PRAYER -8 FEBRUARY 2020

TOGETHER AGAINST TRAFFICKING

**Visual*:*** Place in front a globe, a painting of St. Josephine Bakhita, large iron chains and a candle not lit.

**Leader:** Today, we celebrate together the sixth *World Day of Prayer and Reflection against Human Trafficking*. In many parts of the world, trafficking is a scourge that strikes everyone without distinction, but it strikes above all the poorest and those who in various ways can be defined as “the least”, the “discarded” of our society. Those who live on the margins and the weakest, such as women and children, are the targeted victims of injustice and abuse. May Saint Bakhita intercede for us and for the many Josephine Bakhitas of our time.

**Entrance hymn of your choice  
Leader**: We present some stories of engagement against trafficking. Stories of desperation, poverty, courage.

**Reader1.**(A Story from Uganda) : “I was working in a chemical industry in Uganda. After I got sick because of an allergy to the materials we used, I had to leave work. I bought a small kiosk to sell food to passers-by. Everything was fine, until I was cheated by an agency that offered me work in the Middle East. I thought I had a great opportunity but found myself in domestic slavery. I worked tirelessly and received no food or compensation...”  
*[One minute’s silence as you hear the sound of the chains]*

**Reader2.** (A story from Italy): “I had decided to leave my country, Nigeria, after the death of my father. I wanted to help my mother and my brothers. When I arrived in Italy with the promise of a job, I found myself on the road, under the direction of a Madame who subjected me to physical and psychological violence. I thought that once the debt was paid I would be free from this nightmare. But they kept demanding more and more money. Alone and without papers I ended up in prison, even though I was the victim...”

**Leader**: “If there are so many young women victims of trafficking who end up on the streets of our cities, itis because many men here — young, middle-aged, elderly — demand these services and are willing to pay for their pleasure. I wonder then, is the principal cause of trafficking really the traffickers? I believe the principal cause is the unscrupulous selfishness of the many hypocrites in our world. Of course, arresting traffickers is an obligation of justice. But the true solution is the conversion of hearts, cutting off demand in order to dry out the market.” (Pope Francis, *Address to the participants in the World Day of Prayer against Human Trafficking*, 12 February 2018).

**Reader3.** : A reading from the book of the prophet Ezekiel: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove the heart of stone from your body, and I will give you a heart of flesh. I will put my Spirit within you and I will see to it that you walk according to my laws, and you will observe and put intopractice my prescriptions.” (Ezekiel 36: 26-27)

**Responses  
Reader 4.** When our hearts are indifferent to the pain of our sisters and brothers,  
**All**: Lord, free our hearts  
When our minds refuse to want to know if what we use and consume has been produced by slave workers  
**All**: Lord, free our minds  
When our eyes can’t see our sister, our brother, in the other:  
**All**: Lord, free our eyes  
When our ears close to the cry of freedom  
**All**: Lord, clear our ears  
When our hands and feet become instruments of violence against others  
**All**: Lord free our hands and feet.

**Gesture** - second part: We light the candle near the visual.

**Leader**: Each face can be met, caressed, listened to. Together it is possible to break the chains of slavery. In this way, life stories can become stories of rebirth, hope, dignity.

**Reader1.** (Conclusion to the Story from Uganda): “...Desperation led Jessie to flee and luckily she managed to get to the embassy. For her, it was the beginning of a new life: they took her to our community, which took care of her, giving her back food, clothes and dignity. One day she asked us if we could go home: she often thought of the happiness that that small kiosk she owned only a few years earlier gave her. So we helped Jessie to obtain the documents and make contact with her country of origin. Today she lives in Uganda and we continue to support her on her journey of reintegration into work and society.”  
**Refrain of a song of life**

**Reader2.** (Conclusion to the Story from Italy): “...When I met Maryam in prison she told me her story and I decided to help her. So I convinced my community in Sicily to welcome her into our home to obtain house arrest. In these years Maryam has managed to transform her life and help many young people, who had fallen like her into the hands of the traffickers. Today she is happy: she is a mother and her family is beautiful, as is our community which welcomed her as a daughter and where she still works as an educator.”  
**Refrain of a song of life**

**Leader**: Let us pray, together

The righteous cry and the Lord hears them;  
frees them from all their misfortunes.

The Lord is close to those who have a troubled heart,  
Save the humble in spirit.  
There are many afflictions of the righteous;  
But the Lord frees him from all.

He preserves all his bones;  
not a single one breaks.

Wickedness will make the wicked perish,  
those who hate the right will be found guilty.  
The Lord redeems the lives of his servants,  
none of those who trust in him will be found guilty. Psalm 34 (vv. 17-22)

**Reader3. : Word of God: John 15:12-13**

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.  Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends**.**

**Leader**: Our first call is Love, and responding to this Love is necessary and urgent because it is the only thing that can give meaning and peace to our existence. We are called to bear fruit with respect to this: there are gestures, words, feelings and behaviors which manifest to those around us the deep affection of a God who loved us so much that he put himself in our shoes; embodying himself in our world; an event that has transformed the lives of each of us. These knots link our lives with the stories we hear and with the people around us, as we commit ourselves not to remain indifferent but to transform the world around us.

**Closing hymn of your choice**

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