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Video Message of the Holy Father on the occasion of the 7th International Day of Prayer and Reflection Against Human Trafficking

The following is the text of the video message sent by the Holy Father to the participants in the online prayer Marathon taking place on the occasion of the 7th International Day of Prayer and Reflection Against Human Trafficking, whose theme this year is “An Economy without Human Trafficking”.

Video Message of the Holy Father

Dear sisters and brothers!

I address all of you who work against human trafficking and who are spiritually united today on this World Day of Prayer, which also has a specific intention: an “An Economy without Human Trafficking”. I am pleased to know that this year several moments of prayer are interfaith, one of which will also take place in Asia.

I extend my message to all people of good will who pray, engage, study and reflect on the fight against human trafficking; and especially to those - like Saint Josephine Bakhita, whom we celebrate today - who have experienced the tragedy of human trafficking in their own lives.

This day is important because it helps us all to remember this tragedy, and encourages us not to stop praying and fighting together. May reflection and awareness always be accompanied by concrete gestures, which also open up paths to social emancipation. Indeed, the aim is for every enslaved person to return to being a free agent of his or her own life and to take an active part in the construction of the common good.

Dear friends, this is a Day of Prayer. Yes, there is a need to pray to support the victims of trafficking and those who accompany the processes of integration and social reintegration. We need to pray that we may learn to approach with humanity and courage those who have been marked by so much pain and despair, keeping hope alive. Prayer enables us to be beacons, capable of discerning and making choices oriented towards good.

Prayer touches the heart and impels us to concrete actions, to innovative, courageous actions, able to take risks trusting in the power of God (cf. *Mk* 11:22-24).

The liturgical memorial of Saint Josephine Bakhita is a powerful reminder of this dimension of faith and prayer: her witness always resonates, alive and relevant! And it is a call to place trafficked persons, their families, their communities at the centre. They are the centre of our prayer. Saint Josephine Bakhita reminds us that they are the protagonists of this day, and that we are all at their service (cf. *Lk* 17:10).

And now I would like to share with you some ideas for reflection and action on the theme you have chosen: "An Economy without Human Trafficking". You can find other ideas in the message I addressed to the participants in the "*Economy of Francesco*" event on 21 November.

An economy without human trafficking is:

1. An economy of *care*. Care can be understood as taking care of people and nature, offering products and services for the growth of the common good. An economy that cares for work, creating employment opportunities that do not exploit workers through degrading working conditions and gruelling hours. The Covid pandemic has exacerbated and worsened the conditions of labour exploitation; job losses have penalised many trafficked persons in the process of rehabilitation and social reintegration. "At a time when everything seems to disintegrate and lose consistency, it is good for us to appeal to the 'solidity' both of the consciousness that we are responsible for the fragility of others as we strive to build a common future" (*Encyclical Fratelli Tutti*, 115). Therefore, an economy of care means an economy of solidarity: we work for *solidarity* combined with *solidarity*. We are convinced that solidarity, well administered, gives rise to more secure and sound social construction (cf. *ibid.*)
2. An economy without human trafficking is an economy with *market rules that promote justice*, not exclusive special interests. Human trafficking finds fertile ground in the approach of neo-liberal capitalism, in the deregulation of markets aimed at maximising without ethical limits, without social limits, without environmental limits (cf. *ibid.*, 210). If this logic is followed, there is only the calculation of advantages and disadvantages. Choices are not made on the basis of ethical criteria, but by pandering to dominant interests, often cleverly obscured by a humanitarian or ecological veneer. Choices are not made by looking at people: people are numbers, to be exploited.
3. For all that, an economy without human trafficking is a *courageous economy* - it takes courage. Not in the sense of recklessness, of risky operations in the hope of easy gains. No, not in that sense; of course it is not courage that is needed, this On the contrary, it is the courage of patient construction, of planning that does not always look only at the very short term gain, but at the medium and long term fruits and, above all, at people. The courage to combine legitimate profit with the promotion of employment and decent working conditions. In times of great crisis, such as the current one, this courage is even more necessary. In times of crisis, human trafficking proliferates, as we all know: we see it every day. In times of crisis, human trafficking proliferates; therefore, we need to strengthen an economy that may respond to the crisis in a way that is not short-sighted, in a lasting way, in a solid way.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us put all this in our prayer, especially today, by the intercession of Saint Josephine Bakhita. I pray for you, and let us all pray together for every person who is a victim of human trafficking at this moment. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!