

# PROVINCE WEEKLY

*Happy Mary Ward week.  
Celebrate and enjoy a woman who did much.*

Let us give thanks for the light those before us have been to their world and may we continue to be light for others and receive the gift of their light for us.

## **A Funny Thing happened on the way to the station . . .**

This account begins and ends at the railway station. Setting out early on the morning of Mary Ward's birthday I wandered into the newspaper cabin at Altrincham station. For a couple of minutes the newsagent and I engaged in an infinite deal of nothing about Brexit. Eventually I told him, sheepishly, that I was going to Westminster myself that morning. He asked me why I was going and I told him that I was going to a meeting. He asked me what the meeting was about and I said, 'Anti-trafficking'.

He thought about this for a few seconds before saying:  
'What's that?'

Three hours later I strode confidently into the Churchill room in the House of Commons where I met Bernie and MaryAgnes, and Marie Power, who had made it possible for me to be there. We were attending a reception on behalf of Renate to launch their Report on Child Trafficking in Europe. The research for the report was carried out by Rev Dr Carrie Pemberton Ford, Director of the Cambridge Centre for Applied Research in Human Trafficking (CCARHT) and Research Associate with the Centre for Global Migration (Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge) together with assistance from desk-researchers and RENATE members in the field. Lord Hogan-Howe, a former Metropolitan Police Commissioner is co-sponsor of the event and a trustee of the anti-slavery charity, the Arise Foundation. Speakers included Iain Duncan-Smith MP and Maria Miller MP.



There was a light but delicious and plentiful lunch, together with a variety of waters and wines. About one hundred people gathered in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere to hear government and frontline workers describe their commitment to eradicating modern day slavery. These included Lord Hogan-Howe himself, who focused on the need to protect, support and nurture victims of trafficking so that they can rebuild their lives. Iain Duncan Smith in his role as Commons Sponsor of the Modern Slavery (Victim Support) Bill reinforced this by explaining that victims of anti-trafficking

will have legal status if the Bill becomes Law. Maria Miller gave great praise to the members of Renate and the challenging work they do.

Maria is the co-chair of the Independent Review into the 2015 Modern Slavery Act. She assured us that Britain has led the way in Europe in the field of research and exposing the horrors of modern



slavery, in all its forms, especially with regard to children. MaryAgnes has caught the atmosphere beautifully on camera.



By this time we had listened to the speakers, had our lunch, met and spoken to people we did not previously know, and we had each been given a copy of the newly launched research project the subtitle of which read, rather accusingly, 'Ending Trafficking begins with Us'. No pressure then! It is a weighty tome consisting of 280 A4 pages. We were ready to go home.

However, we seemed to have forgotten something or someone . . . oh yes, The President of Renate was here somewhere.

Imelda looked elegant, calm, relaxed and completely at home and this was reflected in the way she delivered her own address. She reiterated the most important challenge to ensure that victims of trafficking must not only be rescued but protected, cared for and helped to rebuild their lives so that they can **'have life and have it to the full'**.

Those of us who know Imelda may have heard it all before. But as we IBVMs stood in front of her as she spoke, we could not help but admire her tenacity and her passion for the work in which she and her team are involved and for the way they are admired for it throughout Europe. I was reminded, as I listened, of the time I helped Jacinta to buy her outfit for The Palace. At every opportunity I told the suit makers, shoe makers, sock makers and shirt makers that my friend was going to the Palace. The group included men and women of all ages. They were not so interested in the MBE or the Palace but they were all, almost without exception, full of admiration for the reason for the Award.



Imelda ended her address as though she was really speaking to each one of us personally. She understood, she said, that so many people are becoming more aware and more involved in eradicating this modern day evil. But she told us this was not enough. We need to feel for these victims, especially the children. We need to feel for them until it hurts, until it makes us cry.

On this sober note, we did, finally, make our way out of these corridors of power, flanked by wondrous, colourful and magnificent paintings, many depicting scenes from Mary Ward's lifetime.

### Post script

On the train to Manchester from Euston we were told that there was a delay on the line and that we were running approximately one hour late. Having read every inch of my paper (bought in the morning!) I decided, as a last resort, to begin page 1 of pages 280 of THE BOOK. I became quite engrossed in it until I suddenly heard my silent companion say, 'That's serious stuff you're reading'.

In two sentences I explained why I was reading this book. For the next 30 minutes, until the train pulled into Stockport where my companion left it, I learned that he had been to a meeting of investment bankers in London. But he also told me that he and his wife were missionaries and had spent many years in Dakar and had built a school there. He had the photos to prove it. He spoke of his experience of trafficked children in Dakar and to my astonishment he turned his head towards

the window and I could see that he was trying not to cry. He then composed himself and said, *'It is an absolutely terrible thing and it makes me cry even now when I think about it.'*

In our Mary Ward Booklet for 23rd January we are called to look at martyrdom in 21st century. We all know Loreto nuns, who lived out their own martyrdom in order to give their all, *'not in part but altogether'* in their daily lives.

On page 4 of the Booklet we read:

***'We are called to be less self-important and selfish, and to strive for a deeper union with God.'***

Perhaps this self sacrifice also has something to do with identifying with the most vulnerable ***'until it hurts . . . until we cry'***.

*MaryAgnes and Kathryn*