

Friends

The 11<sup>th</sup> of January marks human-trafficking awareness day, 2026. Human trafficking is a wide-ranging crime involving exploiting vulnerable people who are forced into unpaid/underpaid labour, sexual exploitation or even organ trafficking affects millions of lives globally. By marking this International Day of Awareness, organisers hope to advocate for policy change, support victims and encourage global collaboration.

The Bible speaks about slavery on several occasions, and is often condemned for appearing to condone it. Leviticus permits owning slaves from surrounding nations, Ephesians instructs slaves to obey their masters and the Corinthians are advised to stay within their given status, even as a slave. However, the Bible is not silent on this matter. Jesus' first public sermon, recorded in Luke 4, has Jesus quoting from Isaiah: "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour*". In the face of this, freeing slaves was seen as an important act of Christian charity, and many early Christians did so. Some church communities also collected funds to purchase the freedom of enslaved members and St. Augustine of Hippo writes of his church regularly raising large sums to ransom captives from slave traders. More, we know from historical writing that several early Christian figures used their personal wealth to free slaves.

What can we do today? The police suggest that we simply remain interested in the lives of the people around us, particularly those who are working for us. If the stories we hear don't add up, or people seem anxious or worried, we might take the decision to make a report. We must not get directly involved ourselves beyond this, but it seems to me that being interested in the people around us is a good thing at the best of times, and if in so-doing we might make a difference in the life of someone who is struggling in unimaginable ways, then that can only be of God whose Son said, "I am come that they may have life in all its fullness." (John 10:10)

God bless, Vicci