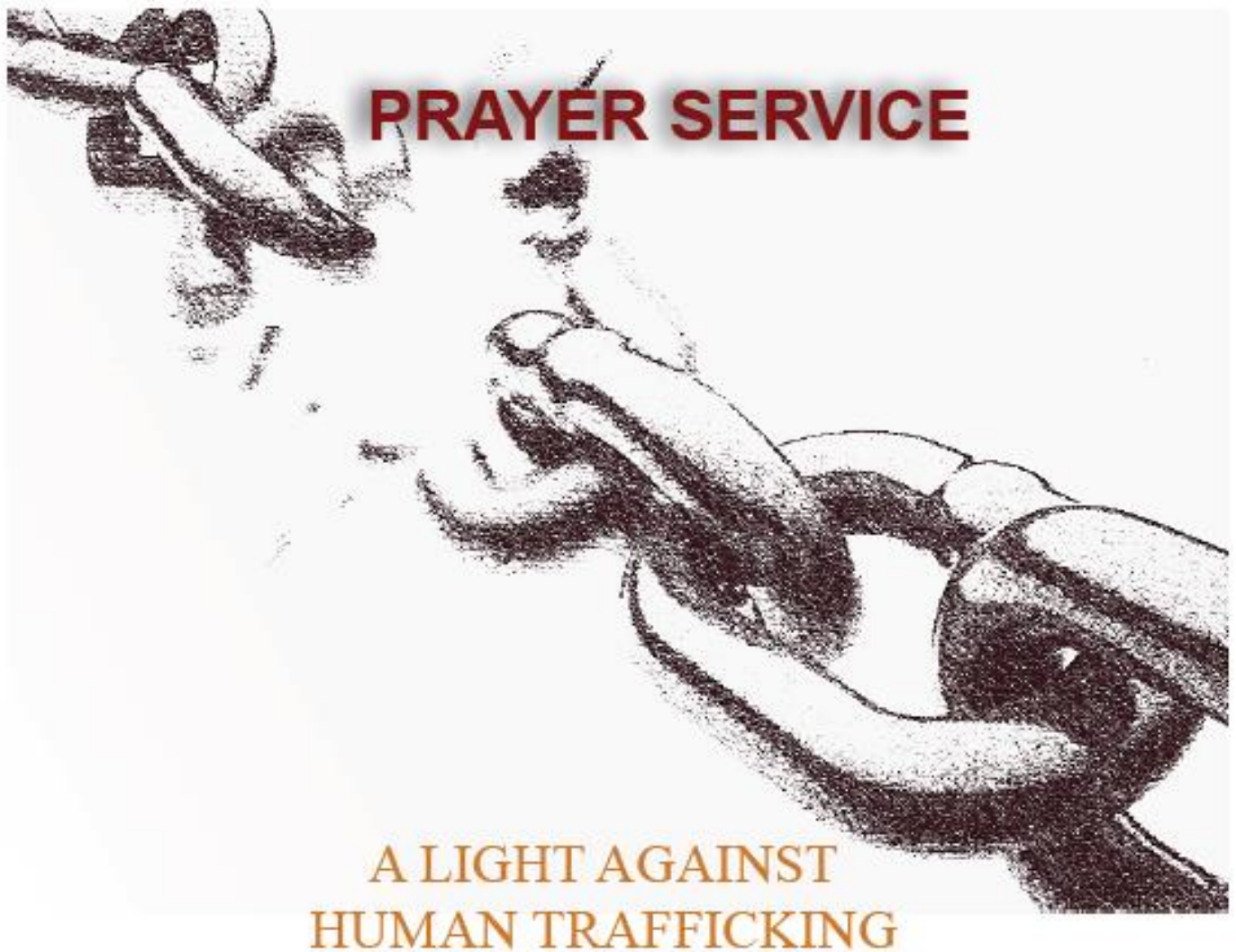




INTERNATIONAL DAY OF  
PRAYER AND AWARENESS  
AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING

FEBRUARY 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Feast of St BAKHITA



For more information visit our website: [www.a-light-against-human-trafficking.info](http://www.a-light-against-human-trafficking.info)



## Opening Hymn

**Leader:** Let us begin this prayer service by listening to the testimony of one of our sisters, a victim of trafficking. There are millions of women, children and men who, like Talia, are exploited by unscrupulous persons for profit.

### Introduction:

Talia is a teenager, trafficked and sexually exploited in a tourist city. Her story is sadly not uncommon. Born in a poor area, Talia wished for a better life: a house, beautiful clothes, shoes, expensive perfumes. She wanted to be like the girls she saw on the TV and in advertisements. She accepted an offer to get out of this poverty by working as a waitress in a rich area of the city. When she started working, she realised the work was not what she had been promised. From the first day of her arrival she was raped and sexually exploited in a massage centre. Before long she had incurred many debts to be paid to her exploiters: travel, accommodation, clothes and perfumes that she had to use to attract clients.

