

Modern Day Slavery and Human Trafficking

Many dioceses and parishes are wake to the de-humanising impact of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery in England and Wales. Leadership from our Bishops and action from many religious congregations and Catholic charities has enabled the Catholic Church to play its part in beginning to eradicate in the UK one of the world's most organised, profitable and criminal activities that causes so much misery and long-term damage to its victims.

What is the issue?:

- There are thought to be 40 million people worldwide who are current victims of Modern Day Slavery. Of these, 1 in 4 is a child and 20,000 children are dying every year through slavery.
- 150 million children who are being exploited in child labour worldwide.
- Little action is taken against organisations that exploit children and adults whilst huge resources are put into making other organisations, such as global airlines, safer for those who can afford it.
- 99.8% of human trafficking goes without prosecution and this makes it an obvious line of business for criminals.
- In the UK there are around 140,000 people caught up in trafficking and modern-day slavery at any one time.
- The problem has infiltrated business models with displaced people especially being taken advantage of.
- Many examples occur in our local communities but remain hidden.
- One distinct action is to raise awareness of the signs of physical or psychological abuse that might indicate human trafficking and slavery.

What can be done to help?

Problems encountered at the front line, specifically by those working at Bakhita House <https://www.caritaswestminster.org.uk/bakhita-house.php> and Women at the Well: <https://watw.org.uk/>

- For example Rose's story (not her real name) who had a happy childhood. At the age of 21, she realised her dream and started university but then she was sold by her father into a pre-arranged marriage. She ran away with her university boyfriend and enjoyed a couple of months of happiness before he sold her into prostitution. Rose had 15 clients a day until she ran away. With the help of Bakhita House, Rose has been free for 636 days and has resumed her studies.

For ideas about how to respond as a Parish access the Medaille Trust <https://www.medaille-trust.org.uk/> and or a parish in the Salford Diocese: www.olotv.org.uk/parish-groups/trafficking

- The Medaille Trust has focused their work in the Birmingham Archdiocese with a pledge to eradicate modern slavery by 2025.
- They have visited 15 Parishes in 6 months and also worked at the Cathedral.

- The Clewer Initiative of the Anglican Church has developed an impressive programme to raise awareness of modern slavery, identify victims and to help provide victim support and care. They are working across the Dioceses of the UK and have a range of education and training resources which could be very useful. <https://www.theclewerinitiative.org/>

One action that might be helpful as a starting point is to meet with the anti-slavery section of the local Police forces to find out what the known risks are in our area.

The West Yorkshire Anti-Slavery Partnership:

<https://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/news-appeals/anti-slavery-experts-discuss-how-combat-trafficking-west-yorkshire>

There is also an Anti-Slavery group for North Yorkshire -

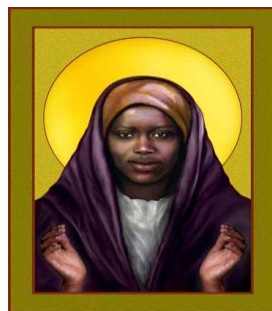
<https://northyorkshire.police.uk/news/modern-slavery-partnership-launched-anti-slavery-day/>

Vatican Document: 'Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking': <https://migrants-refugees.va/documents/en/email/pastoral-orientations-on-human-trafficking.pdf>

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the inspiring example of Saint Josephine Bakhita. Saint Josephine Bakhita, you were enslaved as a child; you were bought and sold, you were treated brutally. Intercede, we implore you, for all those who are trapped in trafficking and slavery. May their captors let them go, and may this evil be erased from the face of the earth.

Saint Josephine Bakhita, once you regained your freedom, you did not let your sufferings define your life. You chose a path of kindness and generosity. Help those blinded by greed and lust who trample the human rights and dignity of their brothers and sisters. Help them to break out of their hateful chains, to become fully human again, and to imitate your kindness and generosity.



Dear Saint Josephine Bakhita, your freedom drew you to Christ and his Church. Then God called you to religious life as a Canossian Sister. You practiced great charity, mercy and joyful gentleness in your vocation. Help us always to be like you, especially when we feel tempted to look away and not to help, to reject others or even to abuse them. Intercede for us so that Christ may fill our hearts with joy as he always filled yours. O Loving God, pour your merciful light into our troubled world. Let it flood into the darkest shadows. Bring salvation to the innocents who suffer under sinful abuse. Bring conversion to the utterly lost souls who hold them captive and exploit them. Give us all the strength to grow in the true freedom of love for you, for each other and for our common home. Amen.

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