

**Talitha Kum's Study, Prayer and Action Pack:  
Migration and Human Trafficking  
"The crisis of migration cannot be ignored." – Pope Francis**

**Part 1: Introduction**

The International Assembly of Talitha Kum in 2019 identified three priority areas of structural injustice to address in the fight to end human trafficking. This discussion paper addresses the third priority: ***unjust and inadequate immigration law and policy coupled with forced migration and displacement puts people at greater risk of being trafficked.***

**We denounce** the unjust immigration laws and policies rooted in a culture of racism and xenophobia which deny the basic human rights of people on the move. [...] We denounce the harsh immigration policy that drives victims of human trafficking into the shadows, making the work of identification of victims and prosecution of perpetrators more difficult.

**We call on** all Catholics and people of good will to take prophetic action consistent with Pope Francis' call to pray for, welcome, protect, promote, and integrate migrants, refugees, and internally displaced people in order to prevent them from falling into the hands of traffickers.<sup>1</sup>

**We call on** governments to implement migration policy and border controls that prevent human trafficking and protect the safety, dignity, human rights, and fundamental freedoms of all migrants regardless of their migratory status.

**We commit** ourselves to work across borders and boundaries through our networks in order to ensure safe migration and prevent recruitment of migrants by traffickers during their journey and accompany them on their return. We commit ourselves to use our collective voice and engage government officials to promote and enforce just immigration laws and policies.

**TRENDS AND CHALLENGES (Migration and Human Trafficking)**

Migration commonly refers to the movement of people, basically relocating of people within and across borders. According to Teresa Albano's reflection on the issue of migration and trafficking; "an international migrant is a person who is living in a country other than his or her country of birth. This definition, elaborated for statistical purposes, does not make reference to the drivers of the individual movement, if voluntary or forced. Indeed, although not enshrined in international instruments, the term "migrant" usually refers to a person who willingly moves to establish his/her residence in a country other than the home one, while a refugee is usually "forced" to leave his home due to the prosecution suffered in the country of origin. Refugees, victims of trafficking, smuggled migrants, asylum-seekers. Terms whose approval at international level has fatigued the minds of excellent jurists, spending hundreds of hours of negotiations, compiling tons of documents, are today distorted, used and abused as if they were synonymous, as if the moving

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<sup>1</sup> "Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 104th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2018 'Welcoming, Protecting, Promoting and Integrating Migrants and Refugees'", 14 January 2018, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco\\_20170815\\_world-migrants-day-2018.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20170815_world-migrants-day-2018.html).

mass of humanity was indistinct and uniform.”<sup>2</sup> Some people choose migration willingly while most people move reluctantly due to factors beyond their control.

The main factors for migration are lack of decent job opportunity, wage disparity, poverty, political instability and conflict, war, and natural catastrophes driven largely by climate change. Climate change is an increasing driver of forced internal displacement and migration. Complex combinations of factors play crucial roles in the movement of people.

Migrants are especially vulnerable to human trafficking and gender-based violence, particularly women, girls and unaccompanied minors. Women migrant workers are highly concentrated in domestic and care work, agriculture, food processing and packaging, manufacturing, tourism and hospitality, etc. Several are forced to sexual exploitation. Violence and discrimination against women are the major concerns for women in migration. Undocumented migrants or irregular status keeps migrant women in fear, living and working in at-risk circumstances, limiting their access to jobs, services, safety, and justice. The situation has been exacerbated by the pandemic.

In recent years, we have heard many tragic stories of people who have died from crossing borders.

*The death toll in 2021 has surpassed 4,470 after dozens were reportedly killed when a truck packed with migrants crashed in Chiapas, Mexico. More than 45,400 deaths have been recorded since 2014, according to the International Organization for Migration’s (IOM) Missing Migrants Project.*

*Globally, the number of deaths this year is already more than the 4,236 total recorded in 2020. Considering fatal incidents are often recorded weeks or months later, the final toll in 2021 is likely to be much higher.*<sup>3</sup>

Irregular migration routes and irregular migration status are factors in vulnerability to trafficking, but migrants in regular situations can also become victims of trafficking.

