefore, everyone is invited – dioceses, parishes, religious congregations of men and of women, groups, movements, associations, schools and families – to reflect and to pray. May God illuminate the darkness caused by this crime, and may humanity be freed of this evil. You are invited to visit the following website:

**“A LIGHT AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING”**  
[www.a-light-against-human.trafficking.info](http://www.a-light-against-human.trafficking.info)

Please participate by lighting up your part of the world, as a sign of your commitment to freedom and human dignity.

This action will be supported by *Prayer Vigils* celebrated in different countries and, in Rome, will culminate with participation at the Angelus with the Holy Father in St. Peter's Square on Sunday 8 February, the feast of **St. Josephine Bakhita**. She was a Sudanese slave and set free, became a Canossian Sister, and was declared a Saint in 2000.

Awareness and prayer will help us:

- to identify the causes of human trafficking;
- to map out an educational pathway;
- to promote the prevention of this scourge at all levels; and
- to eradicate the exploitation of human life that destroys the dignity of the person.

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This day is sponsored by:

**The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life**  
**The Pontifical Council of Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People**  
**The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace**

**With the support of:** The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences; Global Freedom Network; Caritas Internationalis and its Network of Christian Organizations against trafficking (COATNET); Talitha Kum – International Network of Religious Life Against Trafficking and its 24 local networks members; Working Group Against Trafficking of the UISG/USG Justice and Peace Office; the USMI Counter-trafficking Office; Slaves no More; the World Union of Catholic Women Organizations (WUCWO); the Community “Papa Giovanni XXIII”; the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS); the International Catholic Migration Commission; the International Forum Catholic Action; and the Canossian Daughters of Charity