



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF "TALITHA KUM"
THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF CONSECRATED LIFE
AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

*Hall of the Consistory
Thursday, 26 September 2019*

[Multimedia]

Dear Sisters,

I am very pleased to receive you today on the occasion of your first General Assembly. I thank Sister Kafka and Sister Bottani for their introduction. Talitha Kum was born in 2001 from a missionary intuition of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG). It flourishes today as a worldwide network that coordinates the efforts of Institutes of Consecrated Life against human trafficking. In just ten years it has come to coordinate 52 religious networks in more than 90 countries on all continents. The statistics of your service speak for themselves: 2000 workers, more than 15,000 victims of trafficking assisted and more than 200,000 people reached with prevention and awareness-raising activities.

I congratulate you on the important work you are doing amid very complex and tragic situations. Your work brings together the missions of different institutions and demands cooperation between them. You have chosen to be on the front line. Therefore the numerous Congregations that have worked and continue to work as the "avant-garde" of the Church's missionary activity against the scourge of human trafficking deserve gratitude (see [*Address to Participants in the International Conference on Human Trafficking*](#), 11 April 2019). This is also a model of how to work together. It is an example for the whole Church, and also for us: men, priests, bishops ... You are giving a great example – keep at it !

In this, your first assembly, your main objective is to evaluate progress made and to identify

missionary priorities for the next five years. In the various working sessions, you have chosen to discuss two main issues related to the phenomenon of trafficking. On the one hand, the great differences that still mark the condition of women in the world, which stem mainly from socio-cultural factors. On the other, the limits of the neoliberal development model, which risks undermining the state with its individualistic vision. These undoubtedly complex and urgent challenges require adequate and effective answers. I know that in your assembly you have committed yourself to identifying solutions and highlighting the resources necessary to carry them out. I appreciate this work of pastoral planning with a view to providing more competent and fruitful assistance to the local Churches.

While important, these are not the only challenges that face. The Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development recently published "Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking", a document that sets forth the complexity of today's challenges and offers clear pointers for all pastoral workers committed to working in this area.

I renew my encouragement to all the women's Institutes of Consecrated Life that have organized and supported the commitment of their sisters in the fight against trafficking and in helping victims. While I invite you to continue this commitment, I also appeal to other Religious Congregations, both female and male, to join this missionary work, devoting personal service and resources so that they can reach remote corners of the earth. I also hope that foundations and benefactors will multiply and ensure generous and disinterested support for your activities. With regard to this invitation, I realize the problems that many Congregations have; indeed some, both female and male, may tell you: "We have so many problems to solve internally, we cannot...". Tell them that the Pope said that "internal" problems are resolved by going out on the road, so that fresh air can enter.

Considering the extent of the challenges posed by trafficking, it is necessary to promote cooperation and commitment on the part of various ecclesial institutions and organizations. While pastoral responsibility is essentially entrusted to the local Churches and Ordinaries, it is also desirable that the latter be able to involve female and male Religious Congregations and Catholic organizations present in their territory in pastoral planning and action, in order to make the work of the Church more timely and effective.

In the fight against trafficking, Religious Congregations are fulfilling in an exemplary way their charismatic role in the life of the local Churches. Your insights and pastoral initiatives have paved the way for an effective and much-needed ecclesial response. At the same time, I would reiterate that "the journey of consecrated life, both female and male, is a journey of ecclesial discernment." (Address to Participants in the XXI Plenary Assembly of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG), 10 May 2019). It is the path chosen by the Holy Spirit: he is the one who creates "disorder" in the Church through his many charisms, yet he is also the creator of harmony in the Church. A path of rich gifts. This is what being in the Church is about, with all the gifts of the Holy

Spirit: it is the freedom of the Spirit. And if any of you have doubts about this, pick up the Acts of the Apostles and see what creativity the Spirit shows when believers have the courage to leave the synagogue, to go outside. "Things do not work outside the Church – this Church – and parallel to the local Church" (ibid.). But this Church, rich in so many charisms, is the one that will give us strength.

Dear Sisters, I bless you and entrust your good intentions for the future to the Virgin Mary; and I assure you of a remembrance in my prayers. And I ask you too, not to forget to pray for me, because I need it. And allow me one final bit of advice. Never end the day without thinking about the gaze of one of the victims you have known: this will be a beautiful prayer. Thank you.