With the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, the problem of human trafficking in the context of migration has worsened.<sup>4</sup> The rise of domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence for women in migration has worsened.

Human trafficking is therefore explicitly recognized as a development challenge in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which refers to the eradication of forced labor, modern slavery and human trafficking in its SDG 8 Target 7,<sup>5</sup> and SDG 5 Target 2.

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<sup>2</sup> “Resources or Victims”, Ms. Teresa Albano (expert in migration and human rights, collaborating with various international agencies, UNHCR, IOM and OSCE), June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017, [https://www.talithakum.info/files/documentdownload/2019/Teresa\\_Albano\\_EN.pdf](https://www.talithakum.info/files/documentdownload/2019/Teresa_Albano_EN.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> “Rising Migrant Deaths Top 4,400 This Year: IOM Records More Than 45,000 Since 2014”, IOM, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021, <https://www.iom.int/news/rising-migrant-deaths-top-4400-year-iom-records-more-45000-2014>

<sup>4</sup> “Chapter 5 – The Great Disrupter: COVID-19’s impact on migration, mobility and migrants globally” in *World Migration Report 2022*, IOM, December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021, <https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2022>

<sup>5</sup> SDG 8, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs – Sustainable Development, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal8>.

“While massive numbers of people have been forced to leave their homes due to persecution, violence, natural disasters and the scourge of poverty, migration should nevertheless be recognized, not as a new phenomenon, but rather as a natural human response to crisis and a testament to the innate desire of every human being for happiness and a better life. This reality, with its important cultural and spiritual dimensions, is having a significant impact on attitudes and reactions all over the world. Even amidst the current crisis, experience teaches that effective, shared responses are available.

The Church looks forward to working together with the international community to promote and adopt such measures to protect the dignity, rights and freedoms of all persons currently on the move, including forced migrants, victims of human trafficking, asylum seekers, refugees and internally displaced persons.”<sup>6</sup>

Talitha Kum is aware of ongoing efforts towards a global governance of migration and asylum, and acknowledges stakeholders’ cooperation – in the framework of the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees – as including specific actions in the field of human trafficking and exploitation.<sup>7</sup>

Talitha Kum calls for action to address the systemic causes that leave people at risk of falling into the hands of traffickers in the context of migration, by:

**“Supporting Safe and Legal Migration pathways, including cases of forced displacement.**

[...] To promote effective and legal migration pathways, Talitha Kum calls in particular on global governance stakeholders for measures towards:

- the early detection of situations of exploitation suffered by migrants, including asylum seekers, refugees and displaced persons;
- the promotion of awareness-raising activities aimed at portraying the risks of abuse, violence and exploitation along migration pathways and in destination countries;
- the establishment of safe and legal pathways for migration, with special attention to women and girls, including situations of forced displacement;
- the fair recruitment and treatment of migrant workers in the labor market, regardless of their legal status, with special attention to women and girls.”<sup>8</sup>

## Data / Resources and Bibliography

A. Talitha Kum Call to Action: <https://www.talithakum.info/en/call-to-action/>

B. Migration without Trafficking Say Yes to Freedom and No to Slavery:  
<https://www.talithakum.info/it/notizie/migration-without-trafficking-say-yes-to-freedom-and-no-to-slavery>

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<sup>6</sup> “RESPONDING TO REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS: TWENTY ACTION POINTS FOR THE GLOBAL COMPACTS”, Migrants and Refugees Section, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019, [https://migrants-refugees.va/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/20-Action-Points-for-the-Global-Compacts.EN\\_.pdf](https://migrants-refugees.va/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/20-Action-Points-for-the-Global-Compacts.EN_.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> “Talitha Kum’s Call to Action” (p. 9), Talitha Kum, November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021, <https://www.talithakum.info/en/call-to-action/>

<sup>8</sup> “Talitha Kum’s Call to Action” (p. 5-6), Talitha Kum, November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021, <https://www.talithakum.info/en/call-to-action/>

