



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE
Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life

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Australians cannot be indifferent to human trafficking
Media release
22 January 2016

Australians cannot be indifferent to human trafficking and must rise to the challenge to stop this global issue, the Australian Catholic Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life (BCPL) and Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH) said on the Feast of St Josephine Bakhita.

On 8 February 2016, the Church in Australia marks world day of prayer, reflection and action against human trafficking.

Referring to *Laudato si'*, the recent encyclical by Pope Francis, the BCPL and ACRATH highlighted the Holy Father's words that, 'it is clearly inconsistent to combat trafficking in endangered species while remaining completely indifferent to human trafficking, unconcerned about the poor, or undertaking to destroy another human being deemed unwanted' (91).

'Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings,' the Holy Father added.

Chairman of the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life, Bishop Terry Brady said, 'In marking the Bakhita Day of prayer and fasting in this Year of Mercy, Australia's Catholics should be mindful of Pope Francis' challenge to stop human trafficking. We can all commit to learning more about human trafficking. We can commit to helping victims of human trafficking. And we can commit to tackling the systems that enable human trafficking to flourish'.

Sr Anne Tormey rsm, President, ACRATH said, 'Our prayer on this day becomes one of lamentation for the millions of women, children and men trafficked across the globe for human slavery. This day can be an opportunity to learn about trafficking locally and globally, to pray for the victims of human trafficking and for an end to slavery, to commit to buying Fairtrade products where possible and to advocate for legislation to protect victims of human trafficking'.

St Josephine Bakhita, who died on 8 February 1947, was born in Southern Sudan in 1869, and during her life experienced kidnapping and slavery in both Sudan and Italy. Following her delivery to freedom Josephine Bakhita dedicated her life to sharing her story and to supporting the poor and suffering. She eventually became a Canossian Sister, living a life of prayer and service for fifty years. She was canonised in 2000.

Despite many efforts to end human trafficking internationally, women, men and children today are deprived of their freedom and forced to suffer in conditions of exploitation and slavery. There is a compelling need to put an end to trafficking in human beings.

The BCPL and ACRATH call for a fourfold commitment to prevention, victim protection, the legal prosecution of perpetrators, and partnerships for change; these require a global effort on the part of various sectors of society.



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The BCPL and ACRATH support the statement published by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and Social Sciences in November 2013, declaring that 'it is our moral imperative to make ours the last generation that has to fight the trade in human lives'.

For media queries, please contact Aoife Connors on 0450 348 597 or media@catholic.org.au

Resources

Liturgical resources

The life of St Josephine Bakhita – (3 minute video)

Videos by Anti-slavery Australia – (three 30 second videos)



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