



PRESS RELEASE

Human Trafficking

12th International Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking

From 4 to 8 February, mobilization in Rome and worldwide together
with Pope Leo XIV

"Peace begins with Dignity. A Global Call to End Human Trafficking" is the theme of the **12th International Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking**, celebrated each year on **8 February**, on the occasion of the **Feast of Saint Josephine Bakhita**. A Sudanese woman and religious sister, enslaved from the age of seven, Saint Bakhita has become over time a universal symbol of the Church's commitment against human trafficking.

Established by **Pope Francis** in **2015**, the World Day is **coordinated by the international anti-trafficking network Talitha Kum**, led by Religious Sisters, and is **promoted by the International Union of Superiors General (UISG)** and the **Union of Superiors General (USG)**, in collaboration with the **Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development**, the **Dicastery for Communication**, the **Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life**, the **Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network**, **Caritas Internationalis**, **COATNET**, the **Focolare Movement**, the **Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)**, the **World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations (WUCWO)**, the **JPIC – Anti-Trafficking Working Group (UISG/USG)**, **The Clewer Initiative**, the **Community of Pope John XXIII**, the **International Forum of Catholic Action**, **Italian Catholic Action**, **AGESCI**, the **Santa Marta Group**, **USMI**, the **Community of Sant'Egidio**, and numerous other organizations worldwide.

According to the **United Nations**, an estimated **27 million people worldwide are victims of human trafficking**, predominantly women, children, migrants, and people forced to flee their homes. This is a complex and dramatic phenomenon that takes multiple forms—from sexual exploitation to forced labour, from domestic servitude to forced marriage—and which, while remaining largely hidden and underreported, is increasingly finding **new forms of exploitation online**.

Each year on 8 February, thousands of people around the world join the International Day of Prayer and Awareness through events, moments of prayer, and awareness-raising initiatives in communities, parishes, and associations.

In **Rome**, from **4 to 8 February**, international participants will join in a series of formation and awareness meetings, culminating in their **participation in the Angelus prayer at St Peter's Square together with Pope Leo XIV**.

THE EVENTS: IN ROME AND WORLDWIDE

The program opens on Wednesday, **February 4**, with an **online training event led by young people**, highlighting their **leadership** and **innovative approach** in the anti-trafficking mobilisation. Meanwhile, international delegates already in Rome will join the **General Audience**.

On Thursday, **February 5**, the official welcoming and opening of the week gathering will take place at the **UISG** headquarters in Rome, followed by **Walk for Humanity** activity by young people. At **5:30 p.m.**, a **candlelight procession and ecumenical prayer vigil** will be held at the **Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere**, with the participation of **Cardinal Fabio Baggio**.



On **Friday, 6 February**, the **Online Pilgrimage against Human Trafficking** will connect all continents in a **global prayer journey**, from Oceania to Asia, from the Middle East to Africa, from Europe to the Americas. A **message from the Holy Father** is expected at the central moment of the event.

The pilgrimage will be **live-streamed from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (CET)** in five languages (English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Italian) on www.prayagainsttrafficking.net.

Saturday, 7 February, the **“Youth Day”** will begin with a **morning training workshop** led by **Professor Silvia Scarpa**, Chair of the Department of Political Science and International Affairs and Professor of International Relations at John Cabot University, followed by a **public awareness activity against human trafficking** in **Piazza Pia** in the afternoon.

On Sunday, 8 February, the final event will take place in **St Peter’s Square** with the **Angelus prayer with Pope Leo XIV**, followed by a **Eucharistic celebration** presided over by **Cardinal Vincent Nichols**, Santa Marta Group, with **Fr. Mario Zanotti, OSB**, USG Secretary General, at **St. Peter’s Basilica at 1:00 p.m. (CET), in the Cappella del Coro**.

“Human trafficking remains a deep global wound, violating human dignity and disrupting the peace of our societies, especially in a world torn by conflict, war, and forced displacement. By placing the theme of peace and human dignity at the heart of this year’s World Day, we call all people of goodwill to move beyond awareness and unite in concrete action to end this crime. Our commitment is to walk closely with victims and survivors, to listen to their voices, and to advocate for systemic change that addresses the root causes of trafficking and builds a world rooted in peace, justice, and dignity for all.” said **Sister Abby Avelino**, Coordinator of the Day and of the International anti-trafficking network, **Talitha Kum**.

The organizers also invite everyone to take part in the mobilization through social media by sharing a post on 8 February using the official hashtag **#PrayAgainstTrafficking**.

Press contacts

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