

**THE INTERNATIONAL DAY
OF PRAYER AND AWARENESS
AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING**



**XI International Day of Prayer and Awareness
Against Human Trafficking Vigil**

Date: February 8, 2025

Theme: *Ambassadors of Hope: Together Against Human Trafficking*

Welcome and Introduction:

Leader:

Dear friends, we gather in the spirit of pilgrimage, called together as Ambassadors of Hope. This year, in the light of Jubilee, we journey with hearts open to renewal, compassion, and solidarity, recognizing our shared commitment to justice.

Pilgrimage is a sacred path, where each step draws us closer to our mission. As pilgrims, we embody a journey of transformation; and in this Jubilee year, we embrace the call to restore justice, bring freedom to those bound by oppression, and stand with the most vulnerable. This year, we acknowledge the powerful connections between human trafficking, forced migration, and climate change. Many are driven from their homes by war and conflicts, drought, rising sea levels and fire, rain and snow storms. This increased vulnerability is placing people at greater risk of exploitation and trafficking.

Let us join hands and hearts across the globe as we set out on this pilgrimage of prayer and solidarity. Let us step forward together with those who endure such extreme loss and hardship and witness to hope, justice and freedom .¹



Symbolic Gesture: Steps of Solidarity

Leader:

Before us lies a path marked by footprints². Each footprint represents a step taken by countless survivors and by those who accompany them with love and determination. As we walk along this path, we are reminded of those who have been forced to journey under difficult circumstances due to trafficking, migration, and climate displacement.

¹ Image Pixaby Free download - Gerd Altmann

²**SETTING for prayer:** Suggestion to prepare the space for the prayer with cut out footprints along a path. You can add flowers, candles or whatever you wish but this is the setting for the prayer. A Leader and 6 readers are needed for the prayer.

In this pilgrimage, we commit to solidarity, walking with those whose lives have been uprooted and calling for justice, protection, and dignity for all. Each step is an act of prayer and a symbol of hope.

[Invite participants to walk along the path, moving toward a central lit candle, symbolizing the beacon of hope.]

Leader: Let us join in song [Hold on to Hope](#)³.

Stories from Each Continent: Witnesses of Resilience and Hope

Leader: As Ambassadors of Hope, we listen with the ears of our heart to honour the voices of survivors and advocates across the planet. Let us tune our hearts to hear their journey to survival – each, a sacred journey marked by desire for life, determination, resilience, and hope; by compassionate accompaniment and intelligent advocacy. We remember and are encouraged by the words of Jeremiah: “I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord. They are plans for peace and not disaster, plans to give you a future filled with hope.” (Jer 29:11)⁴

Story Sharing

Reader One – Oceania

Let us pause and be ready to honour the telling of this experience. An image representing the person is placed on the footprint centrepiece.

The story of Rani is shared:

Rani, is a 17-year-old student from a high school in Melbourne, Australia. When her parents informed her that they were taking her overseas to marry a man she had never met, Rani felt she had no choice but to comply and thought her fate was sealed.

An Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking of Humans (ACRATH) member visited her school and delivered a presentation where Rani learned that forced marriage is illegal in Australia and, that she had the right to choose her own husband. Empowered by this timely information, Rani realised she had an option she never knew existed and could act to shape her own future.



Leader: Let us pause in silence:

In our silence and using our imagination, we take the hands of those mentioned in the story and offer our love, gratitude and hope – we commit to ‘holds hands’ as we all journey towards justice and freedom for all.

⁵Let us pray together:

³ Hold on to Hope Kathy Sherman csj – used with permission

⁴ Jer 29: 11. [Bible Gateway](#)

⁵ Clipart.com – image purchased.

God of Life, we sing a song of gratitude for your grace and love which has overcome the darkness. Continue to bless us with hope and the resolve to never give up! Amen

Reader Two – Europe

Let us pause and be ready to honour the telling of this experience. An image representing the person is placed on the footprint centrepiece.

The story of Leyla is shared:

I am a mother of three, aged 10 to 14, and wife to a bus driver. We met at our local church here in Ireland, though both of us were born in Nigeria. Life seems idyllic now, but it hasn't always been this way. I was deceived into coming to Ireland with the promise of a better education. Instead, I was trafficked for sexual exploitation. For six months, I was held captive, repeatedly abused. My escape came when my captor carelessly left the keys within reach. After a long recovery journey, I rebuilt my life. I am now a healthcare assistant, striving for a better future for my family. Yet, I carry the scars. My body remembers the trauma. Still, I've gained a gift: the ability to recognize and support other trafficked women. I've survived, and I am now a helper and advocate for my sisters.

