

human trafficking

WHAT EVERY CATHOLIC SHOULD KNOW ABOUT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery whereby traffickers use force, fraud, or coercion to exploit human beings for commercial sex, labor, and even organs. Conservative estimates suggest that 21 million women, men, and children are currently victims of human trafficking. These victims come from a wide range of social, racial and economic backgrounds, but poverty, civil unrest, and migration make persons particularly vulnerable to being trafficked. Traffickers employ ongoing control tactics, including physical and emotional abuse. These tactics leave victims feeling trapped and powerless, while the traffickers profit enormously from the repeated sale of the victim's body or labor.

What does our Catholic Faith Teach us about Human Trafficking?

Our Catholic faith teaches us that we are, each of us, a living image of God. We are called to recognize and protect this sacredness in all others--those near and far, those whom we know and don't know. The crime of trafficking, which is essentially the buying, selling, and exchanging of people like merchandise, and subsequently enslaving these victims, is therefore a grave violation of Church doctrine about human dignity and fundamental human rights.

The second case of labor trafficking brought under federal law happened here in New Hampshire.

In 2003 a Litchfield couple was convicted of the crime and sentenced to over five years in prison. The couple forced four workers from Jamaica to labor for their tree service while living in squalid, freezing conditions. They exerted control over the men by refusing to release their passports and legal travel documents and withholding promised wages.

Is Human Trafficking really something I should be concerned about here in New Hampshire?

Unfortunately, yes. Trafficking in persons happens not just in other parts of the world or country, but also in our state. The current drug epidemic in New Hampshire creates an advantageous climate for traffickers, who often use addiction as a form of control over their victims. On the national and international level, human trafficking is a vast web of organized crime in which victims have become lucrative commodities, like narcotics and firearms. The industries that are most frequently associated with this crime are agriculture, hospitality, construction, and domestic work. **Christ calls us to stand in solidarity with victims in our immediate communities and throughout the world.**

What is the Catholic Church doing to help?

The Church has been a first responder in the fight against modern slavery. Pope Francis has repeatedly condemned human trafficking, calling it a crime against humanity. He has united with faith leaders from around the world, forming the Global Freedom Network to end modern slavery. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), together with its national and international partners like Catholic Charities and Catholic Relief Services, have joined forces to create a network called the Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking (CCOHT). The Coalition has long been working to eliminate the scourge of human trafficking, raise awareness about its devastating impacts, and provide direct services to its survivors. On the local level, Catholic parishes, hospitals, and individuals have reached out to help victims of human trafficking and advocate for change.

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WHAT EVERY CATHOLIC CAN DO TO HELP

What can I do to help end this modern-day slavery?

Educate yourself and others. Become familiarized with organizations and agencies that can help by visiting catholicnh.org/humantrafficking. Raise awareness through educational outreach.

Prevent human trafficking by knowing the warning signs and reporting suspicious activity. Listed below are some red flags to help identify victims.

Advocate for state and federal legislation that protects victims of human trafficking.

Be an ethical consumer. Find out how your actions can contribute to or reduce the demand for human trafficking. Websites like www.slaveryfootprint.org and www.ecpatusa.org are good places to start.

Pray for the victims of trafficking, for the peace and strength of survivors, and for an end to this slavery. February 8th, the feast of Saint Josephine Bakhita, who was herself a survivor of slavery, has been designated as an annual day of prayer and awareness.

Prayer to St. Josephine Bakhita

St. Josephine Bakhita, you were sold into slavery as a child and endured untold hardship and suffering. Once liberated from your physical enslavement, you found true redemption in your encounter with Christ and his Church.

O St. Bakhita, assist all those who are trapped in a state of slavery; Intercede with God on their behalf so that they will be released from their chains of captivity. Those whom man enslaves, let God set free.

Provide comfort to survivors of slavery and let them look to you as an example of hope and faith. Help all survivors find healing from their wounds. We ask for your prayers and intercessions for those enslaved among us. Amen.

To Report Human Trafficking:

National Human Trafficking Resource Center
Provides confidential, non-governmental help.

CALL: 1-888-373-7888

TEXT: BeFree

What Are the Signs of Human Trafficking?

Listed below are a number of indicators that can help you identify potential victims. Remember that a single indicator does not necessarily point to exploitation or abuse. Never undertake independent investigation or confrontation; for your safety and that of the victim, contact a service provider or law enforcement agency.

Is the individual unable to come and go as he/she wishes?

Do high security measures like boarded up windows, security cameras, or bars on windows exist at the individual's work and/or living locations?

Was the individual recruited through false promises concerning the nature and conditions of his/her work?

Is the individual under 18 and providing commercial sex acts?

Does the individual show signs of physical, sexual, emotional, or mental abuse?

Is the individual not allowed or able to speak for him/herself?

Does the individual work excessively long and/or unusual hours?

Is the individual unpaid, paid very little, or paid only in tips?

Does the individual owe a large debt that he/she never seems to be able to pay off?

Is the individual without forms of formal identification, such as a passport or license?

To learn more about Human Trafficking visit:

www.catholicnh.org/trafficking