

THE MEDAILLE SCHOOLS PACK AND SOME COMPETITIONS FOR ANTI-SLAVERY WEEK, OCTOBER 18 TO 24

This note is intended to supplement the ground covered at York and Lancaster on 24 and 26 June.

Modern Day Slavery and Human Trafficking

There are more slaves in the world now than at any time in history. Worldwide the figure has been put at nearly 30 million but it is impossible to have any real idea of the actual numbers. Some of these people are literally locked up but the majority are held through fear or debt bondage. Typically they are lured by promises of a better life and become trapped by having their documents taken, huge debt from money paid to traffickers, and fear for self or family if they try to escape.

Human trafficking encompasses slavery but is a broader term which includes all those involved in luring, transporting and harbouring people for the ultimate purpose of extracting services from them. These services include enforced labour, domestic servitude, cannabis factories, sex services, begging, shoplifting and organ harvesting. The misery these people have to endure ranges from a lifetime of hard labour, with a return that is never sufficient to repay a huge debt, to being a woman locked in a room to service men who want the most abusive kind of sex. Equally shocking the plight of those blinded by having their corneas removed by organ traffickers. Human Trafficking is the second largest organised crime, second only to drugs trafficking. It is the nastiest, most despicable crime that ever existed.

In the UK the National Referral Mechanism statistics for 2014 had 2,340 people referred of whom 60% were female, and of those nearly half were for sexual exploitation. It is believed that 60% of potential victims don't go through the NRM so the real figures will be much higher, but not all referred are ultimately judged to meet the criteria for trafficking. The latest estimate for the number of slaves in the UK is 13,000, more women than men and many working in brothels.

Trafficking for sexual exploitation

Trafficking for sex shouldn't be termed prostitution. It is rape. Since 2009 a man who has sex with a woman held by intimidation or force commits a crime even if he does not know that the woman is trafficked. Some of these women from Eastern Europe or the Far East are trafficked to this country in the full knowledge that they are coming to work as prostitutes where they can earn better money than they can in say Romania. What they get is slavery, debt bondage and no escape. Many women think they are coming to genuine jobs in respectable service industries only to realise the grim truth when they are held captive and "broken in". These women are moved around to thwart detection. The DNA of a woman rescued in London was matched with DNA in a room in Northern Ireland where the same woman had scratched deep into the door with her finger nails to try and escape.

A woman, aged 28, we met who had been trafficked from Albania to Belgium and escaped to the UK was seeking asylum. She had been doing so for 2 years on the grounds that if she returned to Belgium she would be picked up by the traffickers and if she returned to

Albania she would be killed as an honour killing for running away from marrying a 70 year old man.

Other forms of trafficking

But that is only a proportion of the UK's slaves. Many trafficked people work in agriculture, in car washes, takeaways, cannabis factories, garages or in domestic households. Many are free to leave in one sense but have no documents, little language, nowhere to go and live in fear of retribution.

The Catholic Church

In April 2014 there was a conference in the Vatican between the leaders of most of the world's religions and law enforcement officers of the world in an attempt to forge a link that would result in the perpetrators being recognised by an informed public. Pope Francis has said: *"Every citizen of every country must be made aware of human trafficking and join the fight against it."*

A second conference followed in London last December leading to the Bakhita Initiative, headed by the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales (CBCEW) aiming to: *provide specialist training and make awareness-raising available to law enforcement agencies, local authority professionals, frontline volunteers in the parishes, teachers and schoolchildren.*

Other attempts to raise awareness

Such attempts to raise awareness are not new. In 1995 Hilary Clinton made a ground breaking speech about discrimination against women, focusing particularly on abuse, female genital mutilation and human trafficking. David Alton and Baroness Cox have been fighting the cause for years and in 2015 the Anti-Slavery Bill became law. In the UK alone there are over 80 charities with trafficking on their agenda. Some like Stop the Traffik, International Justice Mission, Hope for Justice, Medaille Trust are solely about trafficking. Others like the Salvation Army are better known for other things but it is the Salvation Army that got the government contract to provide safe houses, something they have subcontracted to 12 other charities.

Barriers to the eradication of slavery and human trafficking

Given the scale and horrendous nature of human trafficking and the number of organisations and people fighting it, why is it so difficult to eradicate? Professor Kevin Bales, a human rights professor, argues that the task should not be problematic and cites three obstacles that do not need to be overcome: the laws exist everywhere in the World, no-one but the perpetrators have any doubt about its evil, and it is not economically necessary. Kevin Bales argues that there is an economic solution: *"the estimated cost of not just freedom but sustainable freedom for the entire 27 million people on the planet in slavery is something like 10.8 billion dollars -- what Americans spend on potato chips and pretzels."*

Organised crime, corruption and the skill of the traffickers at keeping their trade underground make detection difficult but the main reason is lack of awareness and lack of

coordination between those fighting it. The Pope's initiative of uniting the Christian and Faith communities with the law enforcement agencies of the world is a big step, but there are some who criticise the Pope saying he should get his own house in order before embarking on a mission to end human trafficking. On Anti-Trafficking Day the charities will all be trying to entice the public into giving them money in a spirit which is more competitive than collaborative. With money in short supply competition is inevitable, yet charities realise that working together and avoiding wasteful duplication has to be good. With this in mind the Human Trafficking Foundation exists solely to foster communication and collaboration.

