

## RENATE

In February last year I visited the so-called 'Jungle' migrant camp in Calais, France. There I met a young Iraqi Kurd who was living in a damp, cold caravan with his Iraqi wife and two small children. His story was quite extraordinary. It is a story that shatters the neat boxes we like to use to organise human experience. He had been born in the UK, the child of refugees. Like many young men he had got into some trouble – minor criminality – as a teenager, and so his parents had decided to send him back to Iraq – he was told he was going on a holiday with his brother to visit family. Once in Iraq, his brother confiscated his passport, returning to the UK alone and leaving Ibrahim in forced exile with his extended family. On returning to the UK his brother sold his passport, ensuring that he could not return. Unknown to Ibrahim his identity now belonged to somebody else. Ibrahim made a life for himself in Iraq, moving between temporary forms of work that paid very little. Eventually as the situation in Iraq deteriorated and the grip of his family lessened he left to make the journey back to the UK. At the border he discovered for the first time that his identity had been sold and that he had no easy legal path back to the place he had been born. With his family he bedded down in Calais, knowing that his only hope was an illegal return. But the camp in Calais was not a safe place. Kurdish mafia groups control much of the camp and suspicious of a man with a British accent, the mafia assumed that Ibrahim was a rival smuggler, recruiting for business in the camp. He was coerced and threatened. As new British and French security deals made it harder to cross the border independently, Ibrahim explained that the grip of the mafia tightened, with many destitute migrants coerced into working for the mafia in a kind of slave labour to earn their own eventual passage. With a new mafia monopoly on travel this would only increase the interconnections between smuggling, trafficking, asylum seeking and economic migration. It was hard to tell whether Ibrahim was telling me indirectly that he too had succumbed to a form of debt bondage to the mafia or whether he was narrating the experience of others. I tell this story not because I am confused about the difference between smuggling and trafficking, refugees and economic migrants, but because I left feeling that there weren't really adequate legal and political categories to describe the experience of Ibrahim and

his family. The categories are important for our work, but they are at best approximations that both capture and lose the human content of the experience of trafficking, asylum seeking or simply searching for survival. This has always been the case, but it is perhaps a truth intensifying before our eyes in Europe now, as traffickers move their people through the flow of refugees, and refugees themselves become victims of slave labour or sexual exploitation en route, and who can forget the sight of refugees forced at gun point onto overcrowded boats in order to perpetuate the market in smuggling? The key moral features of trafficking: 'the purchasing of people, dominating their will, manipulating the needy, and exploiting the vulnerable through force, fraud or coercion' are found in ever new ways across our continent and across the globe. Wherever the state and civil society fails, the market - in its most shadowy form - fills the void of good governance and civic humanity, and the possibilities for the human person to experience multiple injustices, to slip between our categories, multiply.

It is partly because of the sheer complexity of such injustice as it wounds the human body, the body politic and so the Body of Christ, that Catholic social teaching proves itself such a unique and important resource for our times. CST does not deal in simple or neat categories. In fact sometimes its web of principles can make it feel a little too general, difficult to get hold off and tie down to the concrete. But what the Church's social teaching offers is an account of dignity, love, justice and the common good which speaks to the heart of the multiple and complex factors - what are often referred to as a push and pull factors - that impel the reality of human trafficking.

The church roots its opposition to trafficking in the claim it makes for the dignity of every human person, created in the image and likeness of God. This dignity is not just a fact that determines how we relate to each other as individuals, but it is also the basis for the workings of the whole economic and political order. The material goods of the universe are destined for all people, when we own or trade we do so to meet our own needs and as a contribution to the good of all, the common good. The common good is the good of the whole, and most especially

the good of the poorest and most vulnerable. We measure the common good according to the participation and dignity of the poorest. When we use our bodies to work, we do so knowing that the human body is a good prior to any form of capital. CST calls this the priority of labour over capital, never the other way round. Work must be conducted in such a way that it is morally purposeful and a price is paid that honours the value of the work to society and the personal contribution of the skill and dedication of the worker. It must be a wage freely earned and which provides for shelter, food, education and leisure. Such are the terms of the living wage. For these reasons, concentrations of wealth in the hands of the few; nations who wish to shore up their own wealth and build walls of protection and privilege against the claims of others; political failures and corruption which result in lack of employment; an economy geared towards consumption – including the consumption and disposal of human beings – offends against the common good. And each of these is a factor that contributes towards a world in which a modern slave can be bought for \$100. These are descriptions of what the Church has called structural sin, a form of sin that we come to understand through the stories of our brothers and sisters.

