

# January 11, 2010

## National Human Trafficking Awareness Day

### Suggested Bulletin Announcements:

**Monday, January 11, 2010 is National Human Trafficking Awareness Day**

#### What does Catholic Social Teaching say?

“Slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children and disgraceful working conditions, where people are treated as mere instruments of gain...poison human society...and debase their perpetrators.”

*(Gaudium et Spes, #27)*

Human trafficking is defined as ‘the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for commercial sex, labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion, for the purpose of subjecting that person to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.’

*(Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000)*

If you think or suspect that someone is a victim of human trafficking, call the **Trafficking Information/Referral Hotline: 1-888-3737-888**. Visit [www.justicesymposium.org](http://www.justicesymposium.org)

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#### What does Catholic Social Teaching say?

“Action on behalf of justice...appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel...the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive condition.”

*(Justice in the World – 1971 World Synod of Bishops)*

It is not necessary for a victim to cross a border. Women and children, who are domestically trafficked for prostitution and/or forced labor within their own countries, are considered trafficked. Youth under 18, who are involved in prostitution, are also considered trafficked.

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#### What does Catholic Social Teaching say?

“Men and women throughout the world, even when threatened by violence, have taken the risk of freedom, asking to be given a place in social, political and economic life which is commensurate with their dignity as free human beings.”

*(Pope John Paul II address to the United Nations 5-8-96)*

The criminal means by which trafficking takes place include not only force, abduction, or deception, but also less explicit tactics, such as abuse of a victim’s vulnerability.

About 700,000 persons, primarily women and children, are trafficked annually within or across international borders.

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**What does Catholic Social Teaching say?**

“The joys and hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.”

*(Gaudium et spes #1)*

Criminal groups engage in human trafficking because it is highly profitable and less risky, than dealing in drugs or weapons. People can be sold repeatedly without a large capital investment.

The United States is one of the destination countries. Victims of trafficking originate from such nations as Russia, the Ukraine, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, the Czech Republic, Mexico and India. Victims are brought here to work in fields, sweatshops, homes, restaurants and brothels.

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**What does Catholic Social Teaching say?**

“We are witnessing...a new humanism, one in which humans are defined first of all by their responsibility toward their brothers and sisters...” (Gaudium et Spes #55)

Human trafficking is the second largest criminal industry in the world after drug dealing, and is the fastest growing industry.

How might one identify a victim?

- Has inexplicable physical injuries.
- Shows a great deal of fear and/or signs of severe trauma.
- Is unable to speak English, but has a companion speak for her/him, despite the presence of neutral interpreters.
- Is unable to go out or move about freely or alone.
- Has moved housing locations frequently.

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## Suggested Prayers of the Faithful

Saving God, open our ears to the cries of the poor, entrapped and trafficked as human slaves, we pray...  
(*All respond*) **Lord, save your people.**

Provident God, bless those in refugee camps and all who are uprooted from their homes and lands, we pray...  
**Lord, save your people.**

Merciful God, mindful of the many people who are oppressed, may we be aware of the ways that we ourselves oppress others, we pray...  
**Lord, save your people.**

Compassionate God, move our hearts by the reality of the suffering of others and grant that we are not a cause of their pain, we pray...  
**Lord, save your people.**

Loving God, help us to look beyond impressions to see the true value and dignity of every person, we pray...  
**Lord, save your people.**

Creator God, so many people cry out for healing; make us instruments of your liberation and peace, we pray...  
**Lord, save your people.**

Liberating God, empower us to bring quality of life to the enslaved and downtrodden of our world, we pray...  
**Lord, save your people.**

Mighty God, deliver us from the timidity that prevents us from performing actions on behalf of justice, we pray...  
**Lord, save your people.**

## Homily Suggestions

### Introduction

These days I see careful consumers at the grocery store. They stand with a product in hand, studying the fine print that lists its contents before putting it into their grocery carts. They know ahead of time what is safe of healthy for their families.