- C. Migrants, Refugees, and Trafficking in Persons by Ms. Teresa Albano:  
[https://www.talithakum.info/files/documentdownload/2019/Teresa\\_Albano\\_EN.pdf](https://www.talithakum.info/files/documentdownload/2019/Teresa_Albano_EN.pdf)
- D. Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking: <https://migrants-refugees.va/documents/en/email/pastoral-orientations-on-human-trafficking.pdf>
- E. Responding to Refugees and Migrants: Twenty Action Points for The Global Compacts:  
[https://migrants-refugees.va/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/20-Action-Points-for-the-Global-Compacts.EN\\_.pdf](https://migrants-refugees.va/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/20-Action-Points-for-the-Global-Compacts.EN_.pdf)
- F. Strangers No Longer Together on the Journey of Hope: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/immigration/strangers-no-longer-together-on-the-journey-of-hope.cfm>
- G. Some of the people most vulnerable to being trafficked are among the world's 281 million international migrants. <https://www.un.org/en/desa/international-migration-2020-highlights>
- H. World's Largest Refugee and Internally Displaced Population: The Middle East region has experienced massive armed conflicts and international military intervention in recent years: largest population fleeing from neighboring countries: 900,000 Syrian refugees are living in Lebanon and 600,000 are living in Jordan (UNHCR, 2019).
- I. UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020: "Female victims continue to be particularly affected by trafficking in persons. In 2018, for every 10 victims detected globally, about five were adult women and two were girls. About one third of the overall detected victims were children, both girls (19 per cent) and boys (15 per cent), while 20 per cent were adult men. Traffickers target victims who are marginalized or in difficult circumstances. Undocumented migrants and people who are in desperate need of employment are also vulnerable, particularly to trafficking for forced labor."  
<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/data-and-analysis/glotip.html> (Executive Summary p 9)
- J. ILO Global Estimates of Modern Slavery and Forced Marriage: The proportion of migrants among those in forced labour is 3 times higher than the proportion of migrants in the regular labour force. When migrant workers are not protected by law, and are unable to exercise their human rights they are can be more vulnerable to forced labour.  
[https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS\\_575479/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_575479/lang--en/index.htm)
- K. Migration status can be used against victims. "Trafficking victims who do not have permission to work or stay in the country face an extra layer of vulnerability to exploitation. The fear of being exposed as an irregular migrant can be a powerful tool for traffickers, who typically threaten to file reports with the authorities and can more easily keep victims under exploitative conditions. Migrants make up a significant share of the detected victims in most global regions: 65 per cent in Western and Southern Europe, 60 per cent in the Middle East, 55 per cent in East Asia and the Pacific, 50 per cent in Central and South-

Eastern Europe, and 25 per cent in North America. Even migrants who have the right to work can be vulnerable to exploitation, for instance, because they are unaware of their labour rights.” <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/data-and-analysis/glotip.html> (Executive Summary p 10)

- L. Difference between Human Trafficking and People Smuggling:  
“In reality, the line between people smuggling and human trafficking is growing thinner. A situation of people smuggling can easily become human trafficking. In recent years, in massive mixed flows of migrants and refugees, many desperate people, compelled by the lack of accessible and legal alternatives - also due to increasingly restrictive migration policies, have begun as clients of people smugglers, only to become victims of traffickers.” <https://migrants-refugees.va/documents/en/email/pastoral-orientations-on-human-trafficking.pdf>
  
- M. Human Trafficking in Migration Pathways: World Migration Report 2022 (IOM):  
“Human trafficking challenges migration governance at global, regional and national levels, as trafficking risks for migrants are greater when migration is unsafe, disorderly and/or irregular. Irregular migration can be unsafe, with lower access to protection and support networks and greater risks of trafficking.” <https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2022-chapter-10>

