



VIGIL OF PRAYER, FEBRUARY 8th, 2022 – THE POWER OF CARE: WOMEN, ECONOMY, HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Leader: Today we celebrate the World Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking, this year's theme is: The Power of Care - Women, Economy, human Trafficking.

Reader 1: Trafficking is one of the deepest wounds inflicted by the current economic system. Wounds that affect all dimensions of personal and communitarian life. The pandemic has increased the "business" of human trafficking and has exacerbated the pain: it has favored the opportunities and socio-economic mechanisms underlying this scourge, worsening the situations of vulnerability that involved the people most at risk - disproportionately women and girls. The latter, particularly penalized by the dominant economic model. The gap between men and women has thus grown.

Reader 2: With the pandemic, the society and institutions have rediscovered on one hand, the value of caring for people as a pillar of security and social cohesion and, on the other, the commitment to care for the common space in order to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change and environmental degradation, which mainly affects the poorer, and remove their causes.

Leader: The power of care is the only way to tackle human trafficking and all forms of exploitation.

Reader 1 (Invocation): God of all people awaken in our hearts a renewed desire to commit ourselves to service and mission, working for a world where the dignity and freedom of every person is recognized and respected.

All: Strengthen our spirit that we may be a voice for the voiceless, and that the cry of so many victims in the pain of slavery may be heard.

Reader 2 Help us to accompany victims in their healing processes. We ask this through the intercession of St. Josephine Bakhita who was also a victim and suffered the pains of slavery.

Reader 1 (Words of Pope Francis): We welcome the words of Pope Francis: "this is a Day of Prayer. Yes, there is a need to pray to support the victims of trafficking and the people who accompany the processes of integration and social reintegration. There is a need to pray that we may learn to approach with humanity and courage those who are marked by so

much pain and despair, keeping hope alive." (From the video message of Pope Francis for the 7th World Day of Prayer and Reflection against Trafficking in Persons).

Leader: Let's listen to some stories that testify to the power of caring for our brothers and sisters who are victims of human trafficking. They are stories of hope, commitment, closeness, empowerment and care, following the example of the parable of the Good Samaritan taught by Jesus (Lk - 10:25-37).

At the end of each testimony: ***And He took care of Him, and He took care of her.***
(Message from the Parable of the Good Samaritan: Luke 10: 33-35)

Stories can be chosen from your own context or from the following listed below:

Testimony 1: I have known slavery and violence since I was very young. After my mother died, I was sold several times to other men in different countries through arranged marriages in which my father made money. One day, during a trafficking awareness seminar, I could not hold back my tears and some people came to my aid. Since then, at the age of 25, I started a process of healing, social and work reintegration.

Testimony 2: We were happy with the new job we were promised abroad. We left with the hope of finding better conditions and helping our families. When we arrived at our destination, everything we had was taken away, we could not communicate with our families. We were forced to work for free, some of the group were forced to beg. We sought help, even though we didn't know the language. Fortunately, the local authorities began to mobilize on our behalf, and some people and nuns helped us return home.

Testimony 3: Every two weeks I was taken to a different place until one day they found me in a village near my home in a deplorable situation. I was a victim of human trafficking for sexual exploitation. This affected me deeply, physically and mentally. I was behaving abnormally, always had my hands on my chest, couldn't talk, couldn't eat, felt sad. Some nuns became interested in me and took me to a psychiatrist with whom I began my healing and reintegration process.

Reader 3: Let us pray with the words of the Prophet Isaiah.

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good tidings to the wretched, to bind up the wounds of the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom to the slaves, release to the captives, (Isaiah 61:1).

Isaiah's prophecy leads us to contemplate Jesus coming to heal wounded hearts, to release the bonds that imprison, and to be a comfort and support to those who suffer injustice and pain. May the Spirit of the Lord guide us to be bearers of the Good News to all who suffers.

Leader: The liturgical memory of St. Josephine Bakhita calls us back to the dimension of faith and prayer; her testimony sounds ever alive and relevant! It is a call to put the victims of trafficking, their families and communities at the center of any policy and intervention, at the center of our prayer. St. Bakhita reminds us that they are the protagonists of this day and that we can all commit ourselves to transforming the economy of exploitation into an economy of care.

Let us invoke God's protection and respond: **Lord, heal the wounds of our humanity.**

Give us clarity of mind and strength of spirit to work tirelessly for the elimination of slavery and human trafficking. **Lord, heal the wounds of our humanity.**

We pray for all victims of trafficking, their families and communities, that they will not lose heart or lose the comfort of faith and hope. Let us pray. **Lord, heal the wounds of our humanity.**

Help us to raise awareness in society about human trafficking for sexual exploitation of girls, boys, women and men; for labor exploitation and organ trafficking; about land exploitation, demanding concrete measures from governments and authorities. Let us pray. **Lord, heal the wounds of our humanity.**

For the protection of violated and ignored human rights, especially of women and girls, and for the international treaties, and all instruments of particular concern in relation to trafficking in persons, that they can be implemented responsibly. Let us pray. **Lord, heal the wounds of our humanity.**

That, faithful to your Word, we may witness to your love as a merciful Father by healing the wounds of humanity. Let us pray. **Lord, heal the wounds of our humanity.**

Sign: Light a candle for the dignity of every woman

Leader: We invite you to light the candle as a sign of commitment to illuminate the painful realities of many exploited brothers and sisters; to illuminate the injustices suffered especially by women and girls in different social environments; to illuminate the path of recognition of their dignity.

All: Jesus, you invite us to be the light that illuminates the darkness of the pain and suffering of our sisters; to be the light that illuminates the denounce of all the discrimination suffered by every woman and girl; to be the light that illuminates every victim and survivor of trafficking during their process of healing and integration into society; to be the light that gives warmth to the hearts of those who suffer through words and gestures of care, closeness and hope.