During an interview with a social worker, Talia said: "You talk to me about dignity, saying that we are children of God, but what kind of dignity do you offer me? What alternative do you offer girls like me? Professional training courses, when we are lucky, allow us to *enter your world through the back door*, to clean, wash dishes, work as a waitress or to spend 16 hours a day in front of a sewing machine. This is not life. I, however, walk in to your world through the main entrance. Clients take me to restaurants, pizzerias or hotels. I can afford to buy everything I want, a mobile phone for example. This is dignity!"

## Silence

### Leader:

Human trafficking opens the door to illusions which induces the exploitation of millions of persons, the Jubilee of Mercy that we celebrate this year, invites us to enter into the dynamics of mercy with new and creative gestures that allow us to enter through the Jubilee Door of Justice to experience the dignity, true dignity, which builds peace and freedom with respect for all living things.

We turn on the light that illuminates the way to go together.

"Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life. Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness."

*Minsericordiae Voltus, Pope Francis 11 April 2015*

## Silence

**Leader:** Jesus begins his prophetic mission proclaiming a year of grace, a jubilee of mercy... We welcome with gratitude the Spirit that leads us to the freedom of love, which is given to us from the very beginning. Guided by the Spirit we pray for our sisters and brothers close to us, and throughout the world, who find themselves, today, exploited, trafficked, abused, mistreated.

Let us be guided and enlightened by the experience of Jesus to engage with all our might, with all our intelligence and with all our heart against this form of exploitation.

### Reader 1: from the Gospel according to Luke

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:



*“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to set the oppressed free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”  
Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the  
synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your  
hearing.”*

**Reader 2:** Even today our eyes are fixed on those who proclaim freedom. At the same time this message invites us to contemplate the reality of millions of our brothers and sisters who are exploited and trafficked. Even today our hearts are touched by the dreams and desires of a peaceful life, a dignified life, of life in abundance. Even today our ears listen to stories of hope and mercy, like the story of Giuseppina Bakhita.

**Reader 3:** Saint Giuseppina Bakhita was born in southern Sudan in 1869. She was kidnapped and sold as a slave when she was still a child. Sold and resold in the markets of El Obeid and Khartoum, she was treated brutally by her captors. She forgot the name her parents had given her. Bakhita, which means “fortunate one”, was the name given to her by her captors.

**Reader 2:** In 1883, she was bought by an Italian diplomat who sent her to Italy to work as a maid for the daughter of a family friend studying with the Canossian Daughters of Charity. It was there that Bakhita came to know about God whom “she had experienced in her heart without knowing” who God was. In 1890, she was baptized and received the name Josephine.

**Reader 3:** Later, the Italian family came to take their “property” back to Africa. Josephine expressed her desire to stay. When the family insisted she go, she remained firm, later writing: “I am sure the Lord gave me strength at that moment.” With the support of the superior of the Canossian Sisters and the Cardinal of Venice, she won her freedom and later entered the novitiate. For the next 50 years she lived a life of prayer and service as a Canossian Sister before her death in 1947.

**Reader 2:** In the weeks before her death, St. Josephine Bakhita re-lived the terrible days of her captivity. More than once she cried out: "Please, loosen the chains . . . they are heavy!"

**Reader 3:** St. Josephine was canonized in 2000. There is a grassroots movement to designate her as the patron saint of kidnapped and trafficked persons.

**Leader:** We present to the Lord all those who in the face of suffering caused by the violence and evil of human trafficking respond with simple gestures of kindness and mercy. Let us pray together with the hymn.

**English translation. Your night will be the midmorning light** Text: Michel SCOUARNEC, Music: Jo Akepsimas Edizione: SM Studio

1.If you melt the chains of slavery,  
If you release your brother in chains,  
The night on your journey will become the  
midmorning light  
The night on your journey will become the  
midmorning light  
So that a spring will be born from your hands,  
The spring that gives life to the land of tomorrow,

The spring that gives life to God’s earth.  
2. If you share the bread that God gives you,  
With one who is your own flesh,  
The night of your love will become the  
midmorning light  
The night of your love will become the  
midmorning light.



So that from your heart, will flow a river,  
A river that quenches the land of tomorrow,  
A river that quenches God's earth.

3. If you destroy that which oppresses man,  
If you pick your humbled brother back up,  
The night of your struggle will become the  
midmorning light  
The night of your struggle will become the  
midmorning light  
So that from your step will be born a dance  
The dance that will invent the land of tomorrow  
The dance that will invent God's earth.

