



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS FOR THE LENTEN BROTHERHOOD CAMPAIGN IN BRAZIL

Dear Brazilians,

Bearing in mind the greatness of your hearts and the warmth of your welcome you gave me when I visited your country last July, allow me to accompany you on this Lenten journey, that begins on 5 March, by speaking to you about the Brotherhood Campaign that reminds you of the victory of Easter: “for freedom Christ has set us free” (Gal 5:1). By his Passion, death and Resurrection, Jesus Christ freed humanity from the fetters of death and sin. During the next 40 days we will strive to be more aware of the infinite mercy that God has given us and has asked us to give to others, especially to those most in need: “You are free! Go and help your brothers to be free as well!”. In this sense, wishing to mobilize Christians and people of goodwill in Brazil’s society against the scourge of society of human trafficking, our brothers, the Brazilian bishops propose as a theme this year: “Brotherhood and Human Trafficking”.

It is impossible to remain indifferent knowing that there are human beings who are treated like merchandise! Think of the children adopted for organ transplants, of women who are deceived and forced into prostitution, of exploited workers without rights or a voice, etc. This is human trafficking! “It is precisely on this level that we need to make a good examination of conscience: how many times have we permitted a human being to be seen as an object, to be put on show in order to sell a product or to satisfy an immoral desire? The human person ought never to be sold or bought as if he or she were a commodity. Whoever uses human persons in this way and exploits them, even if indirectly, becomes an accomplice of this injustice” ([*Address to the new Ambassadors, 12 December 2013*](#)). If we then go to the family level and enter a home, how often does abuse reign! Parents who enslave their children, children who enslave their parents; spouses who forget their promises, who use each other as if they were disposable goods, goods to be used and thrown away; elderly without a place, and children and adolescents with no voice. How many attacks there are against the basic values that constitute the fabric of family life and of social coexistence! Yes, there is the need for a deep examination of conscience. How can we proclaim the joy of

Easter without supporting those who are deprived of their freedom on this earth?

Dear Brazilians, we can be sure: I offend the human dignity of others only because I have sold my own first. In exchange for what? For power, fame, material goods.... All this – amazingly enough! – in exchange for my dignity as a son and a daughter of God, delivered at the cost of the blood of Christ on the Cross and guaranteed by the Holy Spirit who calls out within us: “*Abbà!*, Father!” (Gal 4:6). Human dignity is the same for all human beings: when I trample on the dignity of another, I am trampling on my own. It was for freedom that Christ has set us free! Last year when I was with you, I said that the people of Brazil were teaching a good lesson in solidarity; certain of this, I hope that Christians and people of goodwill may commit themselves to working so that no man, woman, young person or child will ever again be a victim of human trafficking! This is the most effective foundation on which to re-establish human dignity and proclaim Christ’s Gospel in the countryside and in the cities, because Jesus desires to pour out an abundance of life everywhere (cf. *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 75).

With this hope, I invoke the protection of the Most High upon all Brazilians so that new life in Christ may reach them in the most perfect freedom of the children of God (cf. Rom 8:21), awakening in every heart sentiments of tenderness and compassion for our brother and our sister who needs to be freed, and I willingly impart an Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 25 February 2014

Francis