



Prayer for human
service for
trafficking
January 11, 2010 day

Opening Song

Leader As we gather to mark Human Trafficking Awareness day, let us begin by observing a moment of silence in solidarity with the more than 27 million women, men and children who suffer each day from this modern form of slavery.

[Moment of silence]

Reader 1 Again I considered all the oppressions that take place under the sun; the tears of the victims with none to comfort them! From the hand of their oppressors comes violence, and there is none to comfort them.

— *Ecclesiastes 4:1*

Leader We join our tears with the victims of human trafficking. Let us now listen to the voices of human trafficking survivors, as they tell us their stories in their own words.

Reader 2 “I can’t describe to you the feeling of terror. No child should ever have to know that kind of fear. I didn’t know what I was going to have to endure that night, for how long, or if I was ever going to come back home.”

— *Theresa, survivor of child sex trafficking in the United States*

Reader 1 “I am not the same person who left this village two years ago. My body came back but my soul is somewhere else. Everyone who comes to see me stares at me because I am dirty now. I am filthy inside and my soul is empty. I don’t know if I can live this way.”

— *Lena, survivor of child sex trafficking in China*

Reader 2 “Life was difficult at home in Nigeria, and when I was offered a job in Italy, I went, knowing I would have to repay the travel costs to the woman who made the job offer. When I got to Italy, I was told that foreigners without permits can only do one job — work the streets as a prostitute. They told me I had to repay a debt of \$20,000. I did not resist because the week before, they killed a girl who slept in my room because she refused to pay.”

— *Isoke, Nigerian survivor of sex trafficking in Italy*

Reader 1 “You had to do what they said, or they would kill you. They treated us like animals.”

— *Miguel, Mexican victim of agricultural trafficking*

Leader Let us pause to reflect on their stories.

[Brief pause.]

Together, we pray:

All God of freedom and love, we are saddened by the stories of Theresa, Lena, Isoke and Miguel, but we are inspired by their strength. Give comfort to the survivors of human trafficking and freedom to those still held captive by modern-day slavery.



Reader 2 Jesus returned to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. Entering the synagogue on the Sabbath, as was his habit, Jesus stood up to do the reading. When the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him, he unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:

The Spirit of our God is upon me:
because the Most High has anointed me
to bring Good News to those who are poor.
God has sent me to proclaim liberty to
those held captive,
recovery of sight to those who are blind,
and release to those in prison —
to proclaim the year of our God's favor.

Rolling up the scroll, Jesus gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he said to them, "Today, in your hearing, this scripture passage is fulfilled."

— *Luke 4:16-21*

Leader When we become aware of the reality of human trafficking, we can easily feel overwhelmed. But the words of Jesus and the promise of liberation offer us hope. And so, in a spirit of hope, we pray for an end to modern-day slavery.

Reader 1 For the estimated 27 million women, men and children currently held in slavery-like conditions. May human dignity be restored to those who have been bought, sold or kidnapped for the monetary benefit of others.

Response: **We pray for a hopeful tomorrow.**

Reader 2 For those in bonded labor, in agricultural fields, mines and factories, who have been reduced to tools of production, or commodities rather than human beings. (*Response*)

- Reader 1** For those forced to become soldiers, made into tools of violence. In particular we pray for child soldiers throughout the world. *(Response)*
- Reader 2** For children exploited and objectified in the commercial sex industry, that they may be free to play, learn and grow up in safety. *(Response)*
- Reader 1** For those who cannot return home due to the stigma of prostitution, disease or shame, that they may receive the solace, healing and support they need. *(Response)*
- Reader 2** For women, who are estimated to make up 80 percent of human trafficking victims, and for changes in societal attitudes that deny the equality and dignity of women. *(Response)*
- Reader 1** For victims of trafficking in our own community — in domestic servitude, in local businesses, in forced prostitution. May we have eyes to see and the ability to take steps to make our community slave-free. *(Response)*
- Reader 2** For the success of efforts to stop the demand for human trafficking, especially in the commercial sex industry that turns women and children into commodities. May we as consumers support fairly traded products and stop the demand for cheap products at any cost. *(Response)*
- All** God of hope, guide our actions as we strive to make this dream for a hopeful tomorrow a reality. Help us to end human trafficking in our lifetimes.

Leader Let us end our time together by taking a few moments to quietly reflect on this question:

What hopes and dreams are stirring
in your heart and mind about the
issue of human trafficking?

Leader *[If a small group is gathered]:*
I invite you to share one hope or dream stirring in
your heart.

[If a large group is gathered]:
I invite you to turn to the person next to you and
share one hope or dream that is stirring in your
heart.

Leader *[After sharing is completed]:*
Let us say our closing prayer together.

All God of all peoples, awaken our hearts and deepen
our commitment to work for a world where every
person is free and able to live his or her life fully
and joyfully. We ask for conversion of heart for
traffickers and for strong laws that protect victims.
Help us to grow in the awareness that we are all
connected. Give us wisdom, inspiration and
courage to stand in solidarity, so that together we
will share the freedom that is your gift to all your
people. Amen.

Closing Song

This prayer service was prepared by the Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center in Seattle, Washington, and adapted for our use by the Congregation Justice Committee.

Survivor testimonies excerpted from www.polarisproject.org, www.castla.org, Trafficking in Women and Children Information and Workshop Kit from the Union of International Superiors General, and Africa Renewal magazine, vol. 23, no.3.

Scripture passage (Luke 4:16-21) from The Inclusive New Testament, Priests for Equality, 1994.





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