4. If you denounce the evil that tears at man,  
If you support your abandoned brother

The night of your call will become the  
midmorning light  
The night of your call will become the  
midmorning light  
So that from your eyes will shine a star,  
The star that will announce the land of tomorrow  
The star that will announce God's earth.

5. If you make the walls between men crumble,  
If you forgive your brother enemy  
The night of your passion will become the  
midmorning light  
The night of your passion will become the  
midmorning light  
So that from your bread will live a Church,  
The Church that gathers the land of tomorrow,  
The Church that gathers God's earth.

**Leader:** As we listen to short testimonies from those who have experienced trafficking, we remember the power of the mercy of God, who "did not want to leave humanity in the throes of evil" (MV 3). Mercy opens the heart to hope and makes the love of God visible and tangible. Mercy sustains us and gives us the courage to commit ourselves to put an end to trafficking.

With the words of Psalm 135 let us pray together:

**All: We praise the Lord because he is good, everlasting is His mercy.**

**Reader 4:**

"Who cares about girls like me?" This question came from a teenager who was exploited as a maid. Abandoned by her family, she was trafficked when she was 8 years old. For her, caring about something is always linked to profit. One day she met someone who showed an interest in her, for her life. An interest that asked for nothing in return, someone who only cared about her well-being, to restore her freedom and give her a dignified life that had been robbed of her through years of exploitation.

[Silence. The inscription is presented. **I care about you.**

**All: We praise the Lord because he is good, everlasting is His mercy.**

**Reader 5:**

My daughter was trafficked for sexual exploitation in a house in the city centre. Following an alert she was freed along with 10 other girls. She was 12 years old. After some time away from home she came back to live with me. Everyone looks at her and sees someone of little good, the men in the village never leave her alone. I look at her and I see my daughter.

[Silence. The inscription is presented: **I see my children**]

**All: We praise the Lord because he is good, everlasting is His mercy.**

**Reader 4:**

My son died at 7 years old, following an operation for an intestinal obstruction. I was suspicious and asked for the body to be exhumed. The forensic examination showed that the kidneys had been removed. A bag of urine had been put in their place. For several months I fought alone, I received death threats. Everyone was scared of the mafia organisation that had infiltrated the children's hospital in my city. Everything



changed when the parish priest from the church near my house told me of a network that works against human trafficking. I no longer feel alone, someone walks beside me.

[Silence. The inscription is presented: **I walk with you**]

**All: We praise the Lord because he is good, everlasting is His mercy.**

**Reader 5:**

I am escaping from a country marked by violence and instability. In the attempt to reach England I was faced with many closed doors, walls and fences. During the crossing I was exploited, beaten up, blackmailed and mistreated. I suffered from hunger and the cold. I forgot what it meant to be a person. Yet so many people profited from me. I have an enormous debt to pay for my freedom. I was offered a job collecting tomatoes. I thought I had found an open door, in fact it was just exploitation. When will I find someone to open the door to a job for me?

[Silence. The inscription is presented: **I open the door to justice and mercy**]

**All: We praise the Lord because he is god, everlasting is His mercy.**

**Leader:** We are invited to take a candle and the prayer against trafficking. We shall take them to someone, a friend, a community, a family nearby, or a group, so that they can shine a light against human trafficking and join us in prayer and reflection.

(accompanied by music or a hymn)

**Leader:** In the silence of our heart we commemorate persons who suffer or situations that result from human trafficking.

**Short silence**

If anyone wishes, they can say aloud the name of a person who suffers as a result of trafficking or recalls the reality of trafficking.

**Final prayer:**

**All:** When we hear of children, men and women deceived and taken to unknown places for sexual exploitation, forced work and organ sales, our hearts are outraged and our spirit pained because their dignity and their rights are trampled on with threats, lies and violence.

Oh God, help us to fight all forms of slavery. We ask you, together with Saint Bakhita, to end human trafficking. Grant us the wisdom and the courage to bring us closer to all those who have been wounded in body, heart and soul, so that together we can realise your promise of life and tender and infinite love for these exploited brothers and sisters.

Touch the hearts of those responsible for this grave crime and support our commitment for freedom, your gift for all your children. Amen

**Final hymn**

**ACTIONS**

**LEARN** about human trafficking - both locally and globally

**PRAY** for the victims of trafficking, that this slavery may end

**BUY** 'slave-free' products, using fair trade where possible

**ADVOCATE** for regional and national legislation that protects victims, helps survivors and pursues traffickers

**"Shine a light against human trafficking"**