Leader: Let us pause in silence

In our silence and using our imagination, we take the hands of those mentioned in the story and offer our love, gratitude and hope – we commit to 'holds hands' as we all journey towards justice and freedom for all.



Let us pray together

God of Life, we sing a song of gratitude for your grace and love which has overcome the darkness. Continue to bless us with hope and the resolve to never give up! Amen

Reader Three – North America

Let us pause and be ready to honour the telling of this experience. An image representing the person is placed on the footprint centrepiece.

The story of Aisha is shared:

Aisha, a woman from North Africa, left her family to work as a maid in the Middle East, hoping to send money to her family and her daughter, whom she raised alone after her husband's abandonment. Working for a wealthy family, she endured long hours of work without receiving a salary. She faced endless hours of work, mistreatment from the children, and constant reproaches from the parents.

When her employer's family flew in their private jet to Los Angeles, she seized the opportunity to escape and sought help from the police. After a year in a center run by nuns, she improved her English, learned to drive, and found a stable job. She eventually obtained a green card and brought her daughter to the United States after eight years of separation.

Aisha became an American citizen, working hard to make ends meet. She is grateful to the nuns who supported her and continues to build a new life while staying connected to her family and friends, both Muslim and Christian.

Leader: Let us pause in silence

In our silence and using our imagination, we take the hands of those mentioned in the story and offer our love, gratitude and hope – we commit to ‘holds hands’ as we all journey towards justice and freedom for all.



Let us pray together

God of Life, we sing a song of gratitude for your grace and love which has overcome the darkness. Continue to bless us with hope and the resolve to never give up! Amen

Reader Four – Asia

Let us pause and be ready to honour the telling of this experience. An image representing the person is placed on the footprint centrepiece.

The story of Malyn is shared.

Malyn was a survivor of labor trafficking. She was badly disfigured due to physical abuse and torture. She lost confidence in herself and stayed away from people around her. With time, patience, and encouragement, Malyn began to come out of her shell. She started to interact and make friends. One day, I asked her whether she would like to help other women by allowing me to share her story. She gave an adamant “yes!” with a big smile. This smile of hope lighted up her face. Since then, she had plucked up her courage and touched other lives by advocating for justice.

Leader: Let us pause in silence

In our silence and using our imagination, we take the hands of those mentioned in the story and offer our love, gratitude and hope – we commit to ‘holds hands’ as we all journey towards justice and freedom for all.

Let us pray together

God of Life, we sing a song of gratitude for your grace and love which has overcome the darkness. Continue to bless us with hope and the resolve to never give up! Amen



Reader Five – Africa

Let us pause and be ready to honour the telling of this experience. An image representing the person is placed on the footprint centrepiece.

The story of Samira is shared:

My name is Samira, and this is my story.

I became a mother at a very young age and was left alone to care for my baby. Desperate to give my daughter a better future, I made the difficult decision to embark on a perilous journey to Tunisia. Like many women on the boat, I carried my newborn in my arms, trusting that our children would bring us protection and blessings.

When we arrived, we were met with aid and care. It wasn't easy, but we were no longer alone. In Tunisia, I found support from the Talitha Kum sisters and brothers, who helped me rebuild my life. They trained me to work in agriculture, and I started a small goat and sheep business.

Today, I am happily married with two children. I'm forever grateful to Talitha Kum for helping me start anew with dignity and hope.



Leader: Let us pause in silence

In our silence and using our imagination, we take the hands of those mentioned in the story and offer our love, gratitude and hope – we commit to 'hold hands' as we all journey towards justice and freedom for all.

Let us pray together

God of Life, we sing a song of gratitude for your grace and love which has overcome the darkness. Continue to bless us with hope and the resolve to never give up! Amen

Reader 6 – South America

Let us pause and be ready to honour the telling of this experience. An image representing the person is placed on the footprint centrepiece.

A story of Maria is shared:

I am a mother and a survivor of human trafficking. Twenty years ago, I was blessed to meet the sisters who helped me find my salvation. It was a long and difficult road because changing is painful and hurts a lot, and to get away from situations of prostitution, drugs and violence is almost impossible to achieve alone.

However, everything changed when I was met with words of encouragement, eyes of compassion and caring gestures which allowed me to find and believe in Jesus. He gave me the ability to believe in myself, to love my life and to be grateful for the opportunity I have to still be alive. These were the seeds of hope, which continue to bear fruit.

Today I am a woman who strives and fights for the rights of all women, for those who have no voice and for those who are no longer with us. To them I always say: Never lose hope and ask Jesus, "Father, please never allow me to go back."

