

Human Trafficking

This last Monday, 30th July, was marked by the United Nations as World Day against Trafficking in Persons. To quote from the official website: “Human trafficking is a crime that exploits women, children and men for numerous purposes including forced labour and sex. The International Labour Organization estimates that 21 million people are victims of forced labour globally. This estimate also includes victims of human trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation. While it is not known how many of these victims were trafficked, the estimate implies that currently, there are millions of trafficking in persons victims in the world.

Every country in the world is affected by human trafficking, whether as a country of origin, transit, or destination for victims. Children make up almost a third of all human trafficking victims worldwide, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Global Report on Trafficking in Persons. Additionally, women and girls comprise 71 per cent of human trafficking victims, the report states.

In 2010, the General Assembly adopted the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, urging Governments worldwide to take coordinated and consistent measures to defeat this scourge.

This year, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has chosen ‘responding to the trafficking of children and young people’ as the focus of the World Day. This year’s campaign highlights the fact that almost a third of trafficking victims are children. The theme draws attention to the issues faced by trafficked children and to possible action initiatives linked to safeguarding and ensuring justice for child victims.” End of quote. The statistics cited there are indeed truly appalling.

It is perhaps no coincidence that 30th July is also the day when the Church of England commemorates three campaigners for the abolition of slavery: William Wilberforce, Olaudah Equiano and Thomas Clarkson. The efforts of those three men resulted in the complete abolition of slavery in the British Empire. However, sadly slavery continues in different forms in various parts of our world today. Indeed human trafficking is very much a form of slavery.

Any kind of slavery is against the Christian gospel of love, respect, redemption and liberation, as we heard in those powerful words of our Lord in our reading just now (Luke 4.16-21): that powerful message of release to captives and freedom for the oppressed. May all victims of human trafficking live in hope of that liberation in order that their true humanity and dignity might be restored.

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