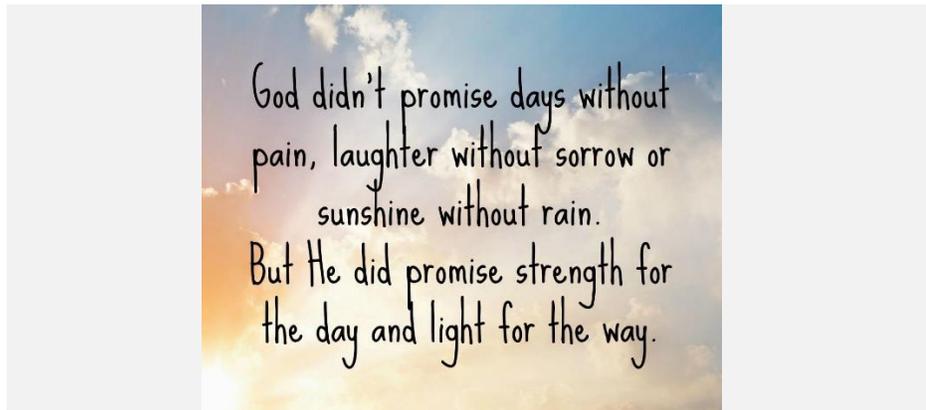
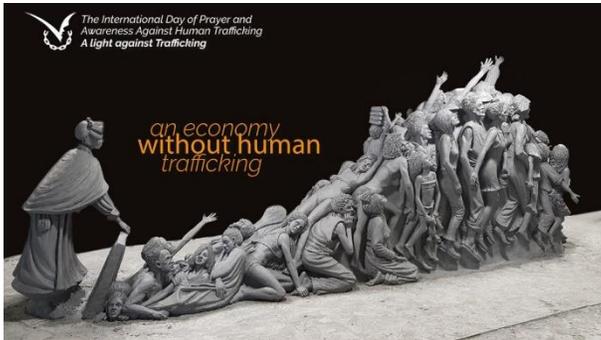




Coloma Catholic Life.



International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking – 8th February 2021



All Christians are invited to participate in an online Prayer Marathon on Monday, 8 February, marking the 7th International Day of Prayer and Reflection against Human Trafficking.

The marathon has been organized by the International Committee of the World Day, coordinated by Talitha Kum, the network of consecrated life against trafficking in persons of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG). Other partners include the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Service to Integral Human Development, Caritas Internationalis, the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations, the Focolare Movement and many other local organizations involved at the local level.



Pope Francis

Prayer Intention for February:

Violence against women.

'We pray for women who are victims of violence, that they may be protected by society and have their sufferings considered and heeded.'

Video:

<https://thepopevideo.org/>

Tweet: 'Let us to allow Jesus to heal us – we always need this, everyone – so that we might in our turn be witnesses to God's healing tenderness.'

Liturgical Year

Week: 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Colour: Green

Event organizers announced that with this online marathon, it will be the first time that every organization working against trafficking in persons will be able to participate in the main event together.

The theme chosen for 2021 is “An Economy without Human Trafficking.” It brings into the spotlight “one of the main causes of human trafficking: the dominant economic model of our time, whose limits and contradictions are exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic,” reads a statement on the organization’s [website](#).

This 7th International Day of Prayer and Reflection, it says, “is an invitation to multiply and promote new economic experiences that oppose all forms of exploitation.”

8th February, the statement explains, is “an important date because it marks the liturgical memorial of St. Bakhita, the slave girl who became a saint and universal symbol of the Church’s commitment against slavery.”

In explaining this year’s initiative, Sr Gabriella Bottani, coordinator of Talitha Kum, says: “With ‘The Economy of Francesco’, the Holy Father has asked the Church to stop and reflect on the dominant economic model and to find alternative paths. We found ourselves perfectly in tune, since the trafficking of people is an integral part of an economy of exclusion, where the rules of the market are destroying the fundamental values of human coexistence, based on respect for dignity but also on the protection of the environment. The dominant economic model is one of the main structural causes of human trafficking in our globalized world. Through this day, let us trace together a path of reflection for an economy that promotes life and dignified work for all”.

