

"If you look at it from the outside, it is beautifully decorated. It has lovely stories, it promises so much, it promises everlasting life and redemption; but, if you strip away the veneer, it is a cold machine, it is gun coloured...it's not about love, compassion, or kindness, or sympathy, or any human quality like that." (Cliff James 2020)

2

This session will cover the following 4 main themes:

- The nature of power
- Power and authority
- Power in pastoral relationships
- Assessing and challenging the use of power

3

Power can be defined as:

The capacity to influence the behaviour, thoughts, emotions and attitudes of others.

Power is usually a matter of more or less, because the capacity to influence another is relative to who the other is in a given context. There are those who have more influence than others due to their status, socio-economic status, education, gender, their role, the office they hold....

4

John 10:17-18

"For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No-one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again".

A Humbler Church

We need to become a humble Church (to quote Martyn Percy), led by lay and ordained leaders who are immersed in humility, able to be relaxed and non-anxious about being in receptive or listening mode rather than in broadcast or pontificating, assertive mode. We need to rediscover a "kenotic ecclesiology" – or a way of thinking about Church, which is about loving service of others rather than acquisition.

5

Evelyn & James Whitehead The Promise of Partnership (1993)

There are three primary sources of legitimising power which are dominant.

These are:

- Institutional
- Personal
- Extra-rational

7

Whitehead

suggests that these sources of legitimating power reinforce the power gap between people in the Church. This gap can undermine any inclination people in the life of the Church have to challenge the use of power.

"Power without accountability tends to corrupt"

8

Richard Gula Ethics in Pastoral Ministry

There is a covenantal action of entrusting to another and accepting entrustment by others and this makes fidelity to trust a moral imperative. Is this person trustworthy? Are their motivations right? The Church has a fiduciary responsibility in a way which means we serve the needs of others before ourselves and we commit to not exploiting vulnerability but give greater preference to the needs of others rather than ourselves.

Paulist Press, 1996

9



10

Power in the Church

"Our power in the Church, then, is used rightly only when we use it to enhance another's freedom so that they might more fully participate in the mission of the Church". Theology of Safeguarding 2021

" if we use language of God as all powerful, as radically different from human beings and separate, as holy and majestic and above the world, without saying anything about God as intimate, involved,...inviting human beings into relationship , we may also glorify those people who claim to be powerful, who understand power in a limited way and use it to dominate or manipulate."

p.307

12

Models of Power

"the way we are to understand God's power is through the costly selfgiving love shown in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. This, then, will also be the model of power properly exercised by human beings. God's power cannot be conceived as co-ercive domination".

13

Jürgen Moltmann

- "The God of freedom, the true God, is... not recognized by his power and glory in the history of the world, but through his helplessness and his death on the scandal of the cross of Jesus"
- <u>The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of</u> <u>Christian Theology</u> 2015 (40th Anniversary edition)

14