

KSC 2018 FORMATION PROGRAMME TOPIC CHOSEN – YOUTH

Session Seven: **Theme:** **Clericalism**

"I invite you all this week to express yourselves frankly, with complete freedom. I have said it before, and I'll repeat it – with a tough face. You all are the stakeholders, and it's important you speak openly. 'But I'm embarrassed, the cardinal is going to hear me.' Whatever he might hear, he's prepared. I assure you whatever you say will be taken seriously." (Pope Francis opening statement to Pre-Synodal Meeting)
Pope Francis wants attendees to ponder the issues that cause youth to leave the Church or abandon their faith, as well as to brainstorm creative solutions.

Step 1: **Opening prayer:** from the Order's Prayers

Step 2: **READING ON THE THEME**

Many have, and I am inclined to agree, related secularism with anti-clericalism. There is no doubt that if the intention is to remove religious teaching and discipline from the society one step is to remove any influence clerics might have. There are many examples of this in history. In recent centuries perhaps the most notable are in Europe where clerics and the power they were seen to exercise were associated with the oppression and privilege of the ruling class who were judged by the general citizenry to have transgressed against human dignity and rights. It is interesting to note that the Holy Father in responding to some questions about clericalism that were put to him during the Pre-Synodal Meeting responded "The community needs a father, a brother, and what they find is a doctor, a professor ... a prince". He described clericalism as a 'terrible sickness' that must be eliminated and that drew enthusiastic cheering!

At the end of the week-long meeting the delegates (300 present and thousands more via social media) produced a document which they presented to the Holy Father on Palm Sunday. It is described in the introduction as not intending to be a 'theological treatise' but rather is meant to serve as a 'compass' for the Bishops in their October Synod. "We want to say, especially to the hierarchy of the Church, that they should be a transparent, welcoming, honest, inviting, communicative, accessible, joyful and interactive community. A credible Church is one which is not afraid to allow itself be seen as vulnerable. ... The Church should also be "sincere" in admitting its past and present wrongs, that it is a Church made up of persons who are capable of error and misunderstanding." The document encourages the Church to be firm in condemning scandals such as sex abuse and the "mismanagement" of power and wealth. If the Church does this with humility, they said, it will "undoubtedly" raise its credibility among the world's young people." (Sourced from on-line reporting by the Catholic News Agency)

In the Australian context we are well aware that the recent Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sex Abuse had much to say about clericalism. While much of the negative expression of clericalism is really historical, there are still some elements remaining and, as Archbishop Coleridge has remarked, removal of all elements of clericalism requires a significant cultural change and that does take time. But one of the 'strands' through the discussion on both secularism and clericalism is the influence that community has in forming some of the principles that has led to the development of clericalism. If the community expresses a desire for and manifests the expectation that its clergy focus on being shepherds – with the smell of the sheep on them – and servants then that is what will evolve in the culture. The principle of ontology – ancient in the Church at least from the time of Anselm – whereby the Church understands that the 'character' imparted by ordination was that the ordained conform more closely to Christ - was roundly criticised during the public hearings of the Royal Commission. It was not hard to see their difficulty in that offenders who were in Holy Orders could and should never have been involved in such conduct. The difficulty is now trying to get the message across clearly that when these people offended they betrayed their sacred character – they betrayed Christ. It is a great difficulty and it is no wonder that young people find it difficult to understanding the true nature of vocation. Again it is a question of witness and expectation. The clergy and the community that they come from have some very hard work to do in this space.

Step 3: *Allow a few moments reflective silence.*

Step 4: **SCRIPTURE READING** Gospel according to Matthew, Chapter 23, verses 2-4.

The scribes and the Pharisees occupy the chair of Moses. You must therefore do and observe what they tell you; but do not be guided by what they do, since they do not practice what they preach.

Step 5: **REFLECTION** (5 Mins)

Step 6: **SHARING** (10 Mins)

The young people are clearly expressing a desire for a sense of belonging and identity in a community that is supportive, uplifting, authentic and accessible – a Church that is welcoming and merciful – and express a strong desire to be part of that Church. In what practical ways can we enable this to come about? How can we 'empower them'?

What can we do to start to bring about the change of culture in the Church that is being called for?

In the document there is a statement "... sometimes, in the Church, it is hard to overcome the logic of 'it has always been done this way.'" Share your reaction.

Step 7: **CONCLUSION** We pray together;

Creator God,
Life is your gift to me,
Through Baptism you invite me to share
the gift of my life in service to others.
Be with me as I choose each day to show
Your presence in our world.
Give me the courage and generosity to
respond to Your love, to Your call.
I pray especially for those who serve you as
Priests, Brothers, Sisters, Deacons and Lay Ministers.
Open the minds and hearts of many other
men and women that they may accept
Your challenge to build the Kingdom.

Our Lady of the Southern Cross, Help of Christians, pray for us.
St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, friend of the young, pray for us.

Step 8: *The meeting proceeds*

Step 9: **CLOSING PRAYERS – FROM THE ORDER'S PRAYERS**