

Presentation to St Peter's Parkstone – 9 July 2019

It's lovely to be with you all again, here at St Peter's. I can't believe that 3 years have gone by since my last visit. So, thank you very much for inviting me again, and, as a little treat, I have brought with me your copies of Families World Wide.

I've been asked to speak to you, today, about MULOA – and we all remember what that stands for - Mothers' Union Listening, Observing, Acting – and with the theme this year – in step with God.

It is hoped that the MULOA process will help to shape the strategy going forward for Mothers' Union as we approach our next big Anniversary – our 150th in the year 2026. The MULOA process has taken over 2 years to put together and more than 200,000 members worldwide have contributed.

And you will ask – how were WE represented in all of this? The answer to that is quite simple -through me – attending 2, if not more, national and provincial Conferences during which I spoke about our work in this Diocese and learned about the work going on within UK and worldwide. Through the information gathered at the Conferences, our MU leadership – that's our World Wide President and Central Board of Trustees, together with the staff of MSH, were given very clear information about what is going on amongst our membership. For those of you who came to our own Spring Council, you will remember hearing that falling membership within Britain and Ireland remains a major concern for our movement. Our Diocese is no exception. In 8 years, our membership numbers have decreased by 1,000, so that our current membership is just over 1,200.

I hope you will take these numbers to heart and give this very serious thought as to how each and everyone of us can help to grow our wonderful organization. I am fully aware and acknowledge that some members do find it very difficult to continue with the formalities of branch, and to a much lesser extent, prayer and fellowship

membership. In those circumstances, Diocesan membership is a perfect alternative – offering continual updates of all MU activities in this Diocese and of the movement as a whole. Our members are important – they provide the vital support needed for our movement to continue to do God’s work in this country and worldwide. I ask you not to lose sight of what it is to be part of our unique and precious Mothers’ Union, especially when personal and local difficulties can perhaps overshadow the whole picture.

Reflecting upon our declining membership, I have given much prayer and thought to what it is that makes our movement so unique and so special. Words such as prayerful, compassionate, kindhearted, benevolent, gracious, loving, accessible – all came to mind. But the word that really stood out for me was NON-JUDGEMENTAL. And for those of you who are good at crosswords (which I’m not by the way) I don’t think you’ll be too surprised to find hidden away in the word NON- JUDGEMENTAL, the letters which spell out MULOA!

Thinking about being non-judgemental, I read about a sign which, apparently, was written above a Church Door – and the sign said –
YOU’RE A TEMPLE, NOT A COURT ROOM – DON’T JUDGE!

During one of my many travels around the Diocese, I was chatting to a member who’d moved to the Diocese some 10 years ago. She was singing the praises of her new local branch – they had welcomed her with open arms and made her feel instantly at home. Well that’s Salisbury Diocese for you, I told her. She went on to tell me that she had moved here from elsewhere within the UK. From a place which had a thriving MU – which she had tried to join. In her previous place, she had been told by a member that she had to be invited to join the branch. So, when she said how much she wanted to become a member, she was told, in no uncertain terms, that she wouldn’t be invited to join them because branch members didn’t think she was

devout enough. Needless to say, she found a very different and refreshing welcome when she came to Salisbury Diocese.

As we live in an age where political correctness and fear of saying or doing something which may cause offence to someone seems to govern our thoughts and actions every waking moment, I think being non-judgemental is perhaps the most special quality of being a member of Mothers' Union. It is certainly part and parcel of our call to Listen, to Observe and to Act in step with God.

So how are we going about our call to do MULOA here? In POOLE Deanery you have every reason to be proud of yourselves. Our MU holiday home is right in your patch and I know you work to support and maintain it through your cleaning rotas and your fund raising for families to spend time there, as well as supporting many other projects including the Sidmouth holiday. That's being committed - putting yourselves out and going the extra mile; that's showing God's love and being non-judgemental; that's putting service to others before your own interests; that's doing MULOA.

All these actions have underpinning principles – you are living out your faith. Small actions touch individuals, who in turn, touch others – in time – moving outwards from individuals to society as a whole. That's being agents of change.

