

Human Trafficking Prayer Service. January 11, 2024

Reference pages:

1. <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/tacklingtrafficking>
2. [2023 Trafficking in Persons Report - United States Department of State](#)
3. [NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS DAY - January 11, 2024 - National Today](#)

Welcome

Welcome to Province V's event to pray for the end of human trafficking. While January is National Human Trafficking Awareness month, today - January 11th, is designated as National Human Trafficking Awareness Day. We invite you into this space to pray for all involved in trafficking of persons, and to pray for the end of this slavery. While we don't have a speaker this evening after the prayer service, we will share some perspectives from those with lived experience of Human Trafficking with you. These Survivor Insights were printed in the US Department of State's June 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report.

This year's theme for the month is "Activate Connections to Prevent Human Trafficking. "Human trafficking cannot be prevented by any one individual, community, organization, or government. To improve the lives of those we serve, we must activate connections throughout the systems that impact individual, family, community, and societal health and well-being. When we partner to prevent, we can enhance our efforts to keep everyone safe from human trafficking."

Background

What do we mean when we say "Human Trafficking?"

[Ref 2] The United States' Trafficking Victims Protection Act defines "severe forms of trafficking in persons" as: (1) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age; or (2) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. A victim does not need to be physically transported from one location to another for the crime to fall within this definition.

And something new to consider:

According to the UN's Office on Drugs & Crime's, 2022 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons released in January 2023, boys represent the fastest-growing segment of identified human trafficking victims. The percentage of boys identified as victims of human trafficking more than quintupled between 2004 and 2020—a much larger increase than for men, women, or girls. The same report notes males (including boys and men) account for 40 percent of all identified victims of human trafficking. Women constitute about twice the percentage of

identified trafficking victims as men, but the percentage of trafficking victims who are boys and girls is almost identical. The growing awareness of boys exploited in human trafficking is fairly recent.

Introduction

[Ref 3]

National Human Trafficking Awareness Day is intended to raise awareness of the persistent issue of human trafficking. Though the entire month of January has already been recognized as National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month, this day is specifically dedicated to awareness and prevention of the illegal practice. Since the Senate established this day of observance in 2007, it has drawn massive public support from individual donations to government-organized events. The horrific injustice of human trafficking can affect people of any race and background, and on this day we are all called to fight human trafficking wherever it exists.

As Betty defined, human trafficking is the recruitment and transport of children or adults for the purposes of sexual exploitation or forced labor. The number of people enslaved through trafficking today exceeds those held at the height of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, but they are not as visible. The enslavement of God's children breaks God's heart. Learn more about human trafficking and join us in prayer for an end to the injustice of human trafficking and modern-day slavery.

Let us take a moment of silence to prepare our hearts for prayer.

Opening Prayer - *based on a Franciscan prayer*

Let us pray.

May we be blessed with the discomfort with easy answers,
half-truths and superficial relationships,
so that our lives have depth and vision.

May we be blessed with courage to confront injustice
and exploitation of people,
so that we work for justice and peace.

May we be blessed with tears to shed for those who suffer,
so that we reach out to comfort them.
to turn their pain into joy.

May we be blessed with enough faith and "foolishness" to believe that we can make a difference in this world, and do what others claim cannot be done.

Readings

Lamentations 5:1, 11, 13, 15

Oh God, remember what has happened to us;
consider and see our degradation.

The women in Zion have been raped,
the young girls in the town of Judah.

Youths have been put to the mill,
boys stagger under loads of wood.

Joy has vanished from our hearts;
Our dancing has turned to mourning.

Matthew 19:13-14

Then the little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs."

