

Not For Sale

Last Year I was asked if I would lead a service for another local church to mark Not For Sale Sunday which is an initiative of CHASTE (Churches Alert to Sex Trafficking Across Europe). It was one of the hardest services I have ever prepared, but one of the most creative and significant. We used some of the resources and stories from the Not For Sale Sunday web resource including the poem, I See You Free, part of which is quoted here.

The actual service involved creating a centre-piece of bright pink fabrics with pink night lights, a large pink candle and a beautiful carved figure of a woman. Those of you who know me know I am very keen on leading all age services but on this occasion the children only joined us for the beginning and together we looked at the idea of God helping us to grow and make a new start by making water lilies out of pink serviettes. After this the under 12's left as many of the stories and the theme itself seemed to warrant a ratings guide. We then looked at the stories of several women who had been trafficked and laid these alongside the story of Jesus' response to the woman who had been accused of adultery. Jesus' condemnation was not for the woman but for those who stood in judgement over her and the systems which had brought her to this point. In silence we lit our nightlights on the display at the front as a symbol of our confession for ignoring what is going on in our city and a sign that this is an issue we will continue to hold in our prayers. We then used this Eucharistic liturgy focusing on the possibility that Christ makes all things new.

"I see the new You,
The way you've always been.
I see you standing tall and strong,
Confident and clean.

I see the true You,
The way you really are.
I see
Beyond the things you see.
I see you free."

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In the cool of a balmy evening,
after the feast was over,
money changed hands,
friendship was betrayed by a kiss,
Jesus was traded, arrested and bound,
dragged from place to place,
stripped naked and beaten,
and paraded around for all to see
made to dress up in gaudy colours
to be mocked by leering onlookers
soldiers gambling over items of clothing
pilot playing pimp to the baying crowd
and when they had made their sport with him
and found him of no further entertainment
they tortured him to death
and discarded his body
only then did they allow him
to be returned to his loved ones
to weep and mourn who he was
and what he might have become.

As the cock crows we realise

that we too stand convicted
not of torturing a man to death
but of turning our gaze away
and denying the atrocities
that are committed
not in some distant place
but right here in our city
in our communities.

As the cock crows we realise
that we too stand convicted
not of trafficking people
but of turning our gaze away
and denying the sexual exploitation
that is perpetuated
not in exotic lands afar
but right here in our city
on our doorstep.

Simon, son of John, do you love me?
Tend my sheep

Simon, son of John, do you love me?
Tend my sheep

Simon, son of John, do you love me?
Then feed my sheep

[Silence]

This is my body,
broken for you,
bread of forgiveness
that you may be whole.

[share bread]

This is my blood
poured out for you
wine of new life
that all may be whole.

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