

THE SYNODAL PROCESS MEETS THE DAY OF PRAYER FOR THOSE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED ABUