



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

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**Sunday 8 Feb 2015**

Feast of St Josephine Bakhita

World Day of Prayer, Reflection and Action Against Human Trafficking

### Homily Notes

1. It's sometimes a good idea to start with a story that connects people to the issue
2. Reflections on the readings for the day
3. Pope Francis' call on World Day of Peace
4. Invitation to take action on this issue

### 1. A story that connects people to the issue

Introduction: Many will have heard of the horrors of young girls being captured by Boko Haram in Nigeria. For over a year these girls and young women have been held in captivity, kept or sold as sex slaves or coerced into forced marriages with their captors. More recently we have heard of young girls who were captured being used as human sacrifices in bombings in market places.

As horrific as these stories are, we are also faced with the dark side of trafficking and exploitation in Australia.

Four stories from real people trafficked into Australia:

Fatima\* was a housekeeper at a consulate in Sydney. She fled after being enslaved in the consulate for months. She received no wages.

Han\* is a construction worker who worked on a building site in Canberra for many months. His trafficker disappeared with Han and his co-workers' wages.

Lin\* had been caught in a poverty trap of being prostituted in order to survive. She was brought to Australia where she thought she would earn a lot of money. Instead when she arrived she was told she owed her trafficker \$50,000.

Rani\* is 17 and attends high school in Melbourne. When her parents said they were taking her overseas to marry a man she has never met, she thought she had no option but to comply. When a community organisation spoke at her school, she learnt about her right to choose her own husband, and that the new Australian law of March 2013 ensures people cannot be forced into marriage.

*\*Names have been changed to protect identities*

Some church communities may have access to a projector to broadcast three videos of human trafficking into Australia: <http://acrath.org.au/resources/multimedia/videos/>  
Videos produced by Anti-Slavery Australia Community Service Announcements on Labour Trafficking - each clip runs for 30 seconds

Looking at St Josephine Bakhita's life and the links between today's slavery and Bakhita: Across the Catholic world this Sunday the feast of St Josephine Bakhita is celebrated. In 2000, she was canonised by Pope John Paul II. St Josephine Bakhita was born in Southern



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Sudan in 1869. She is the first person to be canonised from Sudan and is the patron saint of the country.

As a young girl, she was kidnapped and sold into slavery. She was treated brutally by her captors as she was sold and resold. She did not remember her name: Bakhita, which means “fortunate one,” was the name given to her by her kidnappers. Once Josephine was freed, she dedicated her life to sharing her testament of deliverance from slavery and comforting the poor and suffering. She became a Canossian Sister, working in Italy for her last 40 years. Video clip on the life of St Josephine Bakhita (3 mins 7 secs)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHRjm1dDzZl>

A reflection sheet on St Josephine Bakhita - 2 pages which include notes on Bakhita, quotes from Pope Francis, a 2001 call to action by Catholic Sisters, prayers and action suggestions: <http://acrath.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/ACRATH-Reflection-sheet-for-feast-of-St-Josephine-Bakhita.pdf>

## 2. Reflection on the readings for the day, 5th Sunday of Ordinary Time

### 1st Reading: Job 7:1-4, 6-7

Job wrestles with the problem of innocent suffering

“Do not human beings have a hard service on earth, and are not their days like the days of a laborer? Like a slave who longs for the shadow, and like laborers who look for their wages, so I am allotted months of emptiness, and nights of misery are apportioned to me. When I lie down I say, ‘When shall I rise?’ But the night is long, and I am full of tossing until dawn. My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and come to their end without hope.

“Remember that my life is a breath; my eye will never again see good.

1. Job saw his present suffering like the futile discouraging work of a slave who longs for evening or a hired man who longs for his wages. He experienced weariness, restless, sleepless nights, the passing of time and of his life with a sense of despair.
2. There is a parallel here with the experience of the suffering of millions of trafficked women, children and men across the globe, trafficked into prostitution and forced marriage, into forced labour in the agriculture, fishing, mining, construction, hospitality and domestic service industries.
3. Instead of human dignity being enhanced by participation in decent and meaningful work, it is compromised by a demeaning of work that leads to sense of futility.
4. This is reiterated by Pope Francis who wrote “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.” (4)



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Responsorial Psalm PS 147:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

R. (cf. 3a) *Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted*

Praise the LORD, for he is good;  
sing praise to our God, for he is gracious;  
it is fitting to praise him.  
The LORD rebuilds Jerusalem;  
the dispersed of Israel he gathers.  
R. Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted.

