

Good morning.

When I go out for a meal who's cooking my food? Who cleans the restaurant afterwards? Who's growing the cannabis that is smoked by the gangs who hang around the back of the Cathedral? Who are the people that staff the nailbar just opposite? What are their names? Where do they come from? Whom do they love?

The tragic discovery last week of 39 people who suffocated in the back of a refrigerated container has made us aware of a vast and invisible parallel world. This world feeds our need for consumption but it's not one that many want to confront or understand. It's made up of desperately poor people who have been trafficked or smuggled from overseas, who are employed for a pittance and whose wages are often funding a remittance culture back in their homes. And usually these people go about their work unnoticed and unseen. No one asks for their names. No one knows who they are. They are invisible.

The Gospels deal with a number of people who were invisible. On one occasion for example Jesus met a woman who for 18 years had been bound and whose body was bent over such that she could not stand up straight. She must have been in constant pain, and many people would have added their disapproval to her suffering, wrongly assuming that her disability was a punishment for sin. But Jesus lays his hands on the woman and sets her free. She stands up and starts to praise God in front of those who once criticised her. Jesus placed invisible people right at the centre of the community and freed their tongues to sing.

The deaths of the 39 people in that container are a tragic disaster. Their stories are profoundly harrowing and what happened to them a terrible indictment of an aspect of global economics. But maybe their deaths can be a wake-up call. When he met that bound woman Jesus made the invisible visible. In the same way the suffering of these 39 can bring into the light the shadowy world of smuggled or bonded labour that so many people simply prefer to ignore.

Perhaps from the squalor of this catastrophe, some people this week might look up into the eyes of the person cleaning their car or painting their nails or fixing their coffee. And perhaps as they do so they might see not a functionary or a servant, but a beautiful human being with a name, a family and a story. Maybe this week some of those who are bound up by human greed might be able to open their mouths and sing to us. For then these deaths will not have been completely in vain.

***Philip North***

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