

Archdiocese of Sydney responds to Pope Francis' call to fight human trafficking



From Rome during the past five years the Church and the world have heard a constant flow of statements and exhortations by the Holy Father, in respect of the eradication of modern slavery and human trafficking. He is perhaps the greatest anti-slavery campaigner in our world today. This is a cause dear to his heart and always high in his priorities. He has declared human trafficking to be “an open wound on ... contemporary society, a scourge upon the body of Christ” and “a crime against humanity.” He has pledged with other global religious leaders to collectively work to bring each faith community together to rid this world of this affront to human dignity and degradation of human freedom. He was more than an inspiration in the adoption of Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals which seeks to “[t]ake immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers [by 2030], and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.”

Pope Francis is firm and consistent in his belief that we will be victorious over modern slavery and human trafficking. He exhorts the contemporary world and the contemporary Church to provide the will and the organisation to defeat modern slavery in all its manifestations in this generation. This is one of the most inspiring visions of freedom in our world. Pope Francis' words sound out like a trumpet that shall never call retreat.

So, on this fifth anniversary of his Pontificate, a thunderous salute to Francis comes from the peripheries; from far away Australia. The Archdiocese of Sydney and its Archbishop Anthony Fisher, OP, present to the Holy Father a framework which encompasses an anti-slavery supply chain strategy, anti-slavery education and external engagement, and anti-slavery welfare services.

This far-reaching framework, which is now being implemented, seeks to bring about change in the areas where the Church has the most capacity to influence change: in our supply chains. As Pope Francis has declared, businesses “must also be vigilant that forms of subjugation or human trafficking do not find their

way into the distribution chain. Together with the social responsibility of businesses, there is also the social responsibility of consumers.”

When we consider the estimated 40 million people who are enslaved in our world today we note that the majority of these men, women and children are held in forced labour conditions. Modern slavery touches every country and every industry sector. However, notable examples of high risk sectors include construction, manufacturing and agriculture. Moreover, when we appreciate that 80% of trade goes through global supply chains and consider the sheer extent of the supply chains of Catholic institutions (such as schools, hospitals and universities) we can see that our possible exposure to modern slavery is enormous. So, too, is our capacity to effect change.

When taken together, the Catholic Church in Australia is both the largest employer and the largest procurer of goods and services in the country outside the public sector. By way of example, 1 in 5 Australian children are educated in Catholic schools and 1 in 10 hospital patients and aged care residents receive care in Catholic health facilities. Indeed, the major exposure to modern slavery by the Church in Australia relates to our economic decisions – to the buying of goods and services and to investment decisions. This includes Church institutions which have a procurement function as well as parishes, communities, families and individuals who also make daily purchasing decisions.

In March 2017, Archbishop Fisher publicly committed the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney to a programme directed towards the eradication of modern slavery in the supply chains and life of the Archdiocese. In this statement to a New South Wales State Parliamentary Committee, Archbishop Fisher demonstrated he well understood that the Holy Father wanted action. In proposing action in his own Archdiocese, the Archbishop said that, “it is not enough for groups such as churches to lecture or exhort the rest of the community in such matters [as modern slavery and human trafficking]. We must demonstrate our own willingness to act where we can. The Vatican has already committed itself to slavery-proofing all its procurement practices and supply lines. It is no small task to ensure everything we use has been obtained ethically, that everything we obtain has itself been produced and supplied ethically and sustainably, and that those upon whom we rely or with whom we are affiliated are like-minded. It is no small task but we must try. As Pope Francis has pointed out, buying goods is not just a commercial matter; it has moral dimensions.”

A comprehensive strategy to combat modern slavery

The Sydney Archdiocesan Anti-Slavery Taskforce provided “a fifth anniversary gift for Pope Francis” in the form of a “framework for a comprehensive anti-slavery strategy” set forth in the Taskforce Report to the Archbishop of Sydney. The framework was described by the Taskforce Chair and former Australian Ambassador to the Holy See, H.E. John McCarthy, QC in a speech he delivered at an Ethics and Action Workshop entitled “Modern Slavery, Human Trafficking and Access to Justice for the Poor and Vulnerable”. The Workshop was held in the Vatican’s Casina Pio IV on 12-13 March, coinciding with the fifth anniversary of Francis’ election. The full text of the Report can be found on the Archdiocese of Sydney’s website, www.sydneycatholic.org. The accompanying text is an abridged version of Chairman McCarthy’s address.

Archbishop Fisher subsequently appointed an Anti-Slavery Taskforce and issued a strong Mandate to them. He honoured me by naming me as the Taskforce Chair and with Katherine Moloney, a supply chains expert, we constitute the Taskforce Executive working to fulfil Archbishop Fisher’s Mandate.

Our multifaceted anti-slavery supply chain strategy involves the implementation of an effective anti-slavery supply chain strategy for Catholic institutions with procurement functions. It uses the so-called Australian Model of supply chain regulation which is an international best practice model incorporating human rights due diligence throughout supply chains.

This Model is based on the premise that in order to combat modern slavery and other forms of exploitation, it is imperative to know the locations and conditions of work for all who labour throughout the supply chain at both national and global levels. This transparency is achieved by harnessing contractual arrangements, which already regulate global supply chains. Both national and global supply chains are comprised of a successive ‘chain’ of contractual arrangements for the production of goods or the provision of services. Businesses at the top of supply chains already use contracts to leverage their relative power to effect outcomes throughout the chain. This same mechanism may be harnessed to combat modern slavery and slavery-like practices.

