

# Let My People Go!

## A Prayer for National Human Trafficking Awareness Day: January 11, 2012



Opening Hymn: *We Are Called*

REFRAIN:

*We are called to act with justice,  
we are called to love tenderly,  
We are called to serve one another;  
to walk humbly with God.*

1. Come! Live in the light! Shine with the joy and love of the Lord!

*We are called to be light for the kingdom, to live in the freedom of the city of God!*

2. Come! Open your heart! Show your mercy to all those in fear!

*We are called to be hope for the hopeless, so all hatred and blindness will be no more!*

3. Come! Sing a new song! Sing of that great day when all will be one!

*God will reign, and we'll walk with each other as sisters and brothers united in love!*

**Leader:** One in spirit with all who seek justice, today we join our hearts and minds to pray for the children, women and men in our world who are enslaved by the evil of human trafficking. Let us pray.

Spirit of Freedom, open our ears to hear the cry of those enslaved in our world. Create in us hearts of compassion to respond with justice. Give us strong voices to proclaim the rights of all your people. Lead us to action that brings freedom to those caught in the slavery of human trafficking.

**All:** Amen

## **Reading #1:** What We Know - The Big Picture

**We know** that from 12 to 27 million people live in forced labor, bonded labor and sexual exploitation conditions worldwide. **We know** that 800,000 persons are trafficked across international borders each year. **We know** that 17,500 persons are trafficked and exploited in the commercial sex industry in the U.S. every year. **We know** that profits from human trafficking are estimated at 32 billion dollars a year. **We know...**

**Response:** With our God we sing: **Let my people go!**

Children: stolen from parents, sold by parents, sexually exploited, sold for the harvesting of organs **Let my people go!**

Workers: trapped by debt, forced to labor in fields, mines, food processing plants and factories **Let my people go!**

Women: captives for other's sexual wants, enslaved as domestic workers, laboring under bondage in factories, fields and sweatshops **Let my people go!**



Victims all: caught in a web of economic supply and demand, battered by physical, emotional, psychological, sexual and cultural debasement and abuse **Let my people go!**

*All other petitions from the group, using the same response.*

## **Reading #2:** What We Hear - A Personal Story

Katya, a student athlete in an Eastern European capital city, dreamed of learning English and visiting the United States. Her opportunity came in the form of a student visa program, through which international students can work temporarily in the United States. But when she got to America, rather than being taken to a job at a beach resort, the people who met her put her on a bus to Detroit, Michigan. They took her passport away, and forced her and other victims there to dance in strip clubs for the traffickers' profit. They controlled the girls' movement and travel, kept keys to the girls' apartment, and listened in on phone calls the girls made to their parents. After a year of enslavement, Katya and another victim of trafficking were able to reach federal authorities with the help of a patron of the strip club in whom they had confided. Due to their bravery, six other victims were identified and rescued.

Katya now has immigration status under the U.S. trafficking law. She works in a health club and hopes to finish her degree in kinesiology. The traffickers are in federal prison.

*Adapted from website of U.S. Dept. of State, "Victims' Stories" at: [www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2010/142751.htm](http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2010/142751.htm)*

**Reflection:** How does your heart respond? Your mind? Your will to act?  
Share your response with another.

### **Closing Prayer:**

God of endless love,  
ever caring, ever strong,  
always present, always just,  
you gave us Jesus, who showed  
us how to live and die and live.

Jesus, liberator,  
we join our voices with yours  
striving to free those  
caught in the bondage of human trafficking.  
As we live in your freedom as children of God,  
let us live not for ourselves,  
but rather for those most in need of your mercy.

Holy Spirit of Freedom,  
let your energy and light fill our world  
till all people are treated with dignity,  
justice and compassion.  
We pray this for all the world, as we sing:

**Let my people go!**



*--Northern California Coalition of Catholic Sisters to Stop Slavery*