



# Eyes Wide Open: Modern-Day Slavery in Our Communities

## CALL TO PRAYER

**Leader:** We come together to observe International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking on February 8th. Let us begin with a moment of silence. We bring to our prayer circle all those who are being beaten, starved, violated, sold, or exploited at this very moment.

**Reader 1:** Merciful God, open our eyes to see the role that we each play in creating a world where everyone has a right to human dignity. We are mindful that so many of our migrant and refugee sisters and brothers are at risk of becoming modern-day slaves. Pope Francis wrote, "...we need to make a good examination of conscience: how many times have we permitted a human being to be seen as an object, to be put on show in order to sell a product, or to satisfy an immoral desire? The human person ought never to be sold or bought as if he or she were a commodity. Whoever uses human persons in this way and exploits them, even if indirectly, becomes an accomplice of this injustice."<sup>1</sup> His words, not only challenge us to see the very existence of human trafficking in our communities, but also to ask ourselves, "How have we benefited from those who are exploited, directly or indirectly?" Forgive us, O God, for our role in contributing to this injustice.

**Reader 2:** We pray for all those African refugees who travel to Libya hoping to get to Europe but who are often held and sold in Libyan slave markets for as little as \$400.<sup>2</sup>

**All:** O God, open our eyes to see the existence of modern-day slavery in our communities and help us to recognize the ways that we contribute to the exploitation of others.

**Reader 3:** We pray for vulnerable women and girls who are routinely forced into prostitution through social media, false promises, coercion, fraud, and threat which often lead to a nightmare of sexual slavery.

**All:** O God, open our eyes to see the existence of modern-day slavery in our communities and help us to recognize the ways that we contribute to the exploitation of others.

**Reader 4:** We pray for the terrified men and women who are taken to undisclosed clinics throughout Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and the Americas, and forced to become unwilling participants in the global phenomenon of organ trafficking."<sup>3</sup>

**All:** O God, open our eyes to see the existence of modern-day slavery in our communities and help us to recognize the ways that we contribute to the exploitation of others.



“Modern-day slavery is widespread around the world  
and Libya is by no means unique ...  
But what's particularly shocking  
is that this is happening effectively in the open, where people  
can go to a farmhouse, place a bid, and end up 'owning' a human being.”

— Leonard Doyle, International Organization for Migration

**Reader 5:** We pray for people living in impoverished conditions, who out of a need to feed their families or pressure to pay off debts incurred, agree to sell their organs to those engaged in “transplant tourism.” In this form of organ trafficking, individuals travel to a country such as Pakistan, China, or India, and pay for an organ transplant in cash. Individuals selling their organs are usually paid very little and receive inadequate medical care, and in some cases have died due to infections.<sup>4</sup>

**All:** O God, open our eyes to see the existence of modern-day slavery in our communities and help us to recognize the ways that we contribute to the exploitation of others.

**Reader 6:** We pray for the hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children who are victims of debt bondage across our world. To pay off their debts, many are forced to work in brick kilns, agriculture, garment industries, fishing vessels, and brothels—often suffering extreme exploitation and abuse. These individuals are regularly tricked into working for little or no pay. Most, if not all, of their earnings go to pay off their loan. The value of their work invariably becomes greater than the original sum of money borrowed.<sup>5</sup>

**All:** O God, open our eyes to see the existence of modern-day slavery in our communities and help us to recognize the ways that we contribute to the exploitation of others.

**Reader 7:** We pray for those who are lured into coming to our home countries with promises of a well-paying job and a green card—only to be forced into involuntary servitude.

**All:** O God, open our eyes to see the existence of modern-day slavery in our communities and help us to recognize the ways that we contribute to the exploitation of others.

**Reader 8:** We pray for all those engaged in any form of modern-day slavery. May traffickers and their clientele see and be held accountable for the perennial harm they inflict on each person they exploit.

**All:** O God, open our eyes to see the existence of modern-day slavery in our communities and help us to recognize the ways that we contribute to the exploitation of others.

**Reader 9:** We pray for governments and world leaders that they will do their part to protect and provide care for victims of modern-day slavery—slavery that is often tied to the drug and arms trade and organized crime.

**All:** O God, open our eyes to see the existence of modern-day slavery in our communities and help us to recognize the ways that we contribute to the exploitation of others.



## CLOSING PRAYER

**Leader:** Merciful God, each and every day you remind us  
That slavery has no place in our world.

Bring comfort and healing to those suffering  
At the hands of human traffickers, and all those  
Who bear the scars of modern-day slavery.

Guide us in our work to end this growing crime  
That threatens not only individuals  
And the very fabric of family life,  
But also the basic values of society.

Teach us to tear down our walls of fear and indifference  
That prevent us from seeing the silent victims  
Of modern-day slavery living anonymously in our communities.

Help us to be aware of our surroundings  
And to remain vigilant of all who prey upon the innocent.

Grant us the courage to be your defenders of human dignity  
And to show compassion to the suffering flesh  
Of your Son, revealed in the faces of the exploited.

With each sunrise and each sunset, may we commit  
To rejecting any part of this injustice. Amen.




---

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> "Pope's quotes: Human trafficking." *National Catholic Reporter*, May 28, 2014, <http://bit.ly/2Fp7Flu>.

<sup>2</sup> "Slave trade in Libya: Outrage across Africa," *DW Akademie*, <http://bit.ly/2BfwsX1>.

<sup>3</sup> Asif Efrat, "Organ traffickers lock up people to harvest their kidneys. Here are the politics behind the organ trade," *The Washington Post*, <http://wapo.st/2ANBXuv>.

<sup>4</sup> "One doctor's war against global organ trafficking," *PBS*, May 29, 2017, <http://to.pbs.org/2DgUCSv>.

<sup>5</sup> "Debt bondage in the world: an underestimated and forgotten scourge," *Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women*, <http://bit.ly/2mizumv>.