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New appeal by the Pope against human trafficking and in favour of migrants

After the catechesis of this morning's general audience, Francis mentioned the beatification yesterday in Osaka, Japan, of Justo Takayama Ukon, a Japanese layperson martyred in Manila, Philippines in 1615. "Rather than make compromises, he renounced honours and comfort, accepting humiliation and exile. He remained faithful to Christ and to the Gospel; therefore he represents an admirable example of strength in faith and devotion in charity".

He also remarked that today is the Day of prayer and reflection against human trafficking, this year specially dedicated to children and teenagers. "I encourage all those who in various ways help enslaved and abused minors to free themselves from such oppression. I hope that those who hold responsibility in government will combat this scourge with determination, giving voice to our smallest brothers, humiliated in their dignity. Every effort must be made to vanquish this shameful and intolerable crime".

"Next Saturday, memory of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Lourdes, will be the 25th World Day of the Sick", he added. "The main celebration will take place in Lourdes and the Cardinal Secretary of State will preside. I invite you to pray, by the intercession of our Holy Mother, for all the sick, especially those who are most gravely ill and most alone, and also for all those who care for them".

Francis then made some extemporaneous remarks on the Day of prayer and reflection against human trafficking, "which we celebrate today because today is the feast of St. Josephine Bakhita", he explained, showing a leaflet with a photo of the saint. "She was enslaved in Africa, exploited, humiliated, but she did not lose hope and followed her faith, ending up as a migrant in Europe. And there she heard the call of the Lord, and became a nun. Let us pray to St. Josephine Bakhita, for all migrants, refugees, and the exploited who suffer so greatly".

"And, speaking of migrants who are sent away, I would like to pray with you today in a special way for our Rohingya brothers and sisters: sent away from Myanmar, they go from one place to another, unwanted. ... They are good and peaceful people. They are not Christians, but they are good, and they are our brothers and sisters. They have suffered for years. They have been tortured, killed, simply because they continue to follow their own traditions and their Muslim faith. Let us pray for them. I invite you to pray for them to our Father in Heaven, all together, for our Rohingya brothers and sisters". After reciting the Lord's prayer, the Pope invoked St. Josephine

Bakhita, asking her to pray for us all, and asked all those present to applaud for her.
