



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

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, February 5, 2023

### Human Trafficking Is Violence – Be Aware and Take Action

Human trafficking is violence. The violence suffered by every woman and every girl is an open wound on the body of Christ, on the body of all humanity; it is a deep wound that affects every one of us too. —Pope Francis, February 8, 2022, Video Message on 8<sup>th</sup> Int'l Day of Prayer & Awareness against Human Trafficking

“We bring to our prayers many of our brothers and sisters throughout the world for whom justice is simply an illusion. Among these are those traumatized by the evil of human exploitation, in particular the tragedy of commercial sex and labor trafficking....

The **International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking** and the **feast of St. Josephine Bahkita**, the patroness of human trafficking survivors, are celebrated on February 8.” (Sisters of Mercy Justice Team, 12/15/22)

“There are **approximately 50 million children, women, and men caught in the vicious grip of exploitation and human trafficking throughout the world – nearly double what it was 10 years ago**. Although illegal in every country, many countries serve as a source, transit, or destination for this crime. Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain labor or commercial sex. If the person is a minor, under the age of 18 and is exploited in any way, she or he is considered trafficked. It is a serious crime defined under U.S. Federal Law. Exploitation and human trafficking occur because predators thrive on holding power over and gaining profit from other vulnerable human persons whom they consider objects and property to be bought and sold....

Thankfully, Pope Francis, world religious leaders, and thousands of others are raising awareness about trafficking and working toward its eradication. Specifically, **what can you do to raise awareness and to eradicate human trafficking?**

**\*Keep informed about human trafficking locally and nationally. Contact the appropriate authority, security guard, sheriff, local police, or law enforcement if you think a person is being exploited.**

**\*Check where your groceries, clothes, household items come from. Avoid buying products which may be produced by exploited and trafficked workers. Wherever possible buy ‘Fair Trade’ and locally produced products. This helps reduce workers exploited through labor trafficking.**

**\*Challenge your elected legislators at local, state, and federal levels to address root causes of poverty, violence, racism, and discrimination in all its forms, especially against women and girls. Insist on human rights-based policies.**

**\*Befriend and assist asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers in your local church or community. Their stories may well reflect exploitation of some form....”**

(Jeanne Christensen, RSM, *U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking*, 1/1/23)

**On the feast of St. Josephine Bahkita, we hold in our hearts all those whose lives are impacted by human trafficking as we begin our prayer this day.**