



Prayer Service

*St. Josephine Bakhita,
Patron Saint of Victims of Human Trafficking*

February 8, 2020

Reader 1: We celebrate the life and legacy of **Josephine Bakhita** because of the inspiration her life brings to us. That transformation is possible through suffering which is still needed in today's world where human trafficking has grown into a billion-dollar operation. Her story of deliverance from physical slavery gives meaning and inspiration of her life to many struggling people today.

After having been a slave in Sudan, Josephine Bakhita became a Sudanese-Italian Canossian religious sister in Italy where she ministered for 45 years. A young student once asked Bakhita: "What would you do, if you were to meet your captors?" Without hesitation she responded: "If I were to meet those who kidnapped me, and even those who tortured me, I would kneel and kiss their hands. For, if these things had not happened, I would not have been a Christian and a religious."

This prayer calls us to see, reflect, and act on the problem of human trafficking around the globe, to reject indifference, and to move beyond our comfort zones to help highlight this injustice.

Pause

All: "Prayer brings our whole religious life into focus; it supports the rhythm of our lives emphasizing now the person, now the community, now the world we serve."

YAS c. 28

Reader 2: Human trafficking is an injustice, an outrage, which must be called by its true name – modern slavery. To look at the expansion of prevention strategies is laudable. However, unless we address the underlying socio-economic context that gives rise to human trafficking, until we better understand the changing context of race, gender, politics, labor, and migration in the rapidly globalizing world, we cannot dismantle the cultural superstructure which supports the trafficking of human beings. If we hope to end human trafficking, then we must be willing to examine the undercurrents of consumerism and other forces at work, that allow some to enslave others. If we hope to end exploitation, then we must be willing to undo corporations and governments of every sort. If we hope to establish justice and equality, then we must continually ask 'why'? www.sistersagainstrafficking.org

Pause

All: “In accord with church teaching and directives, we work actively, especially in our local situations, to eliminate the root causes of injustice in order to realize a world of peace, justice, and love.” YAS c. 17

Reader 3: “Human Trafficking is a crime against humanity. We must unite our efforts to free victims and stop this crime that’s become ever more aggressive, that threatens not just individuals, but the foundational values of society.” - Pope Francis, 2015

Pause

All: “The gift of our internationality sharpens our consciousness of universal needs and calls us to foster within ourselves and others a responsible concern for the people of the world.” YAS GD 36



Lord, we ask you to . . .

Help the migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families who are often victims of labor trafficking in harvesting crops, we pray . . .

Free the vulnerable migrants at our borders who are exposed to the danger of being trafficked, we pray . . .

Open the eyes of parents who think their kids are safe and protected just because they are home with their electronic devices, we pray . . .

Give justice to the women and men who are hired in hotels and restaurants and forced to work excessive hours, with few breaks and no pay, we pray . . .

Free us from the sexual and economic exploitation which occurs because of human greed and profit, we pray . . .

Secure safety and justice for the very young boys and girls who are enslaved in dangerous work on cocoa farms and in conflict mineral mines in Africa, we pray . . .

Come to the aid of the parents of a missing child who was taken by a stranger she/he met through online gaming, we pray . . .

Remember those who work to eliminate factors that contribute to human trafficking, we pray . . .

Help predators to be touched by God's love so that their hearts may be transformed, we pray . . .

Let us pray: All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in all of your creatures. Pour out upon us the power of your love that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one. O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes. Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth. God of love, show us our place in this world as channels of your love for all people of this earth. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace. AMEN.

Adapted from Prayers in Laudato Si'

Sing: *City of God* by Dan Schutte