Mark 9:36-37

Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

Intercessions

- **#1** Please reply to "We pray to the Lord" with the response **"God of hope, set us free."**

#1 For children objectified in the commercial sex industry and young adults who run away from foster care and are coerced into trafficking. We pray to the Lord,

#3 **God of hope, set us free.**

#2 For women trafficked by their spouses, romantic partners, parents, or family members. We pray to the Lord,

#3 **God of hope, set us free.**

#1 For migrant workers who live and work in isolated conditions and are forbidden to leave their place of employment. We pray to the Lord,

#3 **God of hope, set us free.**

#2 For adults and children coerced and forced into providing images and videos for the pornography industry. We pray to the Lord,

#3 **God of hope, set us free.**

#1 ~ For those committed to combatting trafficking, may they increase their awareness about this scourge, and may God give them the strength to accompany survivors on their path to healing and wholeness. We pray to the Lord,

#3 **God of hope, set us free.**

#2 For perpetrators of human trafficking, that they repent of their evil ways and turn to God for forgiveness. We pray to the Lord,

#3 **God of hope, set us free.**

(chausa.Org) Catholic Health Association of United States

Prayers for an end to human trafficking

#1 It's easy to feel overwhelmed by the issue of human trafficking, but we *can* take action. We can speak out and insist that our elected officials support effective legislation, such as the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, and we can support World Vision and other programs to end trafficking and care for survivors. **Pray for action.**

#2 *Dear Lord, just as You helped Moses and Aaron as they spoke boldly to Pharaoh on behalf of the Hebrew slaves in Egypt, help us speak up for modern-day slaves around the world. We pray that through our actions we can help bring an end to human trafficking.*

#1 Poor families are vulnerable to the tactics of traffickers, who lure their victims with the promise of well-paying jobs in other cities or countries. Once isolated from their families, victims are forced to work for little or no pay and brutalized if they try to resist. One of the best ways to prevent human trafficking is to help families become self-sufficient. **Pray for prevention.**

#3 *Dear Lord, most of us reading this will never experience the kind of extreme poverty that millions of people live with every day. Help us to be understanding and compassionate toward their needs. Help us to love them in the way that You love them with the resources and abilities You've given to each of us. Help us to support people who have been left impoverished because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Give us the will to make things better and the opportunity to act.*

#1 Children who are rescued from traffickers need a safe place to recover from abuse. It's common for their former captors to try to recover what they regard as their "property." World Vision provides survivors with emergency shelter, legal assistance, and counseling. **Pray for protection.**

#2 *Dear Lord, You are a strong tower and a mighty fortress. Help Your rescued children feel safe and begin to heal. Protect them from others who seek to harm them.*

#1 Survivors of human trafficking often suffer severe psychological damage. Their hearts and spirits have been assaulted as much as their bodies. They are ashamed of what has happened to them. World Vision helps provide a safe environment where children can recover and share happier times with other kids. They also receive vocational training so that they have the chance to become financially secure and make a fresh start. **Pray for restoration.**

#3 *Dear Lord, Your Word shows that You bring new joy and hope where previously there was only shame and fear. We ask this for our siblings, who desperately need to accept that they can be made new.*

#1 The men and women who prey on the poor and innocent need to be arrested, prosecuted, and punished for their crimes. It has been found that even a small number of convictions can have a major impact in reducing trafficking crime. But prosecuting traffickers can be difficult because survivors are terrified to testify against them. **Pray for justice.**

#2 *Dear Lord, You demand justice for Your children who have been wronged. Give strength to people who investigate and prosecute traffickers. Encourage them when they are weary. Give courage to survivors when they are asked to testify against their former captors. Let Your justice prevail.*

FROM [Prayer for an end to human trafficking | World Vision](#)

<https://www.worldvision.org/child-protection-news-stories/pray-end-human-trafficking>

PRAYER FOR AN END TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Oh God, we didn't see them. But you did.

The hundreds and thousands of human beings trafficked each year to join the millions who are trapped in modern-day slavery.

Under terrible conditions, they work in factories, plow fields, harvest crops, work quarries, fill brothels, clean homes, and haul water.