Pope John Paul II famously noted that we live in a world that is increasingly socially, politically and economically interdependent. This interdependence is a fact of our globalised model – but what, he asks, is the moral perspective we bring to bear on this fact? His answer was what he called the virtue or duty of solidarity. Solidarity he argued was not a vague feeling of sympathy for another person, or sporadic acts of generosity, but rather a structural commitment to standing with our neighbour – sustained action for the human good. Solidarity is, put simply, how we overcome structural sin and how we announce dignity. Sin by its nature isolates, it distorts the social and relational nature of the person, it breaks ties that bind and it fragments. Solidarity creates ties that reveal and make visible the human person, resurrecting dignity, love and justice.

Whilst recognising that not all those who experience trafficking are migrants, many are. Therefore the Church social teaching on migration remains a resource for those working with those who are trafficked or at risk of trafficking. The

Church begins by teaching a right to remain – no one should be forced or coerced into migration, however where conditions are impossible due to conflict, natural disaster or extreme poverty there is a natural right of the person to migrate. Sovereign states have a duty to ensure that there are legal channels to facilitate such migration. States may – indeed must – regulate their borders, but that border regulation must happen with attention to both the common good of the so-called settled community and the duty to the universal common good of the whole human family. This is the duty of political leadership – to be open to the reality of a wounded and aspiring world on the move, whilst protecting the conditions for stable and integrated social life. Increasingly Church leaders have emphasised that sovereign states do not take the common good into consideration fully when they chose simply to deport those who have been trafficked.

Pope Francis' contribution to the question of migration has been profound. His sermon in Lampedusa drew on the biblical story of Cain and Abel. He notes the first question which God asks humanity in the Scriptures: Cain, where is your brother? Pope Francis reminds us that we live in an age where the most vulnerable become people without faces and names, disposable and consumable. This is the very opposite of the Creator-creature relationship, in which we are always called by name, always people with faces and names. Francis challenges us firstly to weep, to allow ourselves to be moved by the reality of forced migration and human trafficking, and then to act to restore human relations in which we come to feel that we are called by name. He tells us that the kind of solidarity needed in our world may well cause us to need to be willing to suffer – not to desire to suffer – but to recognise the risk, the difficulty and the conflict that real solidarity might bring in its wake. It is perhaps no coincidence that the holy men and women Francis has singled out during his pontificate have modelled this difficult solidarity: Oscar Romero, Mother Theresa, and Dorothy Day.

CST teaches that solutions to complex problems should be found at the level that best enables those whose wellbeing most depends on such decisions to participate. This principle of subsidiarity however, is often misunderstood – it implies the participation of the least in the finding of solutions. The Catholic

activist Dorothy Day connects subsidiarity to the works of mercy: she sees the teaching of Matthew 25 which commands that we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the imprisoned and the stranger as the subsidiary responsibility of every Christian. These are matters that relate to good governance, but no state or market actor should ever seek to prevent Christians enacting their duty to love of neighbour. However, the principle of subsidiarity also calls for careful discernment of the appropriate levels for cooperation that best serves the human good. We must act at the most local levels to combat trafficking, but we cannot solve the problems of human trafficking or the global financial system only at a local level – this requires forms of cooperation at regional and international level too. At its root subsidiarity reminds us that we are each responsible for all, and that those whose lives are most effected by the way we structure our communities must have a voice in the finding of solutions. This is why the Church emphasises that solidarity and subsidiarity are two sides of the same coin.

It should not be difficult to see therefore that Renate is a model of Catholic social teaching in action. In this regard you should be very clear that you have something vital to contribute to the development of the Church's social teaching as it learns about the ways God transforms history; to the ways that Catholic social *teaching* requires also to be Catholic social *learning*. This is the kind of dialogue that Pope Francis has called for, and I hope it is what we shall see in action over the coming days.

