



Where Justice and Truth Meet

January 2023

“We...reject the societal barriers created by the misuse of power.”

– A Prayer for the Life of the World

January is *Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month*, with January 11 designated as National Human Trafficking Awareness Day.

In recognition of this day of awareness, there are various campaigns to **#WearBlueDay** and call attention to the reality of human trafficking, also known as modern slavery.



What is Human Trafficking?

At its most basic form, human trafficking is the buying and selling of people. Think of it as having three parts:

Action: recruitment, harboring, moving, obtaining

Means: force, fraud, coercion

Particular Ends: involuntary servitude, sex trade, child soldiers, the sale of organs, forced marriage

In all this the consent of the victim is irrelevant; one cannot consent to enslavement. A trafficked person may willingly go with the person who is going to help find work but that doesn't negate that she/he is a victim of trafficking if forced into prostitution in order to pay off her "debt."



Talitha Kum is a global network of women religious who advocate for

and help victims of human trafficking. These Networks are active in the 5 continents coordinating the anti-trafficking efforts of various congregational groups.

It takes its name from Jesus's words to the girl thought to be dead in Mark 5:4. Jesus took her by the hand and said "Talitha Kum", which is translated from Aramaic as "Little girl, arise!". The expression speaks to the possibility of wholeness and transformation even in the most extreme situations.

This Talitha Kum 2-minute video adds to one's understanding: [What is Human Trafficking?](#)

The root causes of human trafficking?

The most common factor is poverty. Other contributing ones are forced migration, domestic abuse, profits from commercial sex, demand for cheap labor, armed conflict, lack of social safety nets, debt, climate change. These situations make people vulnerable to predators.



U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking

U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking (USCSAHT) is a collaborative, faith-based national network that offers education, supports access to survivor services, and engages in advocacy to eradicate modern-day slavery. USCSAHT, whose members include 100+ congregations of Catholic Sisters and coalitions, works to inform the public, prevent this assault on human dignity, and assist survivors to live fulfilling lives. This 3-minute [Human Trafficking Basics](#) is helpful in understanding the human trafficking picture.

USCSAHT's website is a treasure trove of resources. You can access the current monthly newsletter [Stop Trafficking!](#) here. Past issues are archived by date and also by topic, 38 of them for easy reference. This [Q&A with Sr. Jean Schafter on the Evolution of the Anti-trafficking Message](#) tells the story of the newsletter's development and how it came to be part of the USCSAHT's work.

USCSAHT also offers [Human Trafficking Modules](#), short to-the-point educational resources which help to break open a single aspect of Human Trafficking.

How many people are trafficked, enslaved?

Understandably, exact statistics are hard to come by. The September 2022 report of [International Labor Organization](#) (ILO) estimates that 50 million people worldwide are in modern slavery. Forced labor and forced marriage have increased significantly in the last five years.

Modern slavery occurs in almost every country in the world, and cuts across ethnic, cultural and religious lines. More than half (52 per cent) of all forced labor and a quarter of all forced marriages can be found in upper-middle income or high-income countries.

Global and National Efforts

Red Kawsay



Vida Consagrada
por una Sociedad sin Trata

In Peru, the organization associated to Talitha Kum is [Red Kawsay](#) ("Network for a Good Life"), a permanent committee of the Conference of Religious men and women. They offer formation and information to the Church and society and outreach and advocacy to the victims of human trafficking.

The [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime](#) focuses on human trafficking and migrant smuggling, seeing them as global and widespread crimes that use men, women and children for profit. UNODC works to dismantle the criminal enterprises that trade in people and to convict the main perpetrators.

The U.S. [Trafficking Victims Protection Act](#) was first passed in 2000 and has been updated and reauthorized several times. The TVPA provides for protection of victims, prosecution of perpetrators, and prevention possibilities.

The U.S. State Department publishes the [Trafficking in Persons Report](#) each year. The report ranks governments based on their perceived efforts to acknowledge and combat human trafficking.

The [Stop Trafficking Project](#) focuses on domestic minor sex trafficking in U. S. communities. It describes domestic minor sex trafficking as the **exploitation of vulnerability**. The goal is to identify vulnerabilities before they can be exploited, through communication, leadership, team development, and compassion. For minors there is no greater place for their vulnerabilities to be exploited than when they are online.

Stop Trafficking
PROJECT®

Prayer, Reflection, Advocacy

The January *Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month* prepares us in our church for February 8, the designated day of prayer and reflection against human trafficking and the Feast Day of St. Josephine Bakhita.



St. Josephine Bakhita was born in Darfur, Sudan in 1869, was kidnapped, sold into slavery, and given the name Bakhita. After being sold several times, she ended up in Venice taking care of an Italian family's child. When the family had to return to Africa, they left Bakhita and their daughter with the Canossian Sisters of Charity. Bakhita would say later that the moment she walked through the Sister's doors she felt she had returned home.

When the Italian family returned, Bakhita refused to go with them. Despite the family's protestations, it was determined that Bakhita was a free woman according to Italian law. She was baptized Josephine in 1890 and became a Canossian Sister in 1896. After 50 years of ministry she died on February 8, 1947 at a Canossian Convent surrounded by her fellow Sisters.

In 2000, she was canonized by Pope John Paul II who declared: "The history of her life inspires not passive acceptance but the firm resolve to work effectively to free girls and women from oppression and violence and to return them to their dignity in the full exercise of their rights."

The [USCCB Office of Migration & Refugee Services](#) promotes education and actions on human trafficking with their [Anti-trafficking Program](#).

Join their Zoom webinar on February 7, 1:00-2:00 pm Central Time:

St. Josephine Bakhita A Saint for Victims and Survivors of Human Trafficking

[Link to Webinar Registration](#)



On February 6 of 2022, this sculpture of St. Bakhita by artist Timothy Schmaltz was placed in St. Peter's Square. Titled "Let the oppressed go free", the artwork is dedicated to the victims of trafficking and to all women, particularly the nuns committed to their liberation.