



The Holy See

***VIDEO MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
FOR THE NINTH INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER
AND AWARENESS AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING***

8 February 2023

[Multimedia]

Today we remember Saint Bakhita, patron saint of victims of human trafficking. I join you in celebrating the Ninth International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking, on the theme “Journeying in Dignity”, which involves young people as protagonists.

I address you, young people, in a special way: I encourage you to care for dignity, yours and that of every person you meet. I heard that it was you who chose this theme: “Journeying in Dignity”. It is very important: it indicates a broad horizon for your commitment against human trafficking: human dignity. In this way you can contribute to keeping hope alive, and I would also add joy, which I invite you to preserve in your hearts, along with the Word of God, because Christ is the true joy!

Human trafficking disfigures dignity. Exploitation and subjugation limit freedom and turn people into objects to be used and discarded. And the system of trafficking exploits the injustice and inequality that force millions of people to live in conditions of vulnerability. Indeed, people impoverished by the economic crisis, by wars, by climate change and many forms of instability are easily recruited. Unfortunately, trafficking is growing at an alarming rate, affecting, above all migrants, women and children, young people like yourselves, people full of dreams and the desire to live in dignity.

We know that we are living in a difficult time, but it is precisely in this reality that all of us, in particular young people, are called to join forces to build “networks of good”, to spread the light that comes from Christ and his Gospel. The light that will be symbolically handed over in these

days to the young people who have come to Rome to represent the organizations, which for years, have collaborated in this Day of Prayer and Awareness against trafficking. With this gesture, you are sent forth as missionaries of human dignity, against human trafficking and every form of exploitation. This inaugurates a special year of the involvement of young people, until the next Day in 2024. Guard this light and you will be a blessing for other young people. Never tire of seeking pathways to transform our societies and prevent the shameful scourge of human trafficking.

Journeying for dignity, against human trafficking, without leaving anyone behind. I would like to repeat some of the beautiful expressions you have written: “Walking with *open eyes to recognize* the processes that lead millions of people, especially young people, to be trafficked for brutal exploitation. Walking with *an attentive heart* to discover the daily paths of thousands of people in search of freedom and dignity. Walking *with hope guiding our feet* to promote anti-trafficking actions. Walking *together hand in hand* to support one another and build a culture of encounter that leads to the conversion of hearts and inclusive societies, capable of unmasking stereotypes and protecting the rights of every person”.

I hope that many people will accept your invitation to walk together against trafficking: walking together with those who are destroyed by the violence of sexual and labour exploitation; walking together with migrants, displaced persons, those who are searching for a place to live in peace and family. Together with you, young people, to reaffirm courageously the value of human dignity.

I thank you and say to you: go forth with courage! Go forth with courage! May the Lord bless you and may Our Lady protect you. May Saint Bakhita pray with us and for us. I offer my heartfelt blessing to all of you who work against trafficking and every person you meet on this journey for dignity. Thank you!

L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly Edition in English, 10 February 2023