I want now to say something more about the knottier question of the way that the Church has thought about slavery, because I think that there are things that we can learn from the gradual journey the Church makes from a degree of toleration of slavery towards its total condemnation in today's world. I will do this by looking first at Scripture and then at the work of the Thomist tradition of moral reasoning. The position of slaves in a biblical context / early church is complex. The earliest biblical teaching on slavery comes in the Book of Exodus. The first form of slavery of which the Scriptures speak is a form of extreme debt slavery that befalls God's people at the end of the book of Genesis; Joseph is sold by his brothers into slavery in Egypt and gradually as the famine takes the land, so the people of Israel offer

themselves to Pharaoh as slaves, in order to survive. It is Moses who leads his people to freedom under God's redeeming hand, and following their freedom new teaching is offered on the conditions for debt and slavery: what we call 'manumission' – the release of those who are slaves. There were three ways that a slave could earn their freedom in ancient times: earn their way out, be bought out by another, or to be released in a biblical year of jubilee. This connection between the release of slaves and God's redemption or salvation runs through the Judeo-Christian tradition. Indeed the authors of the Gospels make the idea of manumission central to the way we think about the ministry of Jesus himself – he comes to release captives, to win for all a victory over sin and bondage. At one level this is a message about sin and an action that is Christ's alone. But Christ himself makes clear that the message of redemption, is not simply a spiritual message. As Matthew, Mark and Luke emphasise in different ways Christ wins for us our freedom from sin, and the Church is founded by Christ as the permanent community of jubilee – a community of manumission, working for the release of all who are slaves to sin, but also those who experience injustice and need.

But we should be clear, although there are clear Biblical ethical norms for release from slavery, and injunctions against the use of power to coerce and subjugate, the Church did not simply oppose slavery from the start. We have a complex relationship with slavery. Our own reflections on modern slavery need to be conducted in the light of the complexity of our own involvement and history, although dealing with the darkness of that history is not for today. Instead I want to focus on the way that the Scriptures re-frame slavery. What I think the Church begins in the Scriptures is a gradual, non-linear revolution in human thought, and what is significant is this revolution begins with the ways that Christians think about the nature of the Church. In Ephesians and Romans we learn that through baptism, both slave and free belong equally to the Father and to one another. We are all equal members of the wounded and resurrected body of Christ: we relate to each other, slave and free, first and foremost as kin. I think it is significant that this is the foundation from which Christian reflection on breaking the chains of slavery begins. Christian responses to modern slavery is thus rooted in the dignity of the individual human person but through Scripture also to a rich and important

recognition of an equal citizenship, a freedom and membership of a community that cannot be erased. The Church's social teaching can thus offer a multifaceted teaching on dignity: she teaches the inherent dignity of all persons created in the image of God, and the dignity and equality that stems from an invitation to hospitality within a community that lives through the cross into the life of resurrection.

I want now to note a further key development in Catholic moral teaching that I think has a profound impact on the way we can think about modern slavery. It is often forgotten that the roots of contemporary human rights and in particular the view that we possess non-negotiable or inalienable human rights lie in part in medieval Catholic thought. They lie specifically in one simple but profound idea announced by Thomas Aquinas: the idea that the human body cannot be property. Thomas Aquinas offers two specific examples of the ways in which core matters of the human body cannot be subject to coercion: in basic sustenance and in questions of marriage, reproduction and sexual relations. These are telling examples when we think about the nature of modern trafficking and those most likely to experience trafficking.

Several centuries later, Francisco de Vitoria took up Aquinas' teaching in the context of the Spanish conquest of the 'New World'. He talks about the nature of the human person as essentially a communicating being. Vitoria describes the first state of humankind as a natural orientation to partnership and communication (*iuscommunicationis*). He argues that the development of political bordered communities is meant to facilitate and not to frustrate this essential social and rational characteristic of the human person. All laws of hospitality and protection stem from this basic *iuscommunicationis*: from the sociality, interdependence and rationality of the human person. Thus Vitoria imagines a community of human beings, amongst whom minimum standards of justice are binding, and in which the individual maintains a radical freedom over their own body to seek the good.