Leader: Let us pause in silence

In our silence and using our imagination, we take the hands of those mentioned in the story and offer our love, gratitude and hope – we commit to ‘holds hands’ as we all journey towards justice and freedom for all.

Let us pray together:

God of Life, we sing a song of gratitude for your grace and love which has overcome the darkness. Continue to bless us with hope and the resolve to never give up! Amen



Prayer of Pilgrimage and Jubilee

Leader: Together, we pray as pilgrims walking in the spirit of Jubilee, united in our hope for freedom and peace.

All: God of Mercy and Justice, as we walk this path, we remember that each step brings us closer to You and to our call to be Ambassadors of Hope. In this Jubilee, we lift up those impacted by trafficking, migration, and climate instability. We pray for freedom for the oppressed, courage for the journey, and healing for all who have suffered.

Guide our steps to be ones of compassion, courage, and steadfast purpose. May our lives reflect a Jubilee spirit that restores, renews, and honours the dignity of all. We journey together, united in faith, and ask for Your guidance and grace to be with us each step of the way. Amen.

Symbolic Gesture: Steps of Commitment

Leader: Each person is now invited to make a commitment—a step forward in solidarity. This step can be symbolic, perhaps by writing a short prayer, message, or action pledge on a small footprint cut-out, or simply place a small stone on the path. These steps, when placed together, will create a communal path, a trail that represents our unified commitment to justice and healing.

As we walk along this path, we remember that pilgrimage is more than a journey—it is a sacred commitment to transformation. Each step we take is an act of compassion, echoing God’s call to walk alongside the oppressed, the vulnerable, and the displaced. Each footprint we follow symbolizes a step toward justice, dignity, and hope.

[Allow time for participants to write and place their “footprints” along a designated path or wall.]

Prayer for the Journey of Creation and Community Resilience

Leader: Let us pray together

O Creator of Life, we walk as pilgrims in a world marked by migration and change. We ask for resilience and wisdom as we navigate the crises of climate and displacement. Make us protectors of the earth and of each other. May our pilgrimage inspire us to advocate for justice and to foster communities where every person can live in freedom and safety.

We pray that each step taken brings us closer to a world of peace, hope, and restoration. Together, may we journey with open hearts, strengthened by faith, compassion, and love. Amen.

Reflection Questions on Pilgrimage, Justice, and Jubilee

As we reflect, let us consider our roles as pilgrims on this journey of hope and renewal:

As we reflect, let us ask ourselves:

- How can we walk with those who suffer, bringing hope and advocacy to our communities?
- What actions can we take to address the intertwined challenges of trafficking, climate injustice, and forced migration?
- How can we become true pilgrims of hope, making each step a testament to justice and solidarity?

In this Jubilee year, may we feel empowered to take steps that affirm the dignity of every human being and support the renewal of creation and community.

Closing Ritual: Lighting the Path Together

Leader: To conclude, we invite each person to light a small candle from the central flame. This flame represents our shared hope—a light that no darkness can overcome. Carry this light forward as a beacon of compassion, dedication, and strength. As pilgrims and Ambassadors of Hope, we dedicate ourselves to bringing freedom, peace, and justice to all.

Suggested Song: *We Are One in the Spirit* or another song that reflects unity and hope.

The Jubilee Prayer

Father in heaven,
may the *faith* you have given us
in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother,
and the flame of *charity* enkindled
in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,
reawaken in us the blessed *hope*
for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us
into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel.
May those seeds transform from within both humanity and the whole cosmos
in the sure expectation
of a new heaven and a new earth,
when, with the powers of Evil vanquished,
your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee
reawaken in us, *Pilgrims of Hope*,
a yearning for the treasures of heaven.
May that same grace spread
the joy and peace of our Redeemer
throughout the earth.
To you our God, eternally blessed,
be glory and praise for ever.
Amen

Final Blessing

Leader: May we walk as Pilgrims of Hope, carrying light into dark places, bringing freedom to the oppressed, and embodying justice for those in need. In this Jubilee journey, may each step we take testify to the worth, dignity, and beauty of all creation. May God's peace guide us, and may we be strengthened to continue on this pilgrimage, united in purpose and faith. Amen.

Hold On to Hope – © Sr. Kathy Sherman, CSJ⁶

Hold on to hope; you got to hold on to hope, 'cause hope will change the world, you know hope will see us through. Hold on to hope, you got to hold on to hope, 'Cause hope will change the world; you know hope is me and you.

When this world is getting you down and you feel you're losing hope; Just dig deep inside, wake up your soul and hope is a good place to start.

When you're tryin' hard to believe that peace will come in our day; You gotta believe, hang on to the dream and love will show us the way.

⁶ Used with permission. www.ministryofhearts.org