



*Human Trafficking is a crime against humanity. We must unite our efforts to free victims and stop this crime that's become even more aggressive, that threatens not just individuals, but the foundational values of society, international security and laws, the economy, families and communities.*

Pope Francis



*On the Feast Day of St. Josephine Bakhita, we pray for the millions of people that have been victims of modern day slavery. Like St. Josephine Bakhita, may we stand firm in our resolve to create a slave-free world.*

[www.usccb.org/stopslavery](http://www.usccb.org/stopslavery)

## *Day of Prayer and Fasting for Survivors and Victims of Human Trafficking*

*Saturday 8 February*

February 8 is the feast day of St. Josephine Bakhita, who was kidnapped as a child and sold into slavery in Sudan and Italy. Once Josephine was freed, she dedicated her life to sharing her testament of deliverance from slavery and comforting the poor and suffering.

The idea for this day came after Pope Francis entrusted two Vatican academies to study the problem of human trafficking, and a group of women religious asked the pope to raise greater awareness in the church about the issue by establishing a worldwide day of prayer and fasting.

“On that day, we will lift our voices loudly in prayer, hope, and love for trafficking victims and survivors,” said Bishop Eusebio Elizondo, M.Sp.S., auxiliary bishop of Seattle. “If just one person realizes from this day that they or someone they know is being trafficked, we will have made a difference.”

You are encouraged to host or attend prayer services, to reflect on the experiences of those who have suffered through human trafficking and exploitation. You are invited to pray for the emotional, physical, and spiritual healing, and make a personal commitment to work against human trafficking. Awareness-raising to educate communities about human trafficking is essential.

More information on the work of USCCB’s Anti-Trafficking Program is available at: [www.usccb.org/about/anti-trafficking-program/](http://www.usccb.org/about/anti-trafficking-program/)

In an address to new ambassadors to the Vatican, Pope Francis called for more cooperation and effective strategies, a common sense of responsibility and “a more decisive political will” to stop trafficking.

He said “more needs to be done to help victims, to protect their rights and safety, and to stop the corrupt and the criminal from evading justice”.

“Adequate legislative measures in countries of origin, transit and destination, including facilitating legal immigration, can reduce the problem.”

Pope Francis 12 December 2013

### **ACTIONS:**

**LEARN** about human trafficking – globally and locally

**PRAY** for victims of trafficking and for an end to this slavery

**DEMAND** slave-free products. Buy fair trade when possible.

**ADVOCATE** for state and federal legislation that protects victims

**Excerpt from a Prayer adapted from INTERCOMMUNITY PEACE & JUSTICE CENTER – Seattle and the U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking (USCSAHT)**

**Leader:** Let us begin by observing a moment of silence in solidarity with the more than 27 million women, men and children who suffer each day from modern day slavery. [Moment of Silence]

**Leader:** Each person forced into slavery has a personal story...a story of struggles, hopes and dreams. Let us listen to the story of Bakhita, a survivor of human trafficking.

**Reader 1:** St. Josephine Bakhita was born in southern Sudan in 1869. As a young girl, she was kidnapped and sold into slavery. Sold and resold in the markets of El Obeid and Karthoum, she was treated brutally by her captors. She did not remember the name she was given by her parents. Bakhita, which means “fortunate one,” was the name given to her by her kidnappers.

**Reader 2:** In 1883, she was bought by an Italian diplomat who sent her to Italy to work as a maid for the daughter of a family friend studying with the Canossian Daughters of Charity. It was there that Bakhita came to know about God whom “she had experienced in her heart without knowing” who God was. In 1890, she was baptized and received the name Josephine.

**Reader 1:** Later, the Italian family came to take their “property” back to Africa. Josephine expressed her desire to stay. When the family insisted she go, she remained firm, later writing: “I am sure the Lord gave me strength at that moment.” With the support of the superior of the Canossian Sisters and the Cardinal of Venice, she won her freedom and later entered the novitiate. For the next 50 years she lived a life of prayer and service as a Canossian Sister before her death in 1947.

**Reader 2:** St. Josephine was canonized in 2000. There is a grassroots movement to designate her as the patron saint of kidnapped and trafficked persons.

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*Prayer Response: Restore their freedom*

**Leader:** May human dignity be restored to those who have been bought, sold or kidnapped for the monetary benefit of others. R

**Leader:** For those in bonded labor, in agricultural fields, mines and factories who have been reduced to tools of production commodities rather than human beings. R

**Leader:** For those who cannot return home due to stigma of prostitution, disease or shame, that they receive the solace, healing and support they need R

**Leader:** For women who are estimated to make up 80% of human trafficking victims, and for changes in societal attitudes that deny the equality and dignity of women. R

**Leader:** For victims of trafficking in our own local communities. May we have eyes to see and act to make our communities slave free, R

**All:** Awaken our hearts and deepen our commitment to work for a world where every person is free and able to live with dignity and freedom. We ask for conversion of heart for traffickers and for strong laws that protect victims. Give us the wisdom and courage to stand in solidarity, so that together we will find ways to the freedom that is your gift to all people. Amen

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