The Australian Model builds into contracting arrangements human rights due diligence provisions for the protection of all workers throughout the supply chain. These provisions are binding on all suppliers throughout the chain. Moreover, a major strength of the Model is the implementation of a robust system of compliance due diligence. The Model differs from and is superior to other models of supply chain regulation which rely primarily on Codes of Conduct, supplier self-report and auditing.

Secondly, the Taskforce Executive is developing an ethical purchasing guide for use by priests and parishes, communities, families and individuals. This resource will be used to educate the faithful about the link between what they buy and modern slavery, and so equip them to make ethical purchasing decisions.

And thirdly, on behalf of the Archdiocese, we are actively engaged in advocating for effective anti-slavery supply chain strategies in the public and private sectors. We are working particularly closely with government legislators with the view to ensuring that legislation and public procurement policy requires human rights due diligence throughout supply chains.

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Our proposal for the global Church is based on the sure fact that Catholic institutions and communities the world over interface with modern slavery each and every day through their supply chains. We therefore propose that Catholic organisations with procurement functions (such as Catholic educational facilities, health systems and financial institutions) adopt effective anti-slavery supply chain strategies which implement human rights due diligence throughout all tiers of their supply chains.

We also propose that priests, parishes and the wider Catholic community are equipped and empowered about how they can contribute to ending modern slavery through ethical purchasing. And we propose that, in its engagement with governments, the Church worldwide adopt a policy position that prioritises anti-slavery supply chain legislation and ethical public procurement.

As we celebrate a momentous five years of Pope Francis and recognise his central and leading role in worldwide Catholic anti-slavery action, we must look towards the future. We also acknowledge with gratitude the difficult



but critical work being carried out by Catholic groups, particularly the Religious, and other anti-slavery organisations to support and protect victims and to expand justice and freedom to our world.

Like Pope Francis, we truly believe that it is possible to eradicate modern slavery in this generation. Like Pope Francis, we also believe that the Church throughout the world must demonstrate the will and the determination to effect positive change in the lives of the many millions enslaved for the goods and services

our world consumes. We challenge the Church worldwide to embrace an effective anti-slavery supply chain strategy at institutional, diocesan and national levels and even to engage with the Archdiocese of Sydney about how to implement such strategies. For Church leaders, Archbishop Fisher sets a known standard. Going forward the famous words of William Wilberforce take on new relevance: "You may choose to look the other way but you can never say again that you did not know."

Reduced role for UK courts in withdrawal of life support

In Great Britain it will be easier to suspend the feeding and hydration of patients in a vegetative state. According to a Supreme Court ruling on 30 July, an agreement between doctors and a patient's family will suffice, without having to seek legal permission from the Court of Protection, the court that has traditionally ruled in such cases. The Supreme Court's decision also applies to patients who do not require artificial ventilation to breathe.

The Supreme Court's lengthy ruling noted that if the patient's condition appears to be medically irreversible, ending life support would not be in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Court of Protection would be required to intervene only if there were open disagreements between families and doctors. The case that led to Britain's Supreme Court decision is that of a 52-year-old man who had been in a vegetative state since June 2017, when he suffered a severe heart attack which led to extensive brain damage. Faced with the prospect of a lengthy process to obtain permission to remove the life support machines, his family turned to the justice system. The man subsequently died, but the proceedings continued, reaching the Kingdom's highest judicial authority which issued this ruling.

In a 31 July statement on the ruling, Bishop John Wilson, Auxiliary of Westminster, emphasized that "patients in persistent vegetative states are some of the most vulnerable in our society", and thus, "it is not an act of compassion to remove their food and drink in order to cause their death". Likewise, the statement continues, "it cannot be in patients' best interests, whatever their level of consciousness, to have their life intentionally ended".



Statement by Cardinal DiNardo on the McCarrick case

The truth above all

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has released a statement identifying the course of action it will take to respond to the Church's failures, in order to better "protect the People of God".

Signed by USCCB President Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo, Archbishop of Galveston-Houston, the statement said the "accusations against Archbishop Theodore McCarrick reveal a grievous moral failure within the Church" and "cause bishops anger, sadness and shame". Moreover, the statement continues, "they compel bishops to ask ... what more could have been done to protect the People of God". Cardinal DiNardo observed that "these failures raise serious questions", such as: "why weren't these allegations of sins against chastity and human dignity disclosed when they were first brought to Church officials? Why wasn't this egregious situation addressed decades sooner and with justice? What must our seminaries do to protect the freedom to discern a priestly vocation without being subject to misuse of power?"

Cardinal DiNardo reported that Archbishop McCarrick would "rightly face the judgment of a canonical process at the Holy See", but he pointed out that there are "steps we should be taking as the Church here in the United States". He announced that after praying on the matter,

he had convened a meeting of the USCCB Executive Committee. "This meeting was the first of many among bishops that will extend into our Administrative Committee meeting in September and our General Assembly in November". Noting that the meetings would take some time, he explained that they had the aim of "discerning the right course of action for the USCCB". He then illustrated four important points:

"First, I encourage my brother bishops as they stand ready in our local dioceses to respond with compassion and justice to anyone who has been sexually abused or harassed by anyone in the Church. We should do whatever we can to accompany them. Second, I would urge anyone who has experienced sexual assault or harassment by anyone in the Church to come forward.... Third, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops will pursue the many questions surrounding Archbishop McCarrick's conduct to the full extent of its authority; and where that authority finds its limits, the Conference will advocate with those who do have the authority. One way or the other, we are determined to find the truth in this matter. Finally, we bishops recognize that a spiritual conversion is needed as we seek to restore the right relationship among us and with the Lord.... The way forward must involve learning from past sins".