



## ST. PETER'S LENTEN PROJECT.

### No 2. HUMAN TRAFFICKING & SLAVERY VICTIMS

With over 40 million men, women and children trapped in modern slavery according to the most recent official estimates, slavery is not a thing of the past as many of us suppose. There are slaves working on every continent, in every country, in all types of industries and even in people's homes.

**Modern slavery includes forced labour, human trafficking, sexual exploitation, debt bondage and forced marriage.** Anyone who is forced to work or marry and cannot refuse or leave is a victim of modern slavery. Most victims (71%) are women, in forced domestic work or marriages. **1 in every 4 modern slavery victims are children.** Slavery is also endemic in rural societies around the world with 11% of victims working in agriculture and fisheries.

**Profits from modern slavery per victim are higher in developed economies.** In 2014 the EU and other developed countries made an estimated **46.9 billion** US dollars in profits from slavery. In Africa, the region with the highest rate of modern slavery, there are **7.6 victims per 1000** people.

**Slavery is also imposed by governments, not only businesses or individuals.** The latest estimates state that over 4 million people are slaves in State labour at any given time. Like child labour **the root causes of modern slavery are extremely complex** including poverty, conflict and crisis, cultural perspectives and lack of protective safeguards and legislation.

**Each one of us in our own ways unintentionally contributes to the evil of modern slavery** by being part of the chain of supply and demand. Our incessant demands for more and more goods at a cheaper price, exotic foods, out of season fruits, cheaper clothes; newest technology means untold numbers of those who labour to supply our wants pay for them with their own lives and freedom.

In February Pope Francis' monthly prayer request to the Church was for an end to the evil of modern slavery. In a short video produced to explain his prayer intention for the month he said:

*"Although we try to ignore it, slavery is not something from other times. We cannot ignore the fact that there is as much slavery in the world today as there was before, or perhaps more. Faced with this tragic reality no one can wash their hands of it without being, in some way, an accomplice to this crime against humanity.*

He called for prayers and action by welcoming those who are victims of human trafficking, forced prostitution and violence. His video underlined the importance of the International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking held each year on 8<sup>th</sup> February, feast day of St Josephine Bakhita who was herself a slave for 12 years.

**Modern slavery in our own country is thriving.** Our government estimates that tens of thousands of people are in modern slavery in the UK today. Most are trafficked in from overseas but there is a significant number of British Nationals caught in the slavery trap. Others mainly come from Albania, Vietnam, Nigeria, Romania and Poland and are forced into work in agriculture, cannabis production, hospitality, manufacturing and car washes. Girls and women are often sexually exploited.

Our Government's response to this evil is slowly improving. A New comprehensive Modern Slavery Act was passed in 2015. Every organisation must now have a policy statement on Modern Slavery and much action is being undertaken to eradicate it here by government and voluntary groups.

Throughout our history **Faith groups** have played a central role in leading and supporting the Anti- Slavery movement.

**It is now our responsibility to carry on the fight.**

- Through prayer
- Through supporting those organisations that 'Fight the Good fight' as volunteers or with our donations.
- By taking individual action when we suspect 'all is not well' with individuals or groups e.g. in a nail salon or carwash. Contact CRIMESTOPPERS 0800 5551111

#### **PRAYER FOR VICTIMS OF SLAVERY**

*Trusting in God's love and care for the oppressed, we pray for all victims of trafficking and slavery across our world; for an end to the coercion and exploitation of vulnerable people everywhere; for the eradication of poverty and lack of opportunity that breeds such inhumanity; for co-operation between governments and social agencies to neutralise the evil work of traffickers and their networks.*

*We pray especially for a greater awareness of the reality and signs of slavery and human trafficking in our midst and the courage to do all we can to bring it to an end.*

*God of all freedom hear our prayer. Amen*