## Part 2: Catholic Social Teaching Concerning Migration and Human Trafficking

### A. Scriptures

The Bible, both Old and New Testament, relates stories of people forced to flee because of oppression and show us how to welcome strangers in our midst. In the Old Testament, the book of Exodus tells the story of the Chosen People, Israel, who were victims of bitter slavery in Egypt. They were utterly helpless by themselves, but with God's powerful intervention they were able to escape and take refuge in the desert. For forty years they lived as travelers with no homeland of their own. Finally, God fulfilled God's ancient promise and settled them on the land that they could finally call home. The Israelites' experience of living as migrants was so painful and frightening that God ordered God's people for all time to have special care for the foreigner: "Do not ill-treat foreigners who are living in your land. Treat them as you would a fellow-Israelite, and love them as you love yourselves. Remember that you were once foreigners in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God " (Lv 19:33-34)<sup>9</sup>. The New Testament starts with Matthew's story of Joseph and Mary's getaway to Egypt with their infant Jesus, because the paranoid and jealous King Herod wanted to kill the child. Our Savior himself migrated because his own land was not safe (Mt. 2:14-15). In His public ministry, Jesus was an itinerant preacher, moving from place to place, "with nowhere to lay His Head...." (Mt. 8:20).<sup>10</sup> Jesus Himself was not received by His own people: "He came to his own country, but His own people did not receive him" (Jn. 1:11).<sup>11</sup> As we welcome the stranger into our

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<sup>9</sup> Society of Saint Paul, Good News Bible, With Deuterocanonical Books/Apocrypha, Today's English Version, India, 1979.

<sup>10</sup> Idem

<sup>11</sup> Idem



midst, we welcome Christ Himself, for in the face of the migrant, immigrant, and refugee, we must see the face of Christ. In the Gospel of Luke, this is made clear in the experience of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk. 24: 13-15). Jesus reiterates the Old Testament command to love and care for the stranger, a criterion by which we shall be judged: "For I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was a stranger and you received me..." (Mt 25:35)<sup>12</sup>. The Apostle Paul asserts the absolute equality of all people before God: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in union with Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28)<sup>13</sup>. In Christ, the human race is one before God, equal in dignity and rights.

## B. Catholic Ecclesial Documents

Our Church has a long history of welcoming and assisting migrants, refugees and asylum seekers through the different structures at its disposal and based on the social doctrine of the church. We pull our force of action from its teaching through the encyclicals of the popes.

In the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth), Pope John XXIII commented on the situation of immigrants. He reaffirms that migrants have a right to a life with dignity, and therefore a right to migrate and the right not to migrate: "Every human being has the right to the freedom of movement and of residence within the confines of their country; and, when there are just reasons for it, the right to emigrate and take up residence elsewhere."<sup>14</sup>

In *Gaudium Et Spes*, Pope Paul VI emphasized the dignity of human kind stating; "In our times a special obligation binds us to make ourselves the neighbor of every person without exception and of actively helping people when people come across our path, whether a person be an old person abandoned by all, a foreign laborer unjustly looked down upon, a refugee, a child born of an unlawful union and wrongly suffering for a sin he did not commit, or a hungry person who disturbs our conscience by recalling the voice of the Lord, "As long as you did it for one of these the least of my brethren, you did it for me" (Matt. 25:40). Furthermore, whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia or willful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, *such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where people are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons*; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are supreme dishonor to the Creator."<sup>15</sup>

Every person has an equal right to receive from the earth what is necessary for life—food, clothing, shelter. Moreover, every person has the right to education, medical care, religion, and the expression of their culture. In many places people live in fear, danger, or dehumanizing poverty. Clearly, it is not the will of God that some of God's children live in luxury while others have nothing.

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<sup>12</sup> Idem

<sup>13</sup> Idem

<sup>14</sup> Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris* (25), April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1963, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/fr/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_11041963\\_pacem.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/fr/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html)

<sup>15</sup> Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* (26-27), December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1965 [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html)

In Luke's Gospel, the rich man was condemned for living well while the poor man starved at his doorstep (Lk 16:19-31).

In his recent Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis encourages openness to encounter with other people, and advances universal brotherhood and social friendship as the Christ-like approach to such encounter. The Pope illustrates how our culture, our politics and our economy not only diverge from, but even undermine, those principles of brotherhood and social friendship.

He draws our attention to our insufficient vindication of universal human rights as a failure to recognize the humanity of our brothers and sisters: 'It frequently becomes clear that, in practice, human rights are not equal for all.' (22) Instead, Francis points to the way in which our apathy towards human dignity, and greed driven by our economic system, has created the conditions in which rights are trampled: 'In today's world, many forms of injustice persist, fed by reductive anthropological visions and by a profit-based economic model that does not hesitate to exploit, discard and even kill human beings. [...] What does this tell us about the equality of rights grounded in innate human dignity?' (22)<sup>16</sup>

In particular, the Holy Father points to modern day slavery and human trafficking as brutal examples of the disregard for human dignity and rights.