He heals the brokenhearted  
and binds up their wounds.  
He tells the number of the stars;  
he calls each by name.  
R. Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted.

Great is our Lord and mighty in power;  
to his wisdom there is no limit.  
The LORD sustains the lowly;  
the wicked he casts to the ground.  
R Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted.

This call is to praise God whose goodness, graciousness, power and wisdom are manifest in his actions in Jerusalem, towards the people of Israel and in the skies above.  
Above all it is a sense of God's mercy to the broken hearted.  
Today we pray for all people trafficked into human slavery across the world.

**2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 9:16ff**

St. Paul becomes "all things to everyone" in order to bring them the Good News of Salvation.

For if I preach the gospel that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. What then is my reward? Just this: that in my preaching I may make the gospel free of charge, not making full use of my right in the gospel. For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more.

To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law-though not being myself under the law-that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law – not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ-that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I



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became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

1. Paul describes the nature of his apostleship becoming all things to all people, those inside the law and those outside the law, because the gospel is for everyone.
2. His reflection helps us to think of our own calling to be true to the gospel in the service of God and our neighbour.
3. Today we are mindful of Pope Francis' leadership in combating the evil of human trafficking which deprives people of their freedom and dignity, for the work of justice is a constitutive dimension of preaching the gospel.

### **Gospel: Mark 1:29-39**

Jesus needs a quiet place to pray. Then he starts a new phase of his mission.

As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." He answered, "Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

1. This story is a sign of the immediate power of Jesus teaching and of Jesus' authority to heal the sick and the possessed.
2. In healing Simon's mother-in-law he enables her to assume her role in the midst of her community.
3. We pray on this day that all trafficked people may be freed, healed of their suffering and empowered to contribute to their own families and communities.
4. Just as Jesus freed Simon's mother-in-law of her affliction and was sought after by the multitudes for his healing powers, Pope Francis acknowledges the work of groups who work to change the lot of persons caught in any form of slavery by offering assistance to victims, in working for their psychological and educational rehabilitation, and in efforts to reintegrate them into the society where they live or from which they have come. This is an immense task, which calls for courage, patience and perseverance, but of itself, it is not sufficient to end the scourge of the exploitation of human persons. There is also need for Institutional, national and international efforts.
5. Consequently Pope Francis "urgently appeals to all men and women of good will, and all those near or far, including the highest levels of civil institutions, who witness the



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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.” He challenges us to replace “ The globalization of indifference, which today burdens the lives of so many of our brothers and sisters, (with) the a new worldwide solidarity and fraternity capable of giving them new hope.”

### 3. Pope Francis' call on World Day of Peace

Pope Francis in this year's World Day of Peace 2015 specifically addressed the issue of trafficking and exploitation of human beings. In his message, *No Longer Slaves, but Brothers and Sisters* ...

He names some of causes of this awful phenomenon without laying any blame on those who end up being trafficked: “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 of 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; taken in by false promises of employment, they often end up in the hands of criminal networks, which organize human trafficking. These networks are skilled in using modern means of communication as a way of luring young men and women in various parts of the world. Another cause of slavery is corruption on the part of people willing to do anything for financial gain. (4)

Pope Francis began his message for his World Day of Peace message, *No Longer Slaves, but Brothers and Sisters*, by offering “heartfelt wishes of peace to every man and woman ... He reminds us that our relationships should be marked by justice, love and respect for the dignity and freedom of all people. Tragically, however, there are some people in our world today who treat others as objects instead of as human persons created in God's image.

Pope Francis invites us “to practice acts of fraternity towards those kept in a state of enslavement. Let us ask ourselves, as individuals and as communities, whether we feel challenged when, in our daily lives, we meet or deal with persons who could be victims of human trafficking, or when we are tempted to select items which may well have been produced by exploiting others.”

### 4. Invitation to take action on this issue

LEARN about human trafficking – globally and locally  
PRAY for victims of trafficking and for an end to this slavery  
DEMAND slave-free products. Buy fair trade when possible.  
ADVOCATE for state and federal legislation that protects victims  
For more go to [acrath.org.au](http://acrath.org.au)



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On the Feast Day of St. Josephine Bakhita, we pray for the millions of people that have been victims of modern day slavery. Like St. Josephine Bakhita, may we stand firm in our resolve to create a slave-free world.

Further information available at: [www.acrath.org.au](http://www.acrath.org.au) or 0427 302 755