

**How to fight slavery – an introduction from Professor Michel Veuthey of the Sovereign
Order of Malta**

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His Excellency Ambassador Professor Michel Veuthey – PhD in Law, served 33 years on the International Committee of the Red Cross, before taking up roles with The Sovereign Order of Malta. He has taught in numerous universities.

The Sovereign Order of Malta (full name: The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta) is an international entity with observer status at the United Nations. Founded in 1099 as the Knights Hospitaller of St John, the order became militarised in the crusades but, in 1291, relocated to Cyprus.

From Cyprus they moved to Rhodes, and from Rhodes to Malta in 1530. During this time, the Order operated a navy to protect Europe and ran many hospitals. The Vatican issued the knights with independence from the monarchies of Europe, hence the Order's sovereignty.

In 1798, Napoleon invaded Malta, and the Order had to relocate, eventually finding its home in the Vatican. The Order now had no lands to defend and devoted all attention to caring for the poor. National associations were created, and the Order continues its work to this present day across the world (in the UK, St John's Ambulance is a child of the Order of Malta).

Modern-Day Slavery and Human Trafficking are major issues in the modern world, affecting 50 million people worldwide. In Geneva, thousands are estimated to be trapped in slavery.

It usually happens when vulnerable people, hoping to improve their lives, take a chance on a job or opportunity they think exists. Someone says to a child in Africa, "you are great at football – European teams would love you", and that child, and his family, believe the claim. The boy is taken, and finds himself working in an illegal sweatshop.

Or the girl in Asia, told she has the skills to be a famous actress, who leaves home for Europe but finds herself trapped (they take her passport from her and control all her documents) and forced to work as a prostitute by a gang.

Think technology is a solution? Think again: the cost of technology is manual data input by thousands of people in forced labour; or thousands more pressured into removing horrific content from the internet, doing irreparable damage to their minds in the process.

Christians care about this issue because God is a redeemer! He redeemed his people from slavery in Egypt through the Exodus from bondage. He calls us all to only one form of

slavery: to his service, to his loving care – a burden that is light and loving, but which does place the Lord Jesus as our master.

He commissions us to be people of liberation, to set the world free from its slavery to sin. He commissions us to extend the Kingdom of God and the freedom of Christ.

We can do this by looking out for the signs of slavery:

- Is someone looking scared and bullied? Does someone else seem to be pushing them, guiding them, coercing them?
- Is the person serving you in a shop quiet, depressed, frightened?
- Does someone appear badly dressed, dishevelled, or in consistent need of medical care?
- Is the thing I am buying too cheap? If yes, then it is probably made with slave labour...
- Does someone have unexplained marks on their body, signs of violence being inflicted on them?
- Do you only ever see someone in a house occasionally, as if they are not allowed to go out by themselves?
- Are people working in a field seemingly kept all in one location, and never allowed to venture into a public place?

All of the above can be signs of modern-day slavery, and if you have any suspicions, do speak with authorities and/or contact the police, who can investigate the matter. Your action can save lives and put criminals into prison.

This is a **real way we can love our neighbour**; and this is **truly a spiritual fight** – it is a **war against a real form of evil in the world**.

Further information:

- **The Clewer Initiative** of the Church of England: <https://theclewerinitiative.org/>
- **The Santa Marta Group:** <https://santamartagroup.org/>
- Joint **Anglican Communion-Catholic-Sovereign Order of Malta event** affirming the commitment against Modern-Day Slavery:
<https://www.anglicannews.org/news/2024/12/anglicans-reaffirm-commitment-against-modern-day-slavery.aspx>
- **Sovereign Order of Malta – No Human Trafficking:**
<https://nohumantrafficking.orderofmalta.int/en/>