

# They Are Just Children! Not Slaves!

February 8, 2017  
**World Day of Prayer and Awareness  
Against Trafficking in Persons**



**Opening Song** "Prayer of the Children" by Inside Out  
at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-J7DaQwiu8c> (*Lyrics on last page*)

## Our Call and Challenge

On Dec. 2, 2014 Pope Francis and several of the world's leading religious leaders joined together in a pledge to end human slavery by 2020, focusing on the tens of millions of people "in chains" due to human trafficking and forced labor.

"The physical, economic, sexual and psychological exploitation of men and women, boys and girls, is chaining tens of millions of persons to inhumanity and humiliation," the pope said and signed the pledge to do "all in our power, within our faith communities and beyond" to end modern slavery by 2020.  
(<http://www.christianpost.com/news/end-human-slavery-by-2020-pope-francis-world-religious-leaders-commit-to-freeing-millions-of-people-in-chains-130589/#HcJKRtDge8sEWZjM.99>)

The Bible has a record of child trafficking! **We remember** that Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers; a young woman called Hagar was exploited for both labor and sex according to custom of the times. The story of young people being exploited is an old story. Media has alerted us to the trafficking of children as it happens now. How are we called to respond to the exploitation of children?



**Listen** to the sounds of children playing and laughing  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XkgVtktHlZ8>

**Scripture** Little children and Jesus  
People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who

will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them. (Mark 10:13-16)

**Pause** Imagine Jesus taking trafficked children in his arms. Picture children of different origins and ethnicities. Tune into the heart of Christ as he gazes upon the children.

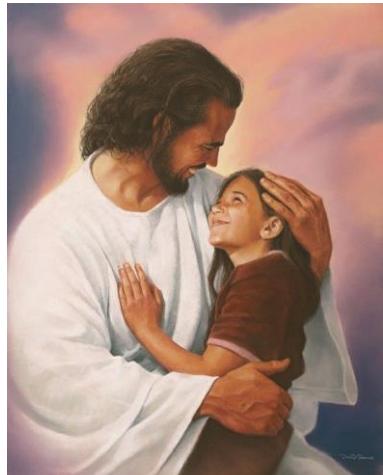
**All Respond** Jesus, give us the insight and the strategies to free children to be embraced in love and freedom.

**Reading** When the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he [Jesus] did and the children shouting in the temple courts, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant. "Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him. "Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read, "from the lips of children and infants you have called forth your praise'?" (Mt. 21:15-16)

**Pause and Remember** When has a young person taught you something? How do you encourage them to speak up and use their voices? Share.

**All Respond** Forgive us for the times we have hushed children or dampened their enthusiasm. May we be your instruments as we empower youth and encourage them to use their voices.

**Reading** He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. "If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. (Matthew 18:2-6)



**Pause and Remember** What are the millstones in our country and our world that strangle and drown out the trust of children? Share.

**Face the Facts:** After each fact is read we respond: ***Christ have mercy.***

The global number of children in child labor is estimated at 168 million. More than half of them, 85 million, are in hazardous work. **Response**

100.000 children in the U.S. are sexually exploited through trafficking. **Response**

31 million girls in the world are NOT enrolled in primary education. **Response**

Every child, boys and girls alike, are included in the Sustainable Development Goals. **Response**

Agriculture remains by far the most important sector where child laborers can be found. **Response**

(<http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/child-labour/lang--en/index.htm>)

Watch the film about Child Labor in the U.S. on Tobacco farms (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-8TBcea05Q>)  
(9 minutes)



The US has *not* ratified the ***The Convention on the Rights of the Child***, the most rapidly and widely ratified international human rights treaty in history.

The U.S. is falling behind on a number of children's rights indicators:

- Poverty: As of 2010, the U.S. ranked 30th out of 34 OECD countries in terms of child poverty. 21.2% of children in the United States live in poverty. The average for OECD countries is 13.3%. Only Chile, Turkey, Mexico and Israel had higher child poverty rates.
- Maternal Leave: The U.S. is the only high-income country not to grant paid maternity leave.
- Criminal Justice: The U.S. is also the one country in the world that sentences offenders under the age of 18 to life in prison without parole, which the Convention opposes.

([https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/wp/2014/11/21/why-wont-the-u-s-ratify-the-u-n-s-child-rights-treaty/?utm\\_term=.b06efa094404](https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/wp/2014/11/21/why-wont-the-u-s-ratify-the-u-n-s-child-rights-treaty/?utm_term=.b06efa094404))

**Pause and Reflect** What can you do in this next 3 years to actively make a difference in the life of children? Share with those around you. How does what you have heard prevent human trafficking?

**Action** Use Hashtags on your social media. #kidsTheyAreNotSlaves

**Closing Prayer** On this International Day of Prayer we remember St. Josephine Bakhita who was sold as a child. We pray that her story and her resilience be a model for all who struggle to be free. We pray that Jesus' sense of the wisdom of children may be ours. We pray that Jesus' invitation to let the little children free to come to him is fulfilled in us. In each and every effort we pray to honor the dignity and value of each child. Amen!

## Lyrics for Opening Song     "Prayer of the Children"

Can you hear the prayer of the children?  
On bended knee, in the shadow of an  
unknown room  
Empty eyes with no more tears to cry  
Turning heavenward toward the light

Crying Jesus, help me  
To see the morning light-of one more day  
But if I should die before I wake,  
I pray my soul to take

Can you feel the hearts of the children?  
Aching for home, for something of their  
very own  
Reaching hands, with nothing to hold on  
to,  
But hope for a better day a better day

Crying Jesus, help me  
To feel the love again in my own land

But if unknown roads lead away from  
home,  
Give me loving arms, away from harm

Can you hear the voice of the children?  
Softly pleading for silence in a shattered  
world?  
Angry guns preach a gospel full of hate,  
Blood of the innocent on their hands

Crying Jesus, help me  
To feel the sun again upon my face,  
For when darkness clears I know you're  
near,  
Bringing peace again

Dali cujete sve djecje molitive?  
(Croatian translation:  
'Can you hear all the children's prayers?'')  
Can you hear the prayer of the children?



For more materials for February 8<sup>th</sup>, please visit

<http://www.SistersAgainstTrafficking.org>  
and <http://www.talithakum.info/>

### Other Resources:

"A Trafficked Child Speaks Out" (less than 2 minutes)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j1sRy8RJBh8>

"Does Your Hotel Know?" (less than 2 minutes)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KlVVJ4seBA>

"Child Labor Trafficking"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mn8chUKrdsA>

"I'm 12 Years Old"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PNaF0k6QF9E>

"A World for Girls" <http://www.gems-girls.org>

*This prayer service is distributed by the U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking for all to use on February 8, 2017. When reproducing, please note USCSAHT as the source. We are grateful to Kathleen Bryant, RSC, Board member of USCSAHT, for creating this service.*

***Ending Slavery is Everyone's Work***