Participating in the prayer initiative

This year an online Marathon of Prayer has been organized due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. It will take place on Monday from 10 am to 5 pm CET. There will also be a moment of prayer all together at 1 pm CET. It will be attended by all the Talitha Kum networks around the world, divided into blocks according to continents.

Event organizers also announced that a video message of Pope Francis will air around 1:40pm. Individuals can support the World Day through the official hashtag #PrayAgainstTrafficking.

The online Prayer Marathon will be live-streamed on [YouTube](#). Further information is available on the International Day of Prayer and Reflection against Human Trafficking [website](#).

World Day of the Sick – 11th February

February 11 is World Day of the Sick, an observation started by Pope John Paul II as a way for believers to offer prayers for those suffering from illnesses. The day coincides with the commemoration of Our Lady of Lourdes. People around the world take the time to pray for the sick and for those who work very hard to alleviate the sufferings of the sick on this day. Faith organisations mark this day especially to provide the sick with medicines, food, and spiritual guidance.

Pope John Paul II initiated the day in 1992 to encourage people to pray for those who suffer from illness and for their caregivers. The Pope himself had been diagnosed with Parkinson’s a year before, in 1991, and it is considered that his own illness was impetus for his designation of the day.

Pope Benedict XVI also declared his decision to resign from his post as the Pope on this day in 2013. He cited his failing health as the reason behind his decision.

London priest's near-death Covid experience



Father Albert Ofere's a Nigerian priest serving at English Martyrs Catholic Church in Wembley, north west London. Last year he contracted Covid-19 and was admitted to nearby Northwick Park Hospital – something he describes as truly frightening. Father Ofere has learnt much from his near-death experience, not least that the virus attacks indiscriminately:

“I speak from experience. Covid-19 is real and is causing havoc. We are all affected, directly or indirectly, regardless of nationality, race or class.”

He makes a passionate call for vaccination uptake. https://youtu.be/-caoVnt5c_s

Religious Festivals

Parinirvana – Buddhism, 8th February

Mahayanists mark the final passing away from this world of Gautama Buddha at Kushinagara, India, at the age of 80.

Pure Land Buddhists refer to it as *Nirvana* Day.

The Buddha's last days are described in the Pali text called the Great Parinirvana Sutra (*Parinirvana* meaning “completed *nirvana*”). The Buddha's

living *nirvana* (achieved during enlightenment) at death

transforms to nirvana without any human residue. Self-possessed, without psychological pain, untroubled by the thoughts of death, the Buddha identified four places of future pilgrimage: the sites of his birth, enlightenment, first sermon, and death. “But” he added, “don't hinder yourself by honouring my remains.” Here is the heart of all Buddhist teaching about Life and Death, where entry into *nirvana* is the goal of all being, as shown to us today in the perfect example all Buddhists seek to emulate.



Chinese New Year 12th February



New Year's Day is the most important event in the traditional Chinese calendar and marks the beginning of the first lunar month. The festival is colourfully celebrated with fireworks, dances (such as the famous Lion Dance) and the giving of gifts, flowers and sweets. Gold is a dominant colour to symbolise the wish for prosperity, and red is also much used as a lucky colour. Business accounts should be settled and all debts paid before the New Year begins. Celebrations can last three or more days. 2021, which is

4719 in Chinese culture, is the year of the Ox, one of twelve symbolic creatures whose character is held to affect the nature of those born at this time.

Chinese New Year is actually celebrated for 15 consecutive days, but the first three days are most important. The 15th and final day is also a big event, where houses are decorated with an abundance of brightly coloured lights. It is a way of ending with a grand finale rather than the festivities just fading away gradually.

New Year's Eve and New Year's Day are celebrated as a family affair, a time of reunion and thanksgiving. The celebration was traditionally highlighted with a religious ceremony given in honour of Heaven and Earth, the gods of the household and the family ancestors. The sacrifice to the ancestors, the most vital of all the rituals, united the living members with those who had passed away. Departed relatives are remembered with great respect because they were responsible for laying the foundations for the fortune and glory of the family.

