

## THE POPE URGES ACTION AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Vatican City, 5 March 2014 (VIS) – Pope Francis has sent a message to the faithful in Brazil on the occasion of the annual Lenten “Fraternity Campaign”, which this year takes on the theme of “Brotherhood and human trafficking”, and whose slogan will be “For freedom Christ has set us free”.

“During the next forty days, we will seek to be more aware of the infinite mercy God has given to us and asks us to give to others, especially those most in need: 'You are free! Go and help your brothers to be free!'. In this sense, and wishing to mobilise Christians and persons of good will in Brazilian society against the social ill of human trafficking, our Brazilian brother bishops propose this year the theme 'Fraternity and human trafficking'”.

“It is not possible to remain indifferent before the knowledge that human beings are bought and sold like goods! I think of the adoption of children for the extraction of their organs, of woman deceived and obliged to prostitute themselves, of workers exploited and denied rights or a voice, and so on. And this is human trafficking. 'It is precisely on this level that we need to make a good examination of conscience: how many times have we permitted a human being to be seen as an object, to be put on show in order to sell a product or to satisfy an immoral desire? The human person ought never to be sold or bought as if he or she were a commodity. Whoever uses human persons in this way and exploits them, even if indirectly, becomes an accomplice of this injustice'. Moving on to the family level, entering into the home, how often do we see that even there, often there is abuse. Parents who enslave their children, children who enslave their parents; married couples who, forgetting their duty in receiving this gift, exploit one another as if they were products for consumption, disposable products; the elderly, without a place in society and children and adolescents without a voice. How many attacks to the basic values of the fabric of family life and social coexistence. Yes, there is a need to profoundly examine our consciences. How can one proclaim the joy of Easter, without lending support to those who are denied their freedom on this earth?”.

He continues, “Be sure: if I offend the human dignity of others, it is because I have previously divested myself of my own. And why have I done this? For power, fame, material goods ... in exchange for my dignity as a son or daughter of God, whose salvation comes at the price of Christ's blood on the Cross and is guaranteed by the Holy Spirit who calls inside us, 'Abba, father!'. Human dignity is the same for all human beings; if I trample that of another, I also trample my own. Christ freed us so that we might live free in freedom! ... I hope that Christians and persons of good faith may make efforts to ensure that men, women, young people or children may never more be victims of human trafficking. It is the most effective foundation for re-establishing human dignity and proclaiming Christ's Gospel in towns and country, because Jesus wishes to sow life in abundance everywhere”, concludes the Holy Father.