

X° INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER AND AWARENESS AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING 2024



“JOURNEYING IN DIGNITY”: LISTEN, DREAM, ACT

»»» INTRODUCTION

“Journeying in Dignity”: Listen, Dream, Act is the theme of the X° Edition of the International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking, celebrated on Feb. 8, 2024. This day is the Feast of St Josephine Bakhita, a Sudanese nun, who as a child had the traumatic experience of being a victim of human trafficking.

Human trafficking is the process by which people are forced or lured by false prospects, recruited, relocated, and forced to work and live in exploitative or abusive conditions. It is a complex reality, often linked to migration. Human trafficking is thus a process that takes shape in the twists and turns of subjugation and violence, whether physical, psychological, or spiritual. People are disfigured and reduced to objects to be used and exploited for profit. Victims of trafficking may be forced into sexual exploitation, child, early and forced marriages, or labor exploitation in various industries, etc. (<https://preghieracontrotratta.org/>)

Through this pastoral guide we want to invite you to become aware of the seriousness of this crime that enslaves and exploits human beings; to let ourselves be enlightened by the Word of God, and carry out concrete actions to protect people, mostly poor and marginalized, migrants and refugee, women, and girls. And to pray for all the victims and the conversion of human traffickers.

To participate in the Day of Prayer and Reflection Against Human Trafficking and obtain more information about the week-long events organized for this year, we invite you to visit the official website: <https://preghieracontrotratta.org/>.

BIBLICAL REFLECTION

"The patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him, and rescued him from all his afflictions, and enabled him to win favor and to show wisdom when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who appointed him ruler over Egypt and over all his household." (Acts 7:9-10 NRS)

The narrative of Joseph, who was sold to Egypt by his brothers (Gen 37:18-36), stands among the most well-known biblical accounts. While its uplifting conclusion underscores that God guided Joseph through his trials for the benefit of his family, the actions of his brothers inflicted profound pain not only upon Joseph but also upon their elderly father and the entire family. The story unfolds a protracted journey of reconciliation and restoration of relationships, highlighting the undeniable gravity of remaining indifferent to such injustices.

Scriptures present two distinct forms of involvement in addressing such issues. The first is evident in Abraham's narrative, where his nephew Lot and family are taken as war booty, likely implying enslavement (see Gen 14:11-16). In the ancient Mediterranean world, outsiders were deemed legitimate targets for exploitation. Abraham, opting for a direct and "military" intervention, organizes a rescue mission, defeating the kidnappers. Today, albeit through different means, the ongoing battle in support of the rights of the exploited persists.

The second form of involvement is observed in the relationship between Jesus and Judas. Judas, driven by monetary gain, betrays his Master. Despite being aware of his disciple's plans, Jesus endeavors until the end to sway Judas's decision—an act symbolized by the friendly gesture of handing a piece of bread at the Last Supper (John 13:26). Although unsuccessful in Judas's case, this approach focuses on persuading transgressors to recognize the wrongfulness of their actions.



ACTION PLAN FOR ANTI HUMAN TRAFFICKING

➤➤➤ AWARENESS:

Create awareness of human trafficking, reduce people's vulnerability to being trafficked and build community resilience. Organize seminars and workshops for vulnerable people.

➤➤➤ NETWORKING:

Collaborate with others in different sectors, for example government, law enforcement, business, media, church agencies and civil society; value others and recognize that we cannot all do everything, but together we can play an important part against human trafficking.

➤➤➤ ADVOCACY:

Ensure that there is effective legislation against trafficking and that it is implemented, both at a state level and within our Church structures. Spread these laws among people.

➤➤➤ REPORT:

Find out the local situation of trafficking and prepare a good report with evidence and submit it to the police or other agencies to take appropriate actions. Victims of sex trafficking and slavery are on increase, finding these victims would be very significant.

➤➤➤ PROSECUTION:

Work for the effective prosecution of perpetrators that ensures traffickers are not allowed to continue and seek justice for the trafficked persons.

➤➤➤ PROTECTION:

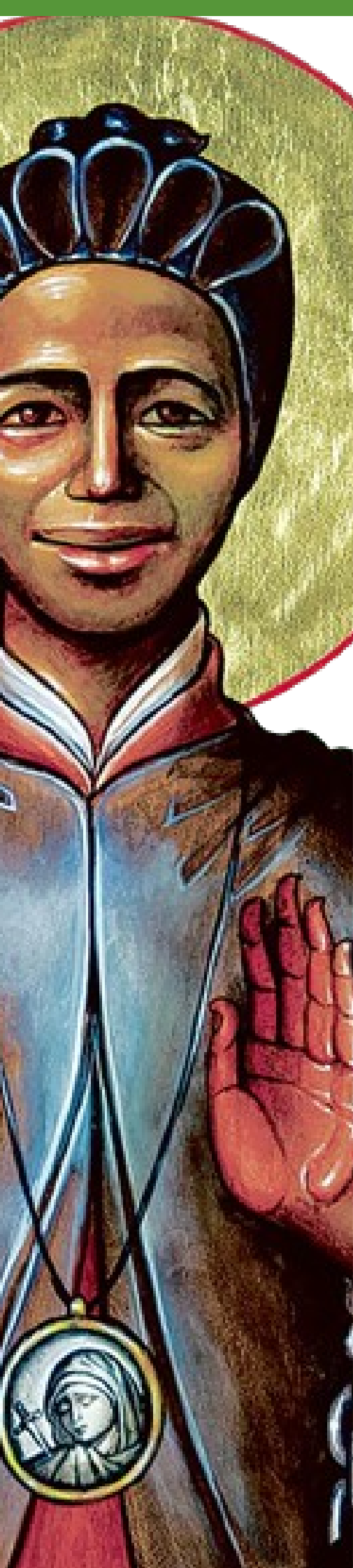
Assist and protect people who have come out of trafficking, for example by providing safe houses or host families and access to psychological and livelihood support and avoiding re-trafficking. Protect those witnesses who are involved in legal procedures.

➤➤➤ FACILITATE COMPENSATION:

Work together with professionals to make legal rights for compensation to victims; find various resources to give compensation to them.

➤➤➤ STRENGTHEN THEIR FAITH:

God works more powerfully when we are vulnerable. Strengthen their faith in God and provide an atmosphere of prayer.



PRAYER

Saint Josephine Bakhita,
you were enslaved as a child;
you were bought and sold, you were treated brutally.
Intercede, we implore you, for all those
who are trapped in trafficking and slavery.
May their captors let them go,
and may this evil be erased from the face of the earth.

Saint Josephine Bakhita,
once you regained your freedom,
you did not let your sufferings define your life.
You chose a path of kindness and generosity.
Help those blinded by greed and lust who trample
the human rights and dignity of their brothers and sisters.
Help them to break out of their hateful chains,
to become fully human again, and to imitate
your kindness and generosity.

Loving and Gracious God,
make us instruments of your Spirit for bringing liberation
to those who are enslaved and denied freedom.
Help us to be strongly committed to taking action
against human trafficking and bless our efforts
to raise awareness and support all people
of goodwill in fighting against trafficking and exploitation.
We make this prayer through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

(Adapted from Pontifical Orientations on Human Trafficking)



SVD Rome

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