



MODERN SLAVERY – HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

A report by Naomi Davis, a parishioner,
who attended the on-line event

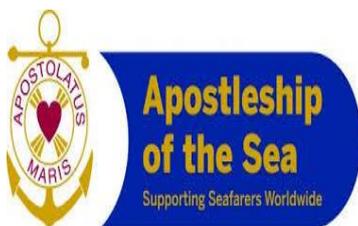
Caritas Plymouth recently held a one-hour on-line event, to hear about modern slavery in rural areas and in the shipping industry, with a focus on Cornwall and Plymouth. There were presentations from Caroline Virgo, [Clewes Initiative](#), Anne Donnelly, [Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea](#) and Deborah Fisher OBE, [CARITAS, Plymouth](#), who presented the on-line event.

The figures for people trapped in some form of modern slavery in the world is staggering: 40.3 million people are estimated to be trapped in some form of modern slavery, 136,000 victims estimated in the UK (according to the Global Slavery Index), 10,627 potential victims found in 2019. People end up trapped in modern slavery because they are vulnerable to being tricked, trapped, and exploited, often as a result of poverty and exclusion. It is these external circumstances that push people into taking risky decisions in search of opportunities to provide for their families or are simply pushed into jobs in exploitative conditions. Modern slavery exists everywhere but we can do something about it.

As Caroline from the Clewes Initiative explained, there is modern slavery in rural areas as well; agriculture, horticulture, equestrian, food processing, packing and manufacture, car washes etc. There are an estimated 19,000 unregulated hand car washes in the UK. Many unregulated sites are suspected of being used for people trafficking and/or exploitation. To help combat this, and to gather the largest community intelligence ever attempted in the UK, download the **Safe Car Wash** app onto your Smartphone or similar device. Next time you are using a hand car wash, simply open the app and complete a short survey about the working conditions of the hand car wash. The **Farm Work Welfare** app can tackle modern slavery in farming, horticulture, and food production. It has been designed to support both employers and workers, and to help support migrant workers the content has been translated into seven languages.



**Modern Slavery is an umbrella term for all forms of slavery, trafficking, and exploitation.
Deception is at the core of the crime as traffickers make false promises to victims.**



Stella Maris/Apostleship of the Sea is the Catholic Church’s maritime welfare agency which provides practical and pastoral care to all seafarers in hundreds of ports around the world. It has over 1,000 port chaplains and volunteers worldwide visiting 70,000 ships per annum. It is estimated about a third of all seafarers are Catholic, with many coming from the Philippines and Catholic areas of India.

In her presentation Anne explained that unfortunately it is not only poorer countries that abuse and exploit fishermen from overseas it happens here in this country. Thankfully, it is only a small percentage of the fishing industry that are involved in unscrupulous practices, but this reflects badly on other companies who work within the law. Fishing slavery is very common in poorer countries.

Young men and boys are forced into slavery at sea, they are exploited and abused and often become injured or lose their lives at sea. Isolation, abandonment, trafficking: These are some of the issues facing the estimated 1.5 million seafarers and fishermen around the world who are responsible for 90 percent of global trade and providing over 110 tons of seafood for the world's table. Seafarers and fishermen are vulnerable at the best of time. The lives that they lead are largely invisible and therefore they can all too easily fall prey to those who would choose to exploit or abuse them. And more recently seafarers face mental health issues after months trapped at sea due to the pandemic, industry bodies warn that supply chains could also be at risk because of overwork and exhaustion.

'There is a need for a coordinated approach between the Church and relevant public and private agencies to close the loopholes that allow forced labour to occur in the maritime and fisheries sector.'

Cardinal Bruno Ciceri (Stella Maris International Secretary)

Some people might ask, what can Churches, and communities do about modern slavery?

Modern slavery is a hidden crime and could be happening in our local areas, so it is important to be able to spot the signs. It can only be eradicated at a community level and churches are part of communities, they are in frequent contact with the most vulnerable. The truth is local people are key to solving this puzzle. For starters they can **spot the signs** of modern slavery and help the police to find victims. They can **prevent** vulnerable people they work with, like the homeless, from being trafficked or exploited. And they can **support** the survivors of modern slavery and help them to overcome the trauma they have experienced.

Some of the forty-odd people who attended the online event were representatives from the Red Cross, Salvation Army, and Santa Marta Group, all keen to pull together to help combat modern slavery.

What to do if you suspect someone is a victim of modern slavery:
In an emergency call 999
Report concerns to the Modern Slavery Helpline: 08000 121 700

For more information go to:

[Clewley Initiative](#)
[Stella Maris](#)
[CARITAS, Plymouth](#)

