

## *Freedom Bears for Court*

The St. Francis Anti-Human Trafficking Committee is collaborating with ACTS Sexual Assault Services to take donations for Freedom Bears for Court.

After Mass on **December 1st and 2nd** committee members will be in the vestibule with a Freedom Bear to take donations to provide for ACTS clients.

*(Checks will be accepted and should be made payable to ACTS with Assault Services Bears in the memo of the check.)*



Being a witness is not a common experience for most adults, let alone for children. Court can be a daunting place, especially when you are worried about what is going to happen. Now imagine being a child and going to court because you have been a victim of sexual abuse.

Children are anxious and afraid to see their abuser and testify in front of everyone in the courtroom. Fortunately, a child does not have to go through this process alone. At ACTS Sexual Assault Services, we provide counseling, support and court accompaniment. One special counseling tool we use are Freedom Bears. These unique bears come with a small piece of paper on which victims can write down the name of the person who harmed them and stick it in the bear's heart. When the child is ready, whether it be hours or years later, they can take the paper out, drop it in water and watch it dissolve, which can be a cathartic experience. Children also bring their Freedom Bear to court to not only help them tell their story but to also provide comfort before and after testifying.

The St. Francis Anti-Human Trafficking Committee (engaged in action, awareness and advocacy efforts in the fight against human trafficking) will be meeting on *Thursday, December 6<sup>th</sup> from 7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. in the Parish Center Grade 5 Classroom.*

All are welcome! **For more information please contact**

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or

**Bob Eves at 703-304-9259, or [evesrc@verizon.net](mailto:evesrc@verizon.net).**