The presence of the ancestors is acknowledged on New Year's Eve with a dinner arranged for them at the family banquet table. The spirits of the ancestors, together with the living, celebrate the onset of the New Year as one great community. The communal feast symbolises family unity and honours the past and present generations.

Chinese New Year celebrations are notable for colour, noise, giving gifts and paying debts. It is a time for looking both backwards and forwards.

Losar – Buddhism, 12th February



Tibetan New Year festival, but it is often celebrated in Nepal as well. Although largely a secular celebration, it also includes the rededication of the country to Buddhism. It especially celebrates the miracles performed by the historical Buddha at Sravasti, the capital city of the kingdom of Kosala. It usually falls on or around the date of the Chinese New Year.

Saints of the Week

St Josephine Bakhita, Virgin – 8th February

Saint Josephine Margaret Bakhita was born around 1869 in the village of Olgossa in the Darfur region of Sudan. She was a member of the Daju people, and her uncle was a tribal chief. Due to her family lineage, she grew up happy and relatively prosperous, saying that as a child, she did not know suffering. Sometime in February 1877, Josephine was kidnapped by Arab slave traders. Although she was just a child, she was forced to walk barefoot over 600 miles to a slave market in El Obeid.



She was bought and sold at least twice during the gruelling journey. For the next 12 years she would be bought, sold and given away over a dozen times. She spent so much time in captivity that she forgot her original name. As a slave, her experiences varied from fair treatment to cruel. Her first owner, a wealthy Arab, gave her to his daughters as a maid. The assignment was easy until she offended her owner's son, possibly for the crime of breaking a vase. As punishment, she was beaten so severely she was incapacitated for a month. After that, she was sold. One of her owners was a Turkish general who gave her to his wife and mother-in-law who both beat her daily. Josephine wrote that as soon as one wound would heal; they would inflict another. She told about how the general's wife ordered her to be scarred. As her mistress watched, ready with a whip, another woman drew patterns on her skin with flour, then cut into her flesh with a blade. She rubbed the wounds with salt to make the scars permanent. She would suffer a total of 114 scars from this abuse. In 1883, the Turkish general sold her to the Italian Vice Consul, Callisto Legani. He was a much kinder master and he did not beat her. When it was time for him to return to Italy, she begged to be taken with him, and he agreed. After a long and dangerous journey across Sudan, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean, they arrived in Italy.

She was given away to another family as a gift and she served them as a nanny. Her new family also had dealings in Sudan. When her mistress decided to travel to Sudan without Josephine, she placed her in the custody of the Canossian Daughters of Charity in Venice.

While she was in the custody of the sisters, she came to learn about God. According to Josephine, she had always known about God, who created all things, but she did not know who He was. The sisters answered her questions. She was deeply moved by her time with the sisters and discerned a call to follow Christ. When her mistress returned from Sudan, Josephine refused to leave. Her mistress spent three days trying to persuade her to leave the sisters, but Josephine remained steadfast. This caused the superior of the institute for baptismal candidates among the sisters to complain to Italian authorities on Josephine's behalf. The case went to court, and the court found that slavery had been outlawed in Sudan before Josephine was born, so she could not be lawfully made slave. She was declared free. For the first time in her life, Josephine was free and could choose what to do with her life. She chose to remain with the Canossian Daughters. She was baptized on January 9, 1890 and took the name Josephine Margaret and Fortunata. (Fortunata is the Latin translation for her Arabic name, Bakhita). She also received the sacraments of her first holy communion and confirmation on the same day. These three sacraments are the sacraments of initiation into the Church and were always given together in the early Church. The Archbishop who gave her the sacraments was none other than Giuseppe Sarto, the Cardinal Patriarch of Venice, who would later become Pope Pius X. Josephine became a novice with the Canossian Daughters of Charity religious order on December 7, 1893 and took her final vows on December 8, 1896. She was eventually assigned to a convent in Schio, Vicenza.

