



## STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH *All of God's Creation*

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, February 25, 2024

### *End Human Trafficking*

St. Josephine Bakhita whose feast day was February 8 is the patroness of survivors of human trafficking. “St. Bakhita was born in the Darfur region of Sudan in 1869 and was kidnapped by slave traders and enslaved as a child. She was forced to walk barefoot over 600 miles and was sold multiple times to different owners before being sold to an Italian diplomat that took her to Italy; here, she valiantly asserted her freedom with the help of the Canossian Sisters of Venice. Through her faith, St. Bakhita realized the promise of liberty inherent in the human spirit. She lived out the rest of her life as a Canossian sister, sharing her empowering testimony of human freedom and dignity.” ([Justice for Immigrants](#))

Two bills before the Congress to end human trafficking are [S.920 - International Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act](#) and [H.R. 5856 - Frederick Douglas Trafficking Victims Prevention and Reauthorization Act](#). H.R. 5856 passed in the House on February 13, 2024, and goes to the Senate next for consideration. “Both these bills address some of the main root causes of human trafficking that force people to migrate and become vulnerable to the insidious threats of human trafficking. Only when root causes are addressed will we bring the horrors of human trafficking to an end.” [Please ask legislators to move forward with these bills](#). (Mercy Justice Team, 1/22/24)

**“Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery that involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to exploit another; to obtain labor or a commercial sex act.** It is a crime under both U.S. and international law. It is a crime against humanity. Human trafficking dehumanizes and commodifies human beings, depriving those who are victimized of their dignity, as persons made in the image of God. It denies the person’s basic human rights: the right to life, security, freedom of movement, and freedom from torture and degrading treatment. It is antithetical to the tenets of our faith and the values of this nation.

**Since the original enactment of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, the connection between human trafficking and forced migration has increased significantly.**

The International Organization for Migration estimates the number of international migrants to be at least 281 million people. They are refugees, asylum seekers, labor migrants, and those displaced by conflict or natural disasters. They are fleeing floods, famine, war, violence, endemic poverty, organized crime, political corruption, and the effects of climate change. They are both desperate and resilient. **The adverse circumstances that force people to flee their homes can lead migrants to be deceived in exploitative recruitment abroad.** Migration routes too often lead migrants into the hands of organized trafficking networks, exploitative employment, or situations of extortion.... Immigration and human trafficking are clearly interconnected, especially in the United States. Polaris estimates 77 percent of persons trafficked in the United States each year are immigrants (Polaris Analysis of 2021 Data from the National Human Trafficking Hotline, pg. 8 of 29).” (Materials provided by the Alliance to End Human Trafficking and the National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd)

Comments on this column may be directed to the Social Justice Committee at [socialjustice@holycrossphl.org](mailto:socialjustice@holycrossphl.org).