

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER & AWARENESS AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING FEBRUARY 8, 2017



ROOTS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING: *Reflections with Pope Francis*

Introduction

Our *Constitution* calls us to prayerful reflection on the events of our lives, as well as realities in global society, to discern God's presence and action within us and our world, and to examine the quality of our response.

“Firmly grounded in our SNJM spiritual heritage, ... we seek out opportunities that will increase our sensitivity to and our understanding of causes that lead to displacement of peoples from their homes, to economic disparity among peoples, to human trafficking, and to destruction of the Earth.”

— *SNJM Chapter Acts 2016 Mission and Ministry (draft)*

This prayer for the feast of St. Josephine Bakhita is crafted as an Examen of Consciousness. Based on the January 2015 message of Pope Francis for the World Day of Peace, “No Longer Slaves, but Brothers and Sisters,” the three reflections focus on root causes of human trafficking.

We suggest you allow time for three periods of personal reflection — one for each section — then gather as a local community to share insights, calls to action, and prayer.



Reflection One

“Today, as in the past, slavery is rooted in a notion of the human person which allows him or her to be treated as an object. ... Whether by coercion or deception, or by physical or psychological duress, human persons created in the image and likeness of God are deprived of their freedom, sold and reduced to being the property of others. They are treated as means to an end.”

— Pope Francis, 2015 World Day of Peace Message

“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 injustice.”

— Pope Francis, 2014 Message for the Lenten Fraternity Campaign in Brazil

* *Recall a time when you felt treated as an object or you observed someone else being “used.” What feelings did that experience evoke in you? What response did you make?*

* *Have you ever experienced yourself using another person as a means to an end?*

* *Where, in your culture, do you see other persons being objectified?*



Reflection Two

“Alongside this deeper cause — the rejection of another person’s humanity — there are other causes which help to explain contemporary forms of slavery. Among these, I think in the first place (is) *poverty*, underdevelopment and exclusion, especially when combined with a *lack of access to education* or *scarce, even non-existent, employment opportunities*. Not infrequently, the victims of human trafficking and slavery are people who look for a way out of a situation of extreme poverty....

“Another cause of slavery is *corruption* on the part of people willing to do anything for financial gain. ... This occurs when money, and not the human person, is at the centre of an economic system.”

— Pope Francis, 2015 World Day of Peace Message

“If economic profit takes precedence over the individual and over humanity, we find a throw-away culture at work that considers humanity in itself, human beings, as a consumer good, which can be used and then thrown away.”

— Pope Francis, 2014 Address to Participants in the World Meeting of Popular Movements

* *How does an understanding of the deep roots of human trafficking shape the responses we make?*

* *Have you ever observed a tendency in yourself or others to value money or material things more than the good of a human person? How did that observation affect you? What questions did it raise?*

** Where, in your society, do you see evidence of a throw-away culture at work? How do you actively resist messages of that culture?*



Reflection Three

“I urgently appeal to all men and women of good will, and all those near or far, including the highest levels of civil institutions, who witness the scourge of contemporary slavery, not to become accomplices to this evil, not to turn away from the sufferings of our brothers and sisters, our fellow human beings, who are deprived of their freedom and dignity....

“The globalization of indifference, which today burdens the lives of so many of our brothers and sisters, requires all of us to forge a new worldwide solidarity and fraternity capable of giving them new hope and helping them to advance with courage amid the problems of our time and the new horizons which they disclose and which God places in our hands.”

— Pope Francis, 2015 World Day of Peace Message

** In what ways might we inadvertently become accomplices to the evil of human slavery through our daily choices?*

** As you reflect over the past few weeks of your life, in what ways have you countered the globalization of indifference and concretely expressed your solidarity with our burdened brothers and sisters?*



Communal Reflection and Discussion

Gather, using appropriate music if desired, and share insights, calls to action and intercessory prayer. Close with Nan C. Merrill's interpretation of Psalm 72.

Closing Prayer: Psalm 72:1–14

Bring justice to the peoples, O Beloved,
and your mercy to all generations!

May the people be known for mercy,
rendering justice to the poor!

Let their spirits soar as the eagle,
let joy abide in every heart!

May we heed the cry of the poor —
the young and the old,
helping to free all those in need,
awakening the souls of oppressors!

May we know oneness with You
as long as the sun endures,
as long as the stars shine,
throughout all generations!

May we acknowledge You in the rain

falling on the fields,
like showers that water the earth!

In our day may justice flourish,
and peace abound,
throughout all the nations!

May every heart open to your Love
from sea to sea,
from the River of Life out
to the universe!
May fears that paralyze the people
rise up from the depths
into Your Light!

May the leaders of nations from all the earth,
listen to Love's Voice;
May they spend time in Silence
before they counsel!

May the leaders surrender to

your Love, and the nations
serve the Most High!

For You heed the needy when they call,
the poor and those who have no friend.

You have compassion on the weak,
the downtrodden,
giving them strength and hope.

From injustice and oppression,
You redeem their life;
and precious are they in your Heart.

—Nan C. Merrill, *Psalms for Praying: An Invitation to Wholeness*
(New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc., 2007) 136–137



*Prayer adapted from Sisters of the Holy Cross 2016 Prayer
SNJM Anti-Trafficking Sub Committee 2017*