

**The International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking
(February 8, 2017)**



1. Opening prayer

God our Father, You have created all of us as your children. We are also members of the body of your son Jesus. Today we remember our sisters and brothers who are made slaves. Expel the darkness around this human trade and enlighten mind to see their plight. Stir up in us passion to fight for their freedom.

2. Slavery:

Slavery was abolished by law in British empire 1833. Today slavery is illegal. But there are more slaves today than earlier. *The Walk Free Foundation*, an Australia-based human rights group, has reported in its global slavery index that there are close to 36 million people living as slaves, or forced into brothels. Every 3 seconds one more slave is added. When slavery was legal it was expensive to purchase a slave but today an average cost of slave is \$ 90. Earlier slaves were encouraged to beget children but today pregnancy is seen as disturbance for extracting labour and sex. In the past slaves had stable relationship with the owner but today they are resold many times and thrown out. So post modern slavery is more cruel. Today slaves come from every where without the distinction of color, nationality and the economic status of the biological family. Most of them get cheated while aspiring prosperous life. Watch

this video on the present slavery(six minutes, Spanish subtitle):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_2MPxaxG7U

3. International day of prayer and awareness:

On December 2, 2014 the leading religious leaders signed a pledge in Vatican to end human slavery by 2020. Pope Francis requested the Union of Major Superiors (USIG/USG) to work towards this. This day is celebrated on February 8 since 2015. For this year the theme is *They are children, Not slaves*. December 8 marks the feast of *St. Josephin Bakhita of Sudan (1869-1947)*. She was trafficked as a child and sold into slavery. At last when she reached the Italian family that bought her in 1882, she was freed. Then she became a nun in the congregation of Canossian Sisters in Venice. There were 144 physical scars on her body. Due to trauma she forgot her birth name and the kidnappers nicknamed her Bakhita meaning 'fortunate'. Josephin was her baptismal name.

4. Praying the Bible

Matthew 18:2-6: He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

- Reflection:

Old testament has instances of child trafficking. Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers(Genesis 17). In the family of Abram and Sarai a young woman called Hagar was exploited for both labor and sex according to custom of the times(Genesis 16). The story of young people being exploited is an old story. Jesus transforms their conditions. He places the young people as examples of perfection. Jesus advocates their protection. He proposes death sentence to those who do evil to them.

- What shall we do:

Pause a moment and visualise the trafficked children in the arms of Jesus; ask the question 'what can we do to bring the enslaved children to the hand of Jesus'?

1. We have to increase the child friendly/protective facilities in our premises.
2. Collaborate with Governmental and Non governmental efforts to prevent slavery and to free the slaves.
3. Oxfam has studied on 'how do the top food companies deal with land, women, farmers, workers, climate, transparency and water'. The results are published.

Oxfam has also asked the consumers to join their campaign to demand from these companies to become eco and poor friendly. Visit this site: <http://www.behindthebrands.org>

4. The way we use things indirectly causes slavery. Using the goods that is tainted by slave labour we become part of the slave causing chain. To see whether slaves work for you do this exercise: www.slaveryfootprint.org

● Intercessory prayers: Resposne: *Lord hear the cry of your children.*

1. Lord Jeus you have asked us to pray for the coming of your kingdom. We pray to you to come down and liberate the children, women and men who are kidnapped, sold and abused. May your justice done on earth as it is in heaven.
2. Lord we pray for the survivors of slave trade. Heal their wounds and reintegrate them into society.
3. Lord we pray for those in governance. May they remain ever vigilant to prevent people being smuggled into slave world. May they work sincerely to end the slavery.
4. Lord we pray for the traffickers and all those who are involved in slave trade. In your anger and mercy convert their hearts. Make them leave this trade which is a sin against humanity.
5. We pray for ourselves. Give us courage to speak about the missery of those enslaved. Make us generous to place our time, ability and money to liberate the people who suffer in darkness.
6. Lord we pray for those who work to end slavery. Strengthen their hands and make their labour bear fruit.

5.Concluding : Now listen to the sounds of children playing and laughing (33 seconds): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XkgVtkHIZ8>

Lord on this we pray through the intercession of St. Josephine Bakhita who was sold as a child. May her story be a model for all who struggle to be free. We pray that Jesus' love for the children might be in us. Bless our resolve to make children laugh and spread this laughter to those in bondage. Amen!

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