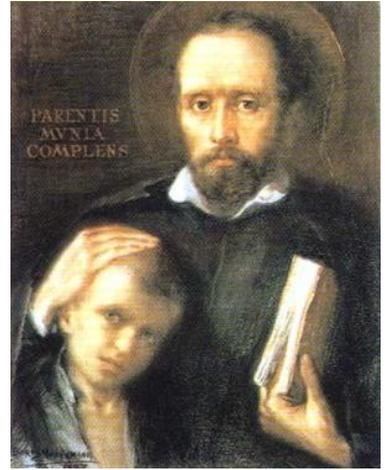
For the next 42 years of her life, she worked as a cook and a doorkeeper at the convent. She also travelled and visited other convents telling her story to other sisters and preparing them for work in Africa. She was known for her gentle voice and smile. She was gentle and charismatic and was often referred to lovingly as the "little brown sister" or honourably as the "black mother." When speaking of her enslavement, she often professed she would thank her kidnappers. For had she not been kidnapped, she might never have come to know Jesus Christ and entered His Church.

During World War II, the people of the village of Schio regarded her as their protector and, although bombs fell on their village, not one citizen died. In her later years, she began to suffer physical pain and was forced to use a wheelchair, but she always remained cheerful. If anyone asked her how she was, she would reply, "As the master desires." On the evening of February 8, 1947, Josephine spoke her last words, "Our Lady, Our Lady!" she then died. Her body lay on display for three days afterwards. In 1958, the process of canonization began for Josephine under Pope John XXIII. On December 1st, 1978, Pope John Paul II declared her venerable. Sadly, the news of her beatification in 1992 was censored in Sudan. But just nine months later, Pope John Paul II visited Sudan and honoured her publicly. He canonized her on October 1, 2000.

Saint Josephine Bakhita is the patron saint of Sudan.

St Jerome Emilian

Jerome was a careless and irreligious soldier for the city-state of Venice, who was captured in a skirmish at an outpost town and chained in a dungeon. In prison Jerome had a lot of time to think, and he gradually learned how to pray. When he escaped, he returned to Venice where he took charge of the education of his nephews—and began his own studies for the priesthood. In the years after his ordination, events again called Jerome to a decision and a new lifestyle. Plague and famine swept northern Italy. Jerome began caring for the sick and feeding the hungry at his own expense. While serving the sick and the poor, he soon resolved to devote himself and his property solely to others, particularly to abandoned children. He founded three orphanages, a shelter for penitent prostitutes and a hospital. Around 1532, Jerome and two other priests established a congregation, the Clerks Regular of Somasca, dedicated to the care of orphans and the education of youth. Jerome died in 1537 from a disease he caught while tending the sick. He was canonized in 1767. In 1928, Pius XI named him the patron of orphans and abandoned children.



Our Lady of Lourdes - 11th February



The Blessed Virgin Mary first appeared on 11th February to a young 14 year old peasant girl called Bernadette Soubirous. She told her mother that a lady spoke to her in the cave of Massabielle while she was gathering firewood with her sister Toinette and friend Jeanne Abadie.

“...I came back towards the grotto and started taking off my stockings. I had hardly taken off the first stocking when I heard a sound like a gust of wind. Then I turned my head towards the meadow. I saw the trees quite still: I went on taking off my stockings. I heard the same sound again. As I raised my head to look at the grotto, I saw a lady dressed in white, wearing a white dress, a blue girdle and a yellow rose on each foot, the same color as the chain of her rosary; the beads of the rosary were white....From the niche, or rather the dark alcove behind it, came a dazzling light...” The “lady” appeared a further 18 times. On 25th March the lady told Bernadette ‘Que soy era immaculada concepciou’ - I am the Immaculate Conception, meaning Mary, the Mother of Christ was conceived without sin and her conception was thus *immaculate*. This doctrine was declared by Pope Pius IX in 1854.



“No society can legitimately call itself civilised if a sick person is denied medical aid because of a lack of means.”

Aneurin Bevan