



SYNOD OF BISHOPS: YOUNG PEOPLE, FAITH AND VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT

Cardinal Vincent Nichols

19 October 2018

On paragraph 155 of the Instrumentum Laboris

Holy Father, my brothers and sisters,

I would like to follow and build on the comments we have heard about the crushing poverty faced by young people in the world and the consequent dangerous journeys they undertake in search of prosperity elsewhere.

These factors lead to the horrific crime of modern day slavery and human trafficking.

It is estimated that in the world today there are over 40 million people held in slavery. 40 million! And the vast majority of those are young people. This is, in the words of Pope Francis, 'an open wound in the body of humanity', in fact, 'in the body of Christ'.

Human trafficking touches us all. Every country represented in this Aula is a country from which vulnerable people are taken into slavery and into which the victims of human trafficking arrive. I first became aware of this when I listened to a young English woman who was trafficked from England into enforced prostitution in Italy; and when I heard an Afghan woman speak of being held in domestic slavery for 30 years in London, where her only place of privacy was under the kitchen table, where she was permitted to sleep. Children, in forced labour in central Africa, dig out of the earth, with their bare hands, the cobalt used to manufacture the batteries of the mobile phones in our pockets.

In the fight against human trafficking the Catholic Church has a crucial part to play. Human trafficking is a vast, international criminal network. The Catholic Church is a

vast, international network committed to all that is good and just. I want to pay tribute, therefore, to all in the Church who help in this struggle, especially many, many religious women who risk their safety to work with the victims of human trafficking.

Also in our Church is the Santa Marta Group, started by Pope Francis, which brings together the resources of the Catholic Church and the leadership of law enforcement agencies, the police, from many different countries around the world. This is a crucial partnership which has the rescuing and support of victims and the prosecution of criminals at its heart. The work of the Santa Marta Group is growing, with a regional conference taking place in Nigeria in November and another in Argentina in February. I ask your support in these initiatives.

The victim is always at the centre of our efforts. So too are attempts to provide resources and opportunities that might prevent young people leaving their homelands and risking slavery. At present we have projects in education and agriculture in Edo State, in Nigeria.

I hope that this topic of human trafficking, so crucial to millions of young people today, finds its place in our final document and that this important work can go from strength to strength. May St Josephine Bakhita, the young Sudanese woman sold into slavery and now our Patron Saint, pray for us and bring God's blessing on these efforts.

Thank you.

+ Vincent Nichols

Cardinal Vincent Nichols the Archbishop of Westminster and President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.