What if all the things we buy came with such a listing of ‘contents’? These ‘contents’ would be a different kind of list – disclosing what went into producing the product at the price we pay. A clothing label might list: “produced in a sweatshop with forced labor – 14 hours per day, 7 days a week at \$2.00/hour.” A chocolate bar’s list: “made from cocoa beans, picked by kidnapped boys of the Ivory Coast; beaten if a bag of cocoa pods is dropped; paid nothing.”

An x-rated magazine with a brown paper jacket across the cover would bear a warning label: “some women and children pictured here held in debt bondage, coerced into bringing these photos to you to reduce their debt.” After reading such label, hopefully we would put the product right back on the shelf. It would be hard to live with the knowledge that what we bought actually contributed unwittingly to the slavery of the person who helped produce it.

But that is what is happening today with many of the things that have become part of our every day lives. It helps large companies get even larger – increasing their profits and keeping their stockholders happy. And concealing how the product is actually produced keeps us happy- because of the cheap price. But this cheap price comes at a very high price for so many of the world’s poor. Someone along the ‘production line’ is getting short changed when prices are too good to be true. This is where slavery (human trafficking) enters the picture. To keep production costs as low as possible, millions of people around the globe are caught in the web of slavery. We outlawed slavery in the U.S. with the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment in 1865. But after 140 years, slavery is not only alive and well, it is happening to more people that at any other time in history.

### Body

Connect the reality of human trafficking and modern day slavery to the Scripture of the day.

### Closing

What is our call in the face of these realities – and God’s intent for each one of us? It is a large and complex issue that can tempt us to feel powerless or hopeless. It is so easy to throw up our hands thinking there is nothing we can do. But we are also an empowered people, who could take steps to impact this devastating abuse of our brothers and sisters.

- If the parish is having an awareness-raising event, urge people to participate. <http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/sweatshops/actionplan>
- Make informed consumer choices and use Fair Trade products, which ensure that slave labor was not used in the production process. [http://www.stopenslavement.org/jan\\_11/going\\_up\\_river.pdf](http://www.stopenslavement.org/jan_11/going_up_river.pdf) , <http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/fairtrade/cocoa/>
- Sponsor a fund-raiser with proceeds given to an organization assisting human trafficking survivors. CAST LA- <http://www.castla.org/> ; Polaris Project- <http://www.polarisproject.org/> ; Not for Sale- <http://www.notforsalecampaign.org/>
- Encourage parishioners to learn more <http://www.stopenslavement.org/index.html>
- Other responses...

We want to know what is safe and healthy not only for our families, but for the many people who touch our lives through their labors. Their very lives are on the line!! How might I become involved in stopping human trafficking?

## Suggested Talking Points:

- Globally 27 million people are enslaved. That number is equivalent to the entire population of our neighbor, Canada.
- Today the US government estimates that 20,000 people are trafficked annually into the US through deception, fraud and coercion. These people are promised good-paying jobs, but are then held against their will or are forced to work for little or no pay.
- Those enslaved in the USA can be working in many venues. Slaves can be found in sweatshops (clothing manufacturing), in commercial agriculture settings (fields, processing plants, canneries), in ordinary neighborhoods (maids, baby sitters), on construction sites, in restaurants and as custodial workers, or in the sex industry (under the disguise of massage parlors, escort services, adult bookstores, modeling studios and bars)
- A young girl may have been sold into a brothel in Asia to be resold every night, earning \$10,000 for her owner but only misery, abuse and illness for herself.
- Slaves may have made bricks that were used to build the factory that assembled the TV you watch.
- Child slaves may have picked the coffee beans that were roasted to supply your morning cup of coffee.
- A 7-year old Pakistani boy may have been one who spent 10-14 hours per day chained to a rug-weaving loom to help make the carpet in your home.
- Every year at least 1.2 million youngsters under 18 years of age are sold into some form of slave labor. There are 211 million child-laborers, between the ages of 5 and 14. Of these, 171 million work on risky conditions. About 120 million children work full time.

*(Fides, the News Agency for the Vatican Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Jan. 2006.)*

Adapted from:

**Human Trafficking: Modern Day Slavery**

**A Parish Resource Packet to bring about God's intent for our world through awareness raising and action.**

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