

REFLECTIONS ON POPE BENEDICT XVI'S MONTHLY INTENTIONS

May 2010

Editor's Note: Apostleship of Prayer receives monthly prayer intentions from Pope Benedict XVI and urges Christians throughout the world to unite in prayer for those intentions. The reflections below seek to illuminate the Holy Father's concerns.

General Intention

Human Trafficking. *That the shameful and monstrous trafficking in human beings, which sadly involves millions of women and children, may stop.*



The world's poor are easy prey for those who wish to profit from the slave market. Many in rich countries like our own purchase women and children to exploit. Slaves are raped, tortured, put to hard labor, and even forced to have babies who are also sold as slaves. The Pope asks us to hear the cries of the millions and pray for the end of this shameful and monstrous trafficking in human beings.

The problem is especially difficult because those who are enslaved sometimes cannot or do not understand that they are victims. Desperate because of poverty, war, or disaster, they seek to escape the hardship and danger of their circumstances. They are fooled by promises of adoption, marriage, and employment. Once sold, they are typically isolated, afraid, ashamed, unable to speak the language of their captors, and ignorant of laws and social services that would rescue them and allow them to live in freedom.

As many as 17,000 people are trafficked into the U.S. each year from Asia, Central and South America, and Eastern Europe. The U.S. State Department reports that they are exploited for prostitution, pornography, domestic servitude, sweatshop labor, and migrant agricultural work.

In her book, *The Sacred Bath: An American Teen's Story of Modern Day Slavery*, Theresa Flores tells how at 15 she was drugged, raped, and tortured for two years in an upper-class suburb in Detroit. After 20 years of silence, she began telling her story to help others. Now a licensed social worker, she works at Gracehaven, a safe home in Dublin, Ohio, for girls under 18 who have been sexually exploited.

How can we help end human trafficking? Let's pray, offering ourselves to God each day this month on behalf of the victims. Praying for the Pope's intention helps us be aware of the enormity of the problem of human trafficking - awareness we can share with those around us.



Reflection:

How can you make others compassionately aware of human trafficking?

Reading:

Luke 4:16-19 Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went...into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found a passage where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives..."

Mission Intention

Priests, Religious, and Committed Lay People. *That priests, religious women and men, and lay people involved in apostolic work may understand how to bring missionary enthusiasm to the communities they serve.*



The Holy Father often asks us to pray for a missionary spirit to pervade the entire Church. But this month we are praying specifically for those priests, religious men and women, and lay ministers who are actively involved in apostolic work: that they bring a missionary enthusiasm to their service.

At the Ascension Jesus told his disciples that when they received the Holy Spirit they would receive the power to be witnesses to him to the very ends of the earth. And they did.

We need that power now - all of us. Have you ever heard some good news that you couldn't wait to tell someone else? You couldn't keep it to yourself.

That's the way it's supposed to be with all of us who have received new life in baptism, especially those who have been called to serve Church ministries. Church workers are to be so inspired by the Holy Spirit that they, like the first disciples after Pentecost, cannot keep the Good News to themselves. From a very small beginning, the Gospel has spread to the ends of the earth. And from your parish, it can spread across your city or county, your state and the nation.

Sunday, May 16, is the 44th World Communications Day, and for it Pope Benedict has written a beautiful message, "Priests and Pastoral Ministry in a Digital World: New Media at the Service of the Word." The digital world too is part of the new frontier of the missions. It is where pastoral workers - ordained, religious, and lay - must be involved in spreading the word. We pray they may do so with the enthusiasm of the Holy Spirit.



Reflection:

Do you know someone who ministers to others with "missionary enthusiasm"? Pray specifically that the power of the Holy Spirit may grow in that person.

Reading:

Acts 1:8 You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Prayer of the Month

Father, of all, I ask that you grant freedom and comfort to the millions of women, girls, men, and boys who are enslaved throughout the world. End their exploitation and abuse. Awaken the consciences of those who buy, sell, and hold them as slaves. Make people aware that this violation of human rights is among us and growing, even in the United States. Give wisdom to lawmakers and law enforcement. Help me live in your hope until all God's children are free. Amen.

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