On this foundation Vitoria builds an account of human rights rooted in 'welfare' or 'passive' rights – that is, benefits or goods due to the human person *qua* human

person - and active liberties. A 'welfare' or 'passive' right constitutes a right to live free from persecution and bodily coercion, as the beneficiary of the basic goods necessary to forge a livelihood and to raise a family: these are minimum conditions we should expect from political community. These benefits have an economic, ecological as well as political dimension. But we also possess active rights to liberty, rooted in the power to act freely and shape the world around us. Vitoria roots this idea of freedom in the *imago dei*: made in the image of God we are equipped to know God, we are equipped with a capacity to act freely in the world, a capacity for rationality and self-mastery, and a capacity to exercise dominium. On this basis Vitoria argues against forms of colonisation and enslavement and for freedom to travel. Vitoria does not propose a world without borders. What he proposes is an idea of sovereignty which is only true to itself when it acts in service to this communicating vision of the human person. This idea is taken up in later CST. In Pope John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris* he reminds the Church: 'We must remember that, of its very nature, civil authority exists, not to confine people without the boundaries of their nation, but rather to protect, above all else, the common good of the entire family.' Whilst anyone working on trafficking would of course want to make clear that there needs to be a corresponding right not to be forcibly migrated, CST is clear that accessible pathways for legal migration and resistance to deportation need to be part of a politics of the common good.

When Pope Francis talks about human trafficking it is notable that he too talks specifically about the human body, the wounding of the individual body and the collective body. Aquinas teaches us that a body that cannot be viewed as property, and Francis echoes this. To protect the body, to love the body – especially the suffering body ought to be basic to a Christian instinct. And it should be clear to a Christian that it is a particular kind of evil to claim to control a body completely. For St Augustine the very nature of evil is that it is a form of non-communication, that it breaks the chain of communication. It is no coincidence that those who practice torture and imprisonment, those who trade in human persons, seek to minimise the communication – this essential human characteristic - of those who are traded and incarcerated. Forced silence. Invisibility. Isolation. These are



precisely the conditions which deprive us of the human good, the goods that build flourishing and mutual relations. They are the very nature of evil.

By way of conclusion, I want to come back now to the question of the Scriptures, and the challenge that Ephesians and Romans sets for us: the challenge to ensure that all persons, those enslaved and those free are released into full membership of body of Christ. My own work in recent years has been with refugees rather than those who have experienced trafficking. But I want to suggest an idea that I think bridges between the two contexts – but without for a moment suggesting that these are the same thing. They are not, and the distinction matters. The Church sometimes gets its engagement with refugees, asylum seekers and those who experience trafficking right and sometimes it does not. Nevertheless, a pattern I have seen across church contexts is that where asylum seekers and undocumented migrants feel they have little visibility or option for participation within society, it is often in the Church that they feel their dignity and participation is recognised. This is not really about being ‘helped’ so much as it is about their recognition as agents and full members of a social body. Churches in the UK, where I am based, are acting as contexts for an alternative kind of citizenship for those who, to quote Hannah Arendt seem ‘not to have rights to have rights’. It took me some time to connect what I was seeing with the idea of the equal citizenship in faith St Paul speaks of. How can the Church be a place that begins its engagement with those who experience trafficking from a place of recognising that we are first and foremost kin, dignified and made human by our common citizenship? The US framework for responding to trafficking talks of ‘rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration’ as the three key words. Echoing John Paul II we might say these are the ‘facts’ of anti-trafficking work, what CST asks us to bring to bear is the moral vision that animates and makes that work truly human. Perhaps that is what the vision of the Church in Ephesians and Romans does for us.

The first task of the Church is to incarnate its own story of creation and redemption in its accompaniment of those who are at risk of trafficking or have experienced trafficking. We should expect that this will draw us into forms of conflictual solidarity: being the Church properly so will lead us to confrontations

with power. But is it also possible to imagine that through demonstrating a different logic to that of state and market, performing another story rooted in both the Gospel, and the charisms of the families of faith to which we belong, that together we stimulate a different kind of social imagination, one that tells the story of the communion we receive and the communion we seek to share?