

World Day Against Trafficking in Persons

July 30

Introduction: The UN theme this year is: “Use and abuse of technology”

This year’s theme focuses on the role of technology as a tool that can both enable and impede human trafficking. With the global expansion in the use of technology - intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift of our everyday life to online platforms -- the crime of human trafficking has conquered cyber space. The internet and digital platforms offer traffickers numerous tools to recruit, exploit, and control victims; organize their transport and accommodation; advertise victims and reach out to potential clients; communicate among perpetrators; and hide criminal proceeds – and all that with greater speed, cost-effectiveness and anonymity. Moreover, technology allows these criminals to operate internationally across jurisdictions and evade detection with greater ease. Traffickers use social media to identify, groom and recruit victims, including children; e-mails and messaging services are used for the moral coercion of the victims; and online platforms allow traffickers to widely advertise services provided by victims, including child photographical material. Crisis situations can also intensify this problem. Criminals profit from the chaos, desperation, and separation of people – particularly women and children - from support systems and family members. For people on the move, online resources can become a trap, especially when it comes to phony travel arrangements and fake job offers targeting vulnerable groups.

The Good News About Technology:

However, in the use of technology also lies great opportunity. Future success in eradicating human trafficking will depend on how law enforcement, the criminal justice systems and others can leverage technology in their responses, including by aiding investigations to shed light on the modus operandi of trafficking networks; enhancing prosecutions through digital evidence to alleviate the situation of victims in criminal proceedings; and providing support services to survivors. Prevention and awareness-raising activities on the safe use of the internet and social media could help mitigate the risk of people falling victim of trafficking online. Cooperation with the private sector is important to harness innovation and expertise for the development of sustainable technology-based solutions to support prevention and combatting of human trafficking.

Song: Choose a song/hymn from your culture expressing unity or how our actions affect the whole community. **OR Visual Reflection:** Christ has no online presence but yours

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oGAfgh4-A_U

Christ has no online presence but yours,
No blog, no Facebook page but yours,
Yours are the tweets
through which love touches this world,
Yours are the posts through which the Gospel is shared,
Yours are the updates through which hope is revealed.
Yours are the links that create relationships and networks.
Yours are the texts that communicate information,
seek help, express compassion.
Christ has no online presence but yours,
No blog, no Facebook page but yours.

- adapted from Meredith Gould and inspired by Teresa of Avila “Christ has no hands but yours”

We thank you, gracious God,
for creating us in your image and likeness,
with power and creativity and imagination.
We thank you for creation, this ever-expanding cosmos,
with its mysteries and unfolding beauty.
We thank you for our digital world,
where we can “google” bits of knowledge
and learning in nanoseconds;
we thank you for Facebook,
which connects us with friends and family,
receiving news from all across the globe;
we thank you for Twitter and for those who follow our tweets in truly interested and
loving ways;
we thank you for our cell phones that enable us to transcend personal and geographic
boundaries.
May we use this technology for the good of all,
for life and beauty, justice and blessing. Amen.

Psalm 72 adapted by Nan Merrill

Bring justice to the peoples, O Beloved, and your mercy to all generations! May the people
be known for mercy, rendering justice to the poor!
Let their spirits soar as the eagle, let joy abide in every heart! May we heed the cry of the
poor – the young and the old, helping to free all those in need, awakening the souls of
oppressors!

All: May our prayers rise up before You and blessings of love be freely rendered.

May we know oneness with You as long as the sun endures, as long as the stars shine,
throughout all generations! May we acknowledge You in the rain falling on the fields, like
showers that water the earth!

In our day may justice flourish, and peace abound, throughout all the nations! May the leaders
of nations from all the earth, listen to Love’s Voice; May they spend time in Silence before
they counsel!

All: May our prayers rise up before You and blessings of love be freely rendered.

May the leaders surrender to your Love, and the nations serve the Most High! For You heed
the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no friend.

You have compassion on the weak, the downtrodden, giving them strength and hope. From
injustice and oppression, You redeem their life; and precious are they in your Heart.

All: May our prayers rise up before You and blessings of love be freely rendered. Amen!

(From Nan Merrill – Psalm 72)

Loving God, we reflect together on the Internet and new technologies which have
transformed the landscape of human trafficking. We know that traffickers use social media
and other online tools to exploit vulnerable individuals, mostly children and young adults,
especially for sexual exploitation.

Today we want to transform this landscape

into one where technology authentically connects us
with one another by exploring our imagination,
by sharing our stories,
by recognizing the power of the technological word
to heal, to comfort, to act in solidarity.

We make this prayer in Jesus' name – he who is your Word, your icon, your face made visible in our world. Amen.

What do these 3 quotes tell us about how we are all deeply connected in the web of life?

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." - Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect." Chief Seattle

"A human being is part of the whole, called by us "universe," a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security." Einstein

Interaction: Feel free do share which quote caught your attention.

Response: "Hope has two beautiful daughters – their names are anger and courage; anger at the way things are; and courage to see that they do not remain the way they are." St. Augustine

Dear Lord, through the intercession of Venerable Mary Aikenhead, grant that there may be an end to human trafficking in Ireland and across the world.

As our beloved Foundress devoted her life to the service of the poor and needy, may we too be awake and alert to human suffering and do all in our power to end it. Give us faith to continue to be a voice for the voiceless, convinced that we can do all things in you who strengthen us. Amen

Intercessions Let us pray for all who are 21st century slaves – that "justice roll like a river," that chains may be broken and that dignity may be restored to all:

For the estimated 40 million women, men and children held in slavery-like conditions:
May chains be broken, dignity restored.

For those in bonded labor, in agricultural fields, in mines and factories who have been reduced to tools of production:

May chains be broken, dignity restored.

For young girls and women, who represent nearly 75% of all trafficked persons* - exploited and objectified in the commercial sex industry:

May chains be broken, dignity restored.

For those forced to become soldiers, especially children, who are made tools of violence:

May chains be broken, dignity restored.

For children, 27% of all victims of human trafficking*, who become prey to deception and exploitation, manipulated and seduced by internet traffickers:

May chains be broken, dignity restored.

For traffickers, that their hearts of stone may be transformed into hearts of flesh:

May chains be broken, dignity restored.

For persons of good will, that we may find ways to curb the “demand” which makes human persons market commodities:

May chains be broken, dignity restored.

**Statistics – UN Office of Drugs and Crime Report*

https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tip/2021/GLOTiP_2020_Chapter5.pdf

Closing Prayer: God, we didn’t see them. But You did. The hundreds and thousands of human beings trafficked each year to join the millions who are trapped in modern- day slavery. Under terrible conditions, they work in factories, plow fields, harvest crops, work quarries, fill brothels, clean homes, and haul water. Many are children with tiny fingers for weaving rugs and small shoulders for bearing rifles. Their labor is forced, their bodies beaten, their faces hidden from those who don’t really want to see them. But you see them all, God of the poor. You hear their cry and you answer by opening our eyes, and breaking our hearts and loosening our tongues to insist: No mas. No more. Amen Catholic Relief Services

Take Action! *“I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.” – Mother Teresa*

Make a ripple by signing a petition or sending a letter using these links:
<https://endsexualexploitation.org/google/> Scroll to the bottom to sign the petition in red section. Uncheck boxes so you don’t receive their updates or emails.

Sign this letter to Demand Metaverse (What’s App & Facebook) Prioritize safety
<https://endsexualexploitation.org/meta/> Scroll down to take action. Make sure you continue to “send letter”.