

Day for Life 2018
A Message from Cardinal Vincent Nichols
Human Trafficking

Human trafficking has been described by Pope Francis as 'an open wound on the body of humanity'. Since we are all part of that humanity, human trafficking defaces us all.

He goes on to say that it is 'a wound in the Body of Christ' in which we share. Our faith teaches us to see the face of Jesus is those who are most vulnerable and needy.

These are the reasons why today, on this Day for Life, we focus on the eradication of human trafficking.

What exactly is human trafficking? Here is a description:

Human trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, harbouring or receipt of individuals for the purpose of exploitation, through the use of violence, force, fraud, coercion, or deception, or through the abuse of power, position or trust. People may be trafficked for any number of exploitative activities, such as domestic servitude, prostitution, forced begging or criminality, forced marriage, and forced organ removal.

This criminal activity is widespread and well organised in the world today. Estimates are that there are over 40 million victims, trafficked out of every country and trafficked into every country. This includes our own. English victims of trafficking include many youngsters caught up in gang crime in our cities. Victims of trafficking held in this country come from over 80 different homelands and are caught up in an invisible crime in our midst, on our streets, in businesses and shops.

As a Church we have a great part to play. Our contacts are widespread, not least among the ethnic communities with their chaplains. We can all learn to recognise the signs of a victim; we can be important 'eyes and ears'.

One of our responses to this tragedy, here in the Diocese, is Bakhita House, a house of welcome and healing for these victims. It is supported by Caritas Westminster, by many religious congregations and by many generous donors. In the past three years it has welcomed and assisted over 80 guests, all women rescued from modern slavery. There are also five babies in this great extended family!

These are some of the words written by one guest:

'When we didn't have any hope and reason to live we came to this house and here we got our new family....We aren't born in the same families but my friends, who are living in this house, we have the same pain in our hearts and souls but with your help every member of Bakhita House are doing the best to relieve our pains.

'Only thing we can do for you is to pray for you in our languages and by our religions, to ask God for your strength, health and patience to have a long life.

'God bless you for all the kind works you have done!'

Please do learn more about modern slavery. Please do support this work in whatever way you can. Please do pray for its victims, held without any apparent hope, exploited every moment of the day, clinging on to life. Please do pray for all those who work hard to bring this criminal activity to an end.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols
Archbishop of Westminster