And who are those individuals who are touched by your actions? They may be single parents with vulnerable children, men and women escaping from abusive relationships, carers in need of time and rest for themselves, couples having to deal with medical problems or, perhaps, facing financial difficulties. All are in need of tender loving care. All are in need of non-judgemental, tender loving care.

During our Festival Service last month in Salisbury Cathedral, +Nicholas, in his Sermon, reminded us that even Mary and Joseph were not a conventional family. And he went on to say that “ What

matters most is stable, loving, lasting relationships”. + Nicholas went on to say how important the work of the MU was in catching those who otherwise might “fall through safety nets”. That’s where we come in – that’s what we do so well.

And as agents of change, what are the changes we can bring about? Through our actions, we can perhaps bring people closer to God. We can help them feel included, less isolated, give them a sense of belonging and of being accepted with barriers broken down.

We can perhaps help to refresh and restore relationships by giving people hope and confidence. Showing them that they are loved and valued. By meeting their immediate needs, we can help them to recover their dignity and their self- esteem. Perhaps even freeing them from fear. And empowering them to live better and healthier lives.

All of this is doing MULOA. Arguably, it’s doing exactly what Mary Sumner set out to do and, in following in her footsteps, it’s what we have always done but perhaps now with a clearer focus and more urgency.

I’ve outlined some of the practical applications of MULOA that are already going on in this Deanery and in the Diocese as a whole. Well here is a new and vitally important one with which you can all get involved.

Some of you will already have heard me speak about MU’s partnership with the Church of England’s Clewer Initiative – this is an initiative to eradicate modern day slavery and human trafficking from the UK by 2030.

As another special treat, I have brought along the Clewer Initiative cards which I would like each one of you to take away. The cards tell you about the different kinds of slavery going on in this country

today, what are the signs to look out for, and how to go about reporting what you have seen.

God has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free. Luke 4:18 (NLT)

WHAT IS MODERN SLAVERY?

Here's a newspaper headline -

“Jail for slavery gang who earned millions preying on the destitute”.

The gang behind Britain's biggest modern day slavery network have been jailed.

The organised criminal syndicate, led by the Brzezinski family, forced up to 400 victims to work for pennies in squalid conditions while their gangmasters earned millions and drove around in Bentleys. They preyed on homeless people, ex-prisoners and alcoholics from Poland before trafficking them to the UK with the promise of a new life.

The victims aged 17 to more than 60, were housed in rat-infested houses in the Black Country, and made to work on farms, in recycling centres and turkey gutting factories for as little as 50p per day. Some were crammed four to a room and fed out of date food. One man had to wash in a canal because he had no other access to water. The farms employing these victims were providing fresh salad vegetables, such as spring onions, to well known supermarket chains such as M&S and Waitrose.

Complaints were silenced by enforcers who would beat victims or threaten them with digging their own graves. In one incident a man was stripped naked in front of others, doused in iodine, and told his kidneys would be removed if he did not keep quiet.

The gang's bosses lived a life of luxury and earned more than £2M between June 2012 and October 2017. They collected benefits in their victim's names and even infiltrated a recruitment agency in Evesham, Worcestershire, allowing work to be directly sourced without raising suspicions.

Following a 3 year police investigation involving more than 1,500 witness statements, it can now be reported that five men and 3 women have been convicted at 2 trials after exploiting their destitute victims. Jurors heard from more than 90 victims but it is believed at least 350 more could not be traced, or were too scared to come forward.

The Senior Investigating Officer, Det Chief Insp Nick Dale said 'the clever and manipulative gang treated their victims as commodities purely for their own greed'.

And just to prove how current this incident is – the article was published in The Times on Saturday 6 July 2019.

Modern Slavery is a serious and often hidden crime in which people are exploited for criminal gain. The impact can be devastating for the victims.

Modern slavery comprises slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking. More than 200 years after the abolition of the slave trade there are still an estimated 40.3 million men, women and children trapped in modern slavery. An estimated 136,000 potential victims are in the UK with the National Crime Agency recording 1,608 potential victims in London alone in 2017. However, there are many more victims out there who have not been identified and go unreported.