Many are children with tiny fingers for weaving rugs and small shoulders for bearing rifles. Their labor is forced, their bodies beaten, their faces hidden from those who don't really want to see them.

But you see them all, God of the poor.

You hear their cry and you answer by opening our eyes,
and breaking our hearts and loosening our tongues to insist:

No mas. No more.

AMEN.

~ Catholic Relief Services

[Ref 2]

Survivor Insights

#1 We wanted to share with you some of these Survivor Insight Stories that were published in the US Department of State's June 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report.

#2 Between the PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA and the UNITED STATES
An American family adopted Abbey from the People's Republic of China when she was 14 months old. The family beat and starved her from the age of 3 and exploited her in domestic servitude. The family kept Abbey confined in a room in their basement without a proper restroom for nearly 14 years. While the family's three biological children attended school, Abbey was denied an education. Abbey repeatedly attempted to escape, but local law enforcement authorities reprimanded and returned her to the abusive household several times. Only after many attempts did Abbey successfully leave her traffickers' custody. She is now pursuing civil and criminal legal action against the family and child protective services.

#3 From INDIA
When Miriam boarded a train in the Northern Indian state of Bihar, she thought she was headed for a brighter future. While on the train, she was comforted by a woman who convinced Miriam to accompany her to her home. The woman, with a team of accomplices, first exploited her in domestic servitude and eventually exploited her in sex trafficking. Two other children and one adult from different parts of Bihar were also exploited. Miriam was identified as a child sex trafficking victim and escaped with the aid of local police during a law enforcement operation. A court later convicted the traffickers. A non-profit organization supported the survivors through a trauma-informed and survivor-centered program that provided them services and resources.

#4 Between INDIA and the UNITED STATES

In every “well” there is a “Frog.” The “Frog” thinks that is his world. Similarly, in human trafficking, the victim is under the control of the perpetrator. The victim is made to believe that they are living in the trafficker’s world, not knowing there is a better world of happiness, joy, food, fragrance, and freedom outside the clutches of the trafficker or the “well.” There is a proverb in India—going to “America” is going to “SWARG.” “SWARG” means “HEAVEN” or “PARADISE.” In 2003, I was invited to the United States on an H-1B visa with a \$75,000 salary per year plus benefits, as a Business Development Manager. The day I landed in the United States, I learned I had been manipulated, tricked, and trapped. My wife and I were forced to work in a restaurant. My kids were 7 and 4 years old. Imagine you woke up in a place where you don’t know the culture, you don’t know the laws, and you don’t know what resources are available and how to access them. Imagine that you thought you were going to achieve a better life for yourself and your family but find yourself on a floor with no bed. You’re working 16 hours a day. Imagine you have no food and no money because someone you trusted took the small amount of money you had “to keep it safe,” and provided you a one-bedroom apartment, then threatened you with arrest and deportation if you didn’t continue working without pay. You work so many hours that you can’t get home to care for your two small children.

This couldn’t happen in the United States of America, could it?

Certainly, this couldn’t happen in Cincinnati, could it?

Perpetrators in America use a variation of four words to silence foreign national victims. Traffickers shout to the victims, “I will get you 1) Arrested 2) Handcuffed 3) Jailed 4) Deported.” Every immigrant victim of labor trafficking in the United States of America has only one “nickname” used by the trafficker a million times—“ILLEGAL.” I was never called ‘Harold’ by my trafficker, only “ILLEGAL.” What happens in the mind of a victim: they begin to believe that they are a “CRIMINAL.”

#5 And, having been OVERLOOKED FOR TOO LONG: Boys and Human Trafficking

Boys or men who are victims of human trafficking are less likely than girls or women to self-identify. Research shows males are less likely than females to self-identify as victims of human trafficking, a fact rooted in stereotypical gender roles in which males are supposed to be strong. Male victims are more likely to view their situation as due to bad luck or even their own gullibility, rather than due to being exploited. Male victims of sex trafficking also may be reluctant to self-identify if they believe they will face a significant risk of stigma. They face multiple societal barriers to self-identifying as trafficking victims, including stigma associated with LGBTQI+ status or same-sex conduct, as well as the taboo nature of discussions around sexual violence against males. LGBTQI+ persons, in general, also face a higher incidence of risk factors for human trafficking

Heather - Action Items:

There are things that we can do.