It is the position of the Catholic Church that pastoral, educational, medical, and social services provided by the Church are never conditioned on legal status. All persons are invited to participate in our parishes, attend our schools, and receive other services offered by our institutions and programs.

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Pope Paul VI, *Exsul Familia Nazarathana*, Apostolic Letter Pastoralis Migratorum Cura, Rome, 1969

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<sup>16</sup> Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* (22-24), October 3rd, 2020, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20201003\\_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html)

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Refer to the document of your local Episcopal Conference commission for Migrants and Refugees on issue of migration

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### Part 3: Discussion Guide

#### **PROCESS: Listen, Reflect, Judge, Act**

The synodal process is vital in accompanying people on the move, migrants and refugees, asylum seekers, particularly women, girls, and young people vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation.

#### **Prayer**

O Spirit of Wisdom! Guide us in ending human trafficking of all persons, with special attention to those migrants and refugees and people on the move, particularly women, girls, and young people who seek lives of safety and security.

The Lord said to Moses: "Strike the Rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." (Exodus 17:6)

As the people journeyed through the desert (darkness), they found they were without water. Exploitation and human trafficking are like the experience of many people without water in the desert; the water of dignity, the water of freedom, without job, people to love and to be loved. Moses, the leader of the community, struck the Rock, and water came out ...

What is the Rock to strike... so that many people may drink?

#### **Blessed are They**

*Blessed are the hands that "strike the rock" flooding the desert with water  
Blessed are the hands that heal and care for victims and survivors of trafficking/exploitation  
Blessed are the hands that empower women and girls enslaved by modern-day slavery.  
Blessed are the hands that restore victims and survivors into a new life with freedom,  
dignity and peace!*

*Blessed are the hands that "strike the rock" flooding the desert with water  
Blessed are the feet that hike the trail walking in the holy footsteps of migrants  
Blessed are the hearts for the voices of vulnerable women and girls that call out:  
"Little Girl, Arise"!*

*Blessed are the hands that "strike the rock" the hardened hearts of traffickers and illegal recruiters,  
and all people benefitting from the exploitation of others;*



*for they have a conversion of heart that leads them to release those they have enslaved!  
Blessed are the hands that strike this rock!*

*Blessed are the hands that “strike the rock” flooding the desert with life!  
for all forced labor, including those who are trafficked overseas, for women, children and men who  
are exploited for their bodies on the streets or on the internet.  
Blessed are the hands that “strike the rock” and flood the desert with life and hope!  
Blessed are the hands reached by Jesus!*

*Saint Josephine Bakhita! Pray for us!*

Adapted Prayer by: Abby Avelino, MM

### **Pope Francis’s Prayer Intentions:**

<https://youtu.be/X6zCPq1JHtI>

### **Discussion**

### **Reflect / Judge**

### **Suggested questions for discussion if suitable in your context and group.**

1. Are you aware of your national migration and refugee policies? Do you know if these laws and policies are being implemented? Which are the policy elements promoting human dignity?
2. If the human person were the first point of reference, what would our immigration policy look like?
3. Are you aware of actions on migration policies and issues by your government or community groups? How can your school, parish, or social justice group get involved?
4. Do the laws and policies of your country honor the rights of forcibly displaced people? If not, what needs to change?
5. How can you respond to the invitation of Pope Francis "to welcome, protect, promote, and integrate migrants and refugees", particularly to women and girls?
6. Share such practices on sustainable re/integration of migrant and trafficked people in your network, including whether they are aware of and could access such services.

### **Act**

1. What action can your network commit to?
2. Get informed on the laws and policies of respected countries regarding unsafe migration issues.
3. Share your action and commitment or your involvement with migrants’ communities, as cultural mediators for the early identification of situation of human trafficking.

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***Protection begins in the country of origin, and consists in offering reliable and verified information before departure, and in providing safety from illegal recruitment practices.***

Pope Francis, *Message for the 104th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2018*, 15 august 2017