

**World Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking
Prayer Service
February 8, 2021**



Words of Welcome

Opening Song *Christ, Be Our Light*, Bernadette Farrell

*Longing for light, we wait in darkness
Longing for truth, we turn to You.
Make us Your own, Your holy people
Light for the world to see.*

*Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in Your church gathered today.*

Opening Reflection and Prayer

God of Justice,
Christ of Peace,
You are light for the world,
The darkness is as light to you, O Lord.

Today we pray for the men, women, and children hidden in the darkness of slavery.
No person in any corner of the world is hidden from your sight.
The darkness is as light to you, O Lord.

Help us shine your light into the places where your children are enslaved,
Help us shine your light into homes, streets, factories, brothels,
Into our own neighborhoods and across the world.
The darkness is as light, to you, O Lord.
Help us shine your light

Sacred Stories

Leader Each person forced into modern-day slavery has a unique story – one of struggle, courage, resilience, and dreams of freedom. Let us listen now to some of these stories -

Reader 1 In the United States, there are thousands of children estimated to be victims of sex trafficking. Traffickers are not just strangers, but often close family members or friends who abuse their power or trusted relationship. The average age of a child trafficking victim is 13 years old.

This is Helen's story, "When I was a little girl, everyone always asked me why I looked so sad, but I couldn't tell them. A family member began trafficking me when I was only seven years old. I felt so alone and scared and didn't know who I could trust or turn to. My life was a living hell."

Reader 2 Forced labor is the type of enslavement used to produce many products in our global supply chains. The fishing, textile, construction, mineral and agriculture industries are particularly laced with forced laborers. The desire to produce excessive profits is a motivating force behind the institution of human trafficking.

This is Somchai's story, "I am 40 years old, many of which were lived with my family in a shantytown in Thailand. I couldn't study because my parents were poor, I had no papers, and I suffered from schizophrenia. I earned my living by selling waste. When I had the opportunity to board a fishing boat, I accepted the offer. I was so tired of such poverty. I dreamt of traveling around the world. Unfortunately, I found myself in a worse situation than before: I ate very little and never rested. Even the promised payment never arrived. After a few months, I was abandoned on an island in Indonesia. I didn't understand their language. I suffered a lot..."

Reader 1 A neighbor woman who lived close to Helen suspected something was wrong. One day, she slipped Helen a piece of paper with her telephone number. Each week Helen took out the trash and watered the lawn, and her neighbor was always waiting there in her car. One day Helen dropped the hose and ran to her neighbor's car to escape. Helen reflected, "She changed my whole life."

Reader 2 Somchai tried to escape and, with the help of two church organizations, managed to regain his freedom and return to Thailand. The organizations helped him obtain the documents he never had and followed his case, allowing him to obtain compensation for damages and to build a new house, where he still lives with his parents. He resumed his old job and now manages to live with dignity, despite his illness.

Leader Each face can be met, caressed, listened to. Let us see in each face, the eyes of Christ looking back at us. Together it is possible to break the chains of human trafficking when we commit to accompanying our brothers and sisters. Together let us prayerfully commit to action and accompaniment.

Commitment to Action

Reader 3 It is said, it is better to light a single candle than to curse the darkness. Each of us are called to be reflections of God's light, to be mirrors reflecting God's love, peace, justice and freedom into the world around us. Somchai and Helen's stories remind us that everyday people, you and I, can be that light for victims of human trafficking.

Reader 4 Right now, we invite you to spend a few moments in reflection and prayer. What can YOU do to be God's living voice and light in the fight against trafficking?

Reader 3 Take out the pen and paper we asked you to have nearby, and we ask that you write down and commit to one act going forward to combat human trafficking and accompany victims in your neighborhoods and communities.

Reader 4 Simple yet powerful acts make the difference. Maybe it will be weekly prayer, joining an anti-trafficking ministry at your parish, volunteering at a local agency that supports survivors, and learning more about how trafficking impacts your community, purchasing fair trade products. What can you do where you are now to be a light to people in darkness?

Instrumental music

Reader 4 Christ tells us what we do for others in this world, we do for Him.

Reader 3 God touch our hearts and energize ongoing efforts so that every victim is freed and every survivor's life renewed. Amen.

Intercessions

Leader God of hope and peace, you blessed St. Josephine Bakhita of Sudan with compassion for others. May her prayers comfort and strengthen the women, men, and children searching for freedom. We ask for the intercession of St. Josephine as we pray.

Our Response will be: God of hope, set us free.

Reader A 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, God of hope, set us free.*

Reader B For women trafficked by their spouses, romantic partners, parents, or family members. *We pray to the Lord, God of hope, set us free.*

Reader C For migrant workers who live and work in isolated conditions and are forbidden to leave their place of employment. *We pray to the Lord, God of hope, set us free.*

Reader D For adults and children coerced and forced into providing images and videos for the pornography industry. *We pray to the Lord, God of hope, set us free.*

Reader D 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, God of hope, set us free.*

Reader E For perpetrators of human trafficking, that they repent of their evil ways and turn to God for forgiveness. *We pray to the Lord, God of hope, set us free.*

Closing Reflection and Prayer

Leader Thank you for joining us today as we pray for and remember victims and survivors of human trafficking. We invite you to make the commitment you made public today by sharing it with the world. Post it on social media and invite others to join you and make their own commitment. Snap a photo of what you wrote and post it with the hashtag #Bakhita. Together we can be light for the world, light for the people in darkness.

Please pray with me as we conclude.

**God of all peoples,
Awaken our hearts and deepen our commitment to work for a world
where all are free and able to live lives full of hope and joy.
Please help us grow in awareness that you are present in each
person and that we are intimately connected to all involved in human
trafficking
God of hope and freedom inspire us in our work to end human
trafficking, starting within our own communities. Amen.**

Closing Song *Christ, Be Our Light*, Bernadette Farrell

*Longing for peace, our world is troubled
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has pow'r to save us.
Make us your living voice.*

*Christ be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in Your church gathered today.*