

Meeting between Bishop John Arnold and representatives of the Our Lady of the Valley Combating Human Trafficking Group, 23 July 2015

Present: Bishop John Arnold, Anthony Brown, Mary Brown, Anthony Galea, Roisin Bowes, Sister Bridie Dowd of the Daughters of Charity St Vincent de Paul.

The Bishop listened carefully to our summary of how we saw our activities falling within the Church's missionary and evangelising aspirations, our ultimate aim in our Pope's words: *"Every citizen of every country must be made aware of human trafficking and join the fight against it"*. We explained what we were trying to do in schools, with the Police, and with Caritas Salford.

The specific proposals we had put to the Bishop prior to the meeting, on how he might add his voice to our work, are listed below:

- Medaille magazines in parishes throughout the Deanery and beyond
- Appeals in church for the Medaille Trust throughout the Deanery starting with Our Lady of the Valley
- Lenten competitions in schools, building on lesson exercises from the Medaille Education Pack which supplements the Caritas in Action Curriculum
- Posters in churches to raise awareness of trafficking, list some of the signs to look for, and provide contact details for more information.
- Pastoral letter for the Year of Mercy to make a link with trafficking
- Media coverage, preferably TV, when the opportunity arises. The Bishop of Stockport had a TV appearance at the Stop the Traffik/International Justice Mission Travel Safe fortnight at Manchester Airport which we were an integral part of. There will be a similar event in 2016
- Linking our OLOTV website and its trafficking page with the Diocesan website
- Working with Caritas Ambassadors and linking them with our local group
- Working with East Lancashire Police via DCI Sion Hall in the spirit of the Bakhita Initiative
- Making the OLOTV/Caritas Salford Three Year Plan a reality

We went through the items either individually or as clusters agreeing those which were for us to pursue initially and those where the Bishop felt he could make an immediate commitment.

The outcome of the meeting (not in strict order as above) can be summarised as follows.

The Bishop asked that Fr John draft a letter for the Bishop to amend to his own style and send to the Deanery priests advising on how they could make their contribution to the Trafficking theme adopted by the Deanery for the Year of Mercy. This will include an Medaille appeal in their parish and encouraging uptake of Medaille magazines. Not mentioned in the meeting but an addition to the list would be giving out St Bakhita prayer cards after Mass on the feast of St Bakhita. A key part of awareness raising is information on the signs to look out for in potential victims of trafficking and we agreed the best way to do this would be via a poster in church porches linked to leaflets for parishioners to take away. The poster would have a named contact for more information, the contact ideally being a parish representative but failing that a Medaille Trust Diocesan Representative. The poster itself needs to be designed by our group and approved by the Diocese. It should attract attention with a graphic picture and just enough words to encourage people to take a leaflet. Posters and leaflets could be printed locally with no central administration cost incurred. The "signs" listed in the leaflet can be taken from a number of websites but need to be culled and refined selectively for our own purpose. This is an exercise for our group.

Bishop John has a Pastoral Letter planned for September and will include a reference to trafficking.

Bishop John was happy for media coverage in newspapers/TV but warned that the press tended to be negative in publicising the activities of the Catholic Church. The specific media example discussed was the Stop the Traffik/International Justice Mission Travel Safe fortnight at Manchester Airport in 2015 which featured the Bishop of Stockport. There will be a similar event in 2016 and Anthony Brown will seek to see if Bishop John might be linked to the event. At the same time he will explore if IJM and Stop the Traffik would consider including a Salford/Medaille addition to the partnership, given that last year we gave a significant number of volunteer hours and fielded a total of 6 volunteers. In considering media coverage it is for our group to explore how this might be achieved. Margaret Parsons, our East Lancashire News Editor will advise.

We agreed that the Our Lady of the Valley website trafficking page should be linked with the Diocesan website and our planned Year of Mercy page also be linked and vice versa. The appointment of a Diocesan Information Officer will improve communication between our Parish and the Diocese.

Bishop John encouraged our work with Mark Wiggin and the aspiration to have Trafficking as an additional Caritas operation linked with our local group and serviced by volunteers. We see the initiative having a minimal resourcing cost for Caritas, the operation being largely by our group and Medaille. He was pleased with what we had already written into our Three Year Plan and that Trafficking would get a mention in the Caritas Salford Annual Report.

We talked about branding and agreed that Our Lady of the Valley Combating Human Trafficking Group was an unhelpful and ambiguous title. We should rebrand as, for example, the Bakhita Group, subject to approval with Westminster. Sister Bridie will put us in touch with Sister Cecilia of the Bakhita Initiative. Bishop John acknowledged that our working with East Lancashire Police via DCI Sion Hall is in the spirit of the Bakhita Initiative and to be encouraged.

Bishop John felt that there was a strong Medaille/Salford link already established and linking the Medaille Education Pack with the Caritas in Action curriculum was something for further discussion in schools. He acknowledged the positive discussions already had with the Director of Education and Assistant Director of Education, and the Diocesan Youth Ministry Co-ordinator. We discussed Lenten competitions in schools, building on lesson exercises from the Medaille Education Pack which supplements the Caritas in Action Curriculum, and working with Caritas Ambassadors and linking them with our local group. This is for us to pursue further.

Bishop John referred to vacant premises which could be used for safe houses. We talked about the financing and running of these and he was open to the idea of Medaille managing them and paying a peppercorn rent. We understand that Medaille would have no problem at all in helping to establish a further safe house in the Salford area together with the Diocese – it could be called St Bakhita's house and promoted as a Diocesan initiative. Medaille are just interested in doing the face to face work.

Anthony Brown
26 July 2015