



Advent Week 3: Praying for Victims of Human Trafficking

By Sister Jeanne Christensen

Contemplation

When I think of Advent, three words come to mind: anticipation, waiting and savior. I am waiting with anticipation for the Savior to come.

- ❖ Anticipation—excitement about or looking forward to something (usually good) that's going to happen.
- ❖ Waiting—staying in a place until an expected event happens, until someone arrives, until it is your turn to do something; to remain in a state in which you expect or hope that something will happen soon.
- ❖ Savior—person who saves someone or something from a danger or harm; a person who saves, rescues or delivers.



"I Am Not for Sale," art by Sister Mary Daly

When I think of someone who is trafficked, I can also think of these three words, but the context is so radically different that I am stunned.

Emma is a trafficking victim, an exploited child. Here's her story as she tells it.

I anticipated, without excitement and not much hope, that all the pain I suffered while I was waiting to be rescued would be rewarded, and a savior would finally arrive. I didn't expect to be saved but I was. One of my "tricks" turned out to be a compassionate social worker who gained my trust after several visits. We pretended to have sex, but we just talked. Then one day when my trafficker was too drunk to notice, my savior took me away from the dingy motel where I worked. We went to a safe house where the bed was clean and warm and no one could force their way into my bed or my body.

But what happens to me next? I don't have skills; I was only 13 when my trafficker lured me away from home and school. I have been gone for so many months I've lost count. If I get sober, will I be able to stay clean when I'm rejected by others—or when I remember, and want to forget, what I've been through?

I can't go back to school; no one would understand. Can I even go back home? Will my family want me back? Will they blame me? When I'm older, who would want to date or marry me? Will I ever be good enough to have and protect a child of my own? I can't get a job or rent an apartment. I have a criminal record – exploited kids aren't supposed to be criminals with a record; we're victims!

Will my savior answer my questions? Find me the help I need? Can my savior protect me when my trafficker hunts me down? Do saviors hold you when the nightmares come? I hope so – the nightmares take away my breath!

Prayer

“It is only when we learn to cry with those who are suffering that we can begin to understand them and to love them. The smallest, the weakest, the poorest soften us: they have the ‘right’ to take our heart and soul” (Pope Francis).

Victims of trafficking have a right to sleep without nightmares taking their breath away, and it is our responsibility to see they do.

We must be hope-bearers so we remember that “the one who has hope lives differently; the one who hopes has been granted the gift of a new life” (Pope Benedict XVI).

God of hope, hear us! Maranatha!

Amen.

Source: Catholic Relief Services: Catholic Prayer Resources

Call to Action

Talk with your family, especially youth, about how they could be at risk and how to avoid becoming a victim.

Buy Fair Trade products when possible. Sources include: [Ten Thousand Villages](#), [Catholic Relief Services](#), [Trades of Hope](#) and [Partners for Just Trade](#).

Join your parish or faith congregation’s social action group and encourage members to focus on human trafficking.