Often hidden in plain sight in cities, towns and villages they are exploited because of mental illness, drug or alcohol dependence, debt, homelessness or immigration status. Controlled through

violence, victims are being forced to work in nail bars, car washes, on traveller and building sites – and women, men and children are also being forced into prostitution.

The common factors are that a victim is, or is intended to be , used or exploited for someone else's (usually financial) gain, without respect for their human rights. The perpetrators seeking to take advantage of them could be private individuals, running small businesses or part of a wider organised crime network.

For adult victims, there will be some element of coercion involved, such as threats, use of force, deception, or abuse of power. For example, perpetrators may:

Find out personal information about the victim and then use threats against their family in order to manipulate and control the victim.

Use the victim's fears about their immigration status to control them.

Deceive them with false promises of legitimate jobs.

There are many more examples. Victims may appear to give consent, but in reality they have little ability to choose to leave the exploitative situation and the perpetrators have still committed a crime.

Child victims and vulnerable adults are not able to give informed consent and therefore exploitation even without any element of coercion could constitute modern slavery.

TYPES OF MODERN SLAVERY

Modern slavery takes many different forms in the UK. The prevalence of different types of modern slavery in the UK will vary by region and change over time. However, currently there are 4 broad categories in which perpetrators may seek to exploit victims. These 4

categories are explained on the little cards being given out. The 4 categories are –

Labour exploitation – Victims of forced labour are made to work long hours, often in hard conditions, without relevant training and equipment. They are forced to handover the majority, if not all, of their wages to their traffickers. In many cases victims are subjected to verbal threats or violence and often large numbers of people are kept in the same house in horrific conditions. Cases of labour exploitation have been widely reported in car washes and nail bars, but this is only the tip of the iceberg. Victims have been found in manufacturing, entertainment, travel, farming and construction industries. The newspaper article I have just read to you is a classic example of Labour exploitation.

Domestic Servitude – this typically involves victims working in a private family home where they are ill treated, humiliated, subjected to unbearable conditions or long working hours or made to work for little or no pay. The victim could be used in this way by their own family members or partner. Again, it is very difficult for them to leave, for example because of threats, the perpetrator holding their passport, or using a position of power over the victim. Victims will lead isolated lives and have little or no unsupervised freedom. Their privacy and comfort will be minimal, often sleeping on a mattress on the floor.

Brenda is from Uganda. She was arrested after a member of the community became suspicious that she was having a same-sex relationship, which is illegal in Uganda. She was transferred to a detention centre where she was repeatedly raped by the guards, had

stones and chillies rubbed in her eyes and barrels of water poured over her mouth and nose. After 8 months of rape and torture, Brenda became pregnant and was released.

A friend put her in contact with Imelda, an agent whom she was led to believe organised well-paid work abroad. Brenda was told she could work in the UK as a cleaner and send money to Uganda for her daughter's education. Her child was left in the care of a family member.

On arrival in the UK, Brenda was told she would be working for 'Missus', the female owner of a house. The 'Missus' informed her that she now owed her money for bringing her to the UK and had to work to repay her debt.

Brenda had to clean the entire house every day, with no breaks and no pay. She was locked in the basement at night with nothing to sleep on. She was beaten, had no food and was not allowed outside. Because of the cold conditions, her limbs became stiff and painful and her damaged eyes deteriorated further from long exposure to darkness.

After a few months, a girl who was visiting the house unlocked the door, discovered Brenda and helped her to escape. Brenda was able to get help, support and

medical treatment through the UK's National Referral Mechanism. Brenda was allowed to remain in Britain, now works part-time and has been reunited with her daughter in the UK.

Sexual Exploitation – Victims are coerced into sex work or sexually abusive situations. This includes child sexual exploitation. Victims may be brought to the UK on the promise of legitimate employment, or moved around the UK to be sexually exploited. Sexual exploitation involves any non-consensual or abusive sexual acts performed without a victim's permission. This includes prostitution, escort work, or pornography. Women, men and children can be victims and many will be controlled through violence and abuse.