But the biggest obstacle to progress is ignorance. In the early 90s, Kevin Bales was astonished to learn about human trafficking when he of all people should have been well informed. It didn't come into my awareness until perhaps two years ago and although the Internet is brimful with trafficking, as is the media and even television series, most people have very little notion of what is going on. If it isn't ignorance it is denial. Press stories are seen as one-offs rather than symptomatic of something much more widespread.

So what can we do?

For Catholics, what the Pope has initiated is a good start. The Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales' Bakhita Initiative is a top down approach aimed at reaching down to Parish level. In January 2015 we turned our local mission and aspirations into a group based on the Parish of Our Lady of the Valley, Clitheroe and Sabden – the Combating Human Trafficking Group. Starting with ten minutes at a Parish Forum we invited people to put their names and email addresses on our list with no more commitment expected from them than to receive emails and be aware of what we were trying to achieve. Since then we have over 40 names and we are interdenominational, interfaith, non faith and we go far beyond the boundaries of our Parish. What we are trying to do is bottom up, starting at Parish level and working up through the Deanery to the Diocese and into other dioceses. Our belief is that change will have to come about by massive awareness and a feeling of personal responsibility to be alert to the signs of trafficking. Beyond that we can donate and lobby but mainly it is at a personal level that the authorities need people to act and to notify them of anything suspicious. But major change will only come about at generational level which is why our current focus is schools. Change can be achieved best via the Justice and Peace mission of the Church in secondary schools and perhaps in primary schools too. But schools are tied by the curriculum and the achievement of targets. The trick must be to make trafficking integral with the curriculum, Justice and Peace, school activities and indeed the life of the school. Education in trafficking cannot work if it is something that involves more work with nothing in return.

The Medaille Trust

The Medaille Trust is a Catholic charity with its main work being the provision of safe houses for victims rescued from trafficking. These houses are funded for the statutory 45 days from when someone is identified as a victim of trafficking. After that, the Medaille Trust depends on voluntary donations and it is also dependent on voluntary donations to fund working with the more difficult clients, many of whom are deeply traumatised and have turned to drink or drugs. The awareness raising aspect of the Medaille's work ultimately leads to more donations and a greater capability to do more but like all organisations fighting trafficking, what it is really striving for is the end of trafficking.

The Medaille Trust Education Pack

The Medaille Schools Education Pack aims to introduce students and young people, within Key Stage 3 (age 11-14), to the subject of human trafficking and slavery. Each lesson plan is designed to link a specific area from within the Catholic RE syllabus (Revelation, Church, Celebration and Life of Christ) with a key subject from the national curriculum (English, History, Music and Drama). The student and teacher guide are relevant to every lesson, and alongside this there is the 'Using RE directory' column to supplement key themes from within the Catholic RE curriculum directory. This design gives the teacher of these lessons the flexibility to decide how best to deliver the session to their class/group and to what extent to include the Bible passages and prayer ideas provided. Each lesson is designed to be an hour long but also includes a 'Call to action' which will take place outside of the initial lesson so it is at the discretion of the teacher to decide how long to spend on this.

Four lessons doesn't seem to amount to much but it is enough to bring home the stark realities of trafficking in a way that also meets curricula requirements. Each of the lesson plans contains an activity leading to a tangible product – a poem, a piece of art or a song. These artistic endeavours are powerful both in their creation and in their display. They can impact on the individual and they can impact on the school so it is much more than the lesson that the children take away.

Schools and Anti-Trafficking week, October 18 to October 24

So far so good but what more can we do? In October we have Anti-Trafficking Day on the 18th and for us that is the start of Anti-Trafficking Week which will end on the 24th with gospel singer Elsa Harris performing at the Grand in Clitheroe.

Look at the Pack carefully with Anti-Trafficking Week in mind. Could you motivate your school to submit poems, pieces of art, original songs to a Diocesan wide competition? The schools would select one or a small number of entries in each of a number of categories for external assessment by judges. The Medaille Trust has agreed in principle to support with certificates, prizes and the best entries published and publicised in the media as part of a big awareness raising effort. The details would have to be worked out, judges and sponsors sought, and media interest tested, but first we need expressions of interest. If enough schools will partake the rest should follow.

Please discuss with your head teachers and chaplains for initial thoughts before the end of the school year with a view to a final decision at the start of the autumn term.

Anthony Brown
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