Stolen Lives: A Gospel Response to Human Trafficking

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives... to let the oppressed go free...” (Luke 4:18-19)

Office for Catholic Social Justice Ministry Of the Archdiocese of Hartford
The Catholic Church's strong opposition to human trafficking is rooted in principles of Catholic social teaching— the sacredness and dignity of human life.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church "forbids acts or enterprises that, for any reason, lead to the enslavement of human beings – to their being bought, sold, and exchanged like merchandise, in disregard for their personal dignity."
Catholic Teaching on Human Trafficking

“The trade in human persons constitutes a shocking offense against human dignity and a grave violation of fundamental human rights... Such situations are an affront to fundamental values which are shared by all cultures and peoples, values rooted in the very nature of the human person. The alarming increase in the trade in human beings is one of the pressing political, social, and economic problems associated with the process of globalization; it presents a serious threat to the security of individual nations and a question of international justice which cannot be deferred.”

Catholic Teaching on Human Trafficking

“Human trafficking is a horrific crime against the basic dignity and rights of the human person. All efforts must be expended to end it.”

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Migration's Statement On Human Trafficking, 2007

www.catholicsocialjustice.org
Catholic Teaching on Human Trafficking

“I have always been distressed at the lot of those who are victims of various kinds of human trafficking. How I wish that all of us would hear God’s cry: “Where is your brother?” (Gen 4:9). Where is your brother or sister who is enslaved? Where is the brother and sister whom you are killing each day in clandestine warehouses, in rings of prostitution, in children used for begging, in exploiting undocumented labor? Let us not look the other way. There is greater complicity than we think. The issue involves everyone! This infamous network of crime is now well established in our cities, and many people have blood on their hands as a result of their comfortable and silent complicity.” – Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium, November 2013
“Together we can and must employ our energies so that these women, men and children can be freed, thus putting an end to this horrible trade... Responsibility is required towards those who have fallen victim to trafficking in order to protect their rights, to guarantee their safety and that of their families, and to prevent the corrupt and criminals from escaping justice and having the last word over the lives of others.”

Pope Francis, December 12, 2013 in his address to new ambassadors to the Holy See
Catholic Relief Services

Root causes of trafficking and solutions are linked to other urgent humanitarian issues including:

• Fostering economic development
• Providing effective responses to emergencies
• Promoting greater protections for women, children and vulnerable groups
• Protecting refugees and migrants
• Addressing root causes of migration

www.crs.org/globalpoverty
“It is good for people to realize that purchasing is always a moral – and not simply economic – act. Hence the consumer has a specific social responsibility, which goes hand-in-hand with the social responsibility of the enterprise.” - Pope Benedict XVI (Caritas in Veritate)
Buy Ethically Made Products

- Visit Catholic Relief Services Fair Trade for more resources [www.crsfairtrade.org](http://www.crsfairtrade.org)
- Look for items labeled “fair trade” especially on products like coffee, tea, sugar, chocolate, and cotton
- Read the Department of Labor reports on goods made by child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking: [http://www.dol.gov/ilab/media/reports/iclp/main.htm](http://www.dol.gov/ilab/media/reports/iclp/main.htm)
Be a Responsible Employer and Business Owner

- Know the origins of the goods you sell, especially how they are manufactured or harvested.
- Ensure that all workers and contractors are treated fairly.
- Partner with a local anti-trafficking organization to offer employment to survivors of trafficking who are trying to rebuild their lives.
- Learn about your responsibilities as an employer. Visit www.dol.gov/whd.
Become a Shepherd

- Make a personal commitment to combating this evil.
- Visit [www.usccb.org/stopslavery](http://www.usccb.org/stopslavery) to learn more about human trafficking.
- Lead a gathering or pray on your own.
- Host a workshop and tell others.
- Be an ethical consumer and employer.
- Report trafficking if you suspect it.
- Support the work of the USCCB’s Anti-Trafficking Program [http://www.usccb.org/about/human-trafficking/usccb-response.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/about/human-trafficking/usccb-response.cfm)
January 11: National Human Trafficking Awareness Day (U.S. Gov.)

January: National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention month (U.S. Gov.)

February 8: International Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking (USCCB)

July 30: World Day Against Trafficking in Persons (U.N.)

How will you respond?

We know that God will ask each of us: What did you do for your brother? (cf. Gen 4:9–10). The globalization of indifference, which today burdens the lives of so many of our brothers and sisters, requires all of us to forge a new worldwide solidarity and fraternity capable of giving them new hope and helping them to advance with courage amid the problems of our time and the new horizons which they disclose and which God places in our hands.

Pope Francis, World Day of Peace, January 2015