Even if we never realized how close human trafficking is to us.

- INFORM people - Order items from Blue Campaign
<https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign>
Blue Campaign is a national public awareness campaign designed to educate the public, law enforcement, and other industry partners to recognize the indicators of human trafficking, and how to appropriately respond to possible cases.
 - o They're all free
 - o Pass them out to church
 - o Pass them out to friends

- Know the signs of trafficking
 - o Physical Abuse (such as bruises, cuts, burns and scars)
 - o Avoiding eye contact and social interaction
 - o Having no identification (such as a driver's license or passport)
 - o Being coached as to what to say, or Inconsistent stories.

- Talk to your local law enforcement. What is their current work on trafficking? What do they know about trafficking in your area?

- Research what your attorney general says about trafficking. Ohio's AG told every county that they need to have a task force. Other states are very behind. If you don't have a statement about human trafficking from your AG, call and ask that they respond. (Province V webpage)

- Prevention: Find ways to get involved with children and youth programs. Invest in them in your community.

Closing Prayer: A Prayer for the End of Human Trafficking

As shared by the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth, Convent Station, N.J.

God of freedom, beauty and truth
we believe that your deepest desire,
your most powerful energy,
is that all creation might know abundant life.

We raise our voices in anguished prayer
for our sisters and brothers,
women and girls, men and boys,
who are modern day slaves;
They are your beloved daughters and sons,
exploited sexually or forced to work
because of human violence and greed.

Fill us with your holy anger and your sacred passion
that those who are trafficked might know healing and justice;
that traffickers will come to repentance and conversion;
that all of us might live in such a way
that others are not made to pay the price
for our comfort and convenience.

Hasten the coming of the day when all people
and our precious Earth itself
will be treated, not as a commodity,
but as radiant images of your freedom, beauty and truth.
Amen. May it be so.

Additional resources shared at the event:

The Collaborative, Cleveland

<https://collabtoendht.org/anti-human-trafficking-coalition/our-partners/>

Freedom a la cart: <https://freedomalacart.org>

Re-link: <https://needs.relink.org/category/human-trafficking>

Sanctuary Night: <https://www.sanctuarynight.com>

She has a name: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/She_Has_a_Name

Violent Human Trafficking Ring Dismantled by Central Ohio Task Force

<https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Media/News-Releases/January-2024/Violent-Human-Trafficking-Ring-Dismantled-by-Centr>

Labor Trafficking:

Trafficked: Harold's Story

<https://www.wyso.org/local-and-statewide-news/2021-06-02/trafficked-harolds-story>

Trafficking of Older Adults

PA: <https://www.pcadv.org/wp-content/uploads/Human-Trafficking-of-Older-Adults-3.pdf>

MD: <https://www.wbaltv.com/article/human-trafficking-trends-older-people-benefits/45990679#>

Child Labor Laws:

Relaxing child labor protections is not the solution to our labor problem

<https://www.ohioemployerlawblog.com/2023/03/relaxing-child-labor-protections-is-not.html#:~:text=Ohio%27s%20Senate%20recently%20passed%20legislation%20that%2C%20if%20signed,so%20from%20the%20person%27s%20parent%20or%20legal%20guardian.%22>

2 days ago:

BREAKING: An Indiana Republican has filed a bill that would allow kids as young as 14 to drop out and work on corporate farms during school hours. Kids would only need to complete 8th grade in order to work 40 hours a week as a farm laborer.

<https://bsky.app/profile/moreperfectunion.bsky.social/post/3kilesn4z6q2k>