Serena is from Gambia. When her family arranged for her to marry a man living in the UK, she hoped to find a better life.

She was only 15 when she arrived and was met by her new 'husband' at the airport. On their first night together, he forced himself on her and from that point on she was raped daily. It soon became clear that this was not the marriage that her parents or she had hoped for.

Her trafficker kept Serena prisoner in the flat. Groups of men and women would arrive, money would change hands and she would be forced to have sex with them.

She was drugged to ensure she didn't fight back and beaten if she disobeyed or closed her eyes as she suffered. One time she woke up to find herself chained to the bed and being gang-raped.

Serena's living conditions were woeful – she was often locked in a room with no heating, no light and little food. She was eventually taken to different locations in Birmingham and Manchester. She would be driven to isolated buildings, where her suffering continued. She and other young girls would be sexually exploited, often made to dress up and pose for sexual photographs.

After a number of years, she eventually found the courage and opportunity to escape. She found help through the National Referral Mechanism, where The Salvation Army arranged care for her at a safe house where she stayed for 6 months. She was granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK. Various charities have helped her work through her trauma and find accommodation.

Human Organs – The forced removal and trafficking of human organs is an additional category of modern slavery that occurs globally. Traffickers may force or deceive their victims into giving up an organ, often kidneys or liver, or victims may agree to sell an organ but are not paid or paid less than the promised price. Sometimes

victims are treated for an illness which may or may not exist, and their organs are removed without their knowledge.

The first case of this was discovered in October 2013. The unnamed girl was brought to the UK from Somalia with the intention of removing her organs and selling them on to those desperate for a transplant. Child protection charities warned that the case was unlikely to be an isolated incident as traffickers were likely to have smuggled a group of children into the country. Since then there have been no new reported cases of organ harvesting in the UK.

Victims of modern slavery can be men women or children. They can be British citizens living in the UK, EU nationals, or those from outside the EU. Victims of over 100 nationalities have been identified in the UK but the most common originating countries of potential victims are:

Albania, Vietnam, UK, Nigeria, China, Romania, Poland, Eritrea, India and Afghanistan

Since the establishment of the Modern Slavery Act in 2015 the police have more backing and resources to investigate suspects and bring them to prosecution, but they also rely on the public to report potential crimes. Individuals, communities, churches and other organisations are very aware this is happening and often feel compelled to get involved, but might not necessarily be sure of what signs to look out for and what the correct response mechanisms would be.

In October 2017, the ++ Canterbury launched The Clewer Initiative. With this, ++Justin is enabling the Church of England Dioceses and

their wider networks – that's us – The Mothers' Union - to develop strategies to detect modern-day slavery in their communities and help provide victim support and care. This involves working with local churches to identify resources already available to be utilised, developing partnerships with others and thus creating a wider network of advocates seeking to end modern slavery.

The main focus of the collaboration will be through raising awareness, identifying victims and providing support to the survivors.

Those little cards I've brought along today will help you do this but they also carry a

Government Health Warning:

The advice given out to the public is that if you see anything untoward or out of the ordinary, that causes you to be suspicious, in no way intervene yourself – always report but do not intervene. Intervening could put the victim and yourself in danger.

Remember, behind the victims, are highly organised and ruthless criminal gangs who care nothing for human life.

God has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free. Luke 4:18 (NLT)

Please Listen, Observe and Act in step with God and help the Church eradicate from our world – this manifestation of pure evil – which is modern slavery.

I have spoken for long enough and I thank you having been so patient and attentive. You've heard about the purpose of MULOA,

you have heard how we do MULOA and now, with the focus on modern slavery, you have the practical application of MULOA going forward.

I would like to close now with the words that +Nicholas said at our Festival Service.

“There is much to celebrate. You are an amazing organization and I am proud of MU in this Diocese.

Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. At Pentecost we receive the gift of God’s spirit to enable and empower us to live as citizens of heaven in the here and now.

That is the Christian hope, the certain basis of our faith. That is what drives, empowers, enlivens the work of the MU and all Christians to ‘the glory of God, our maker, redeemer, sustainer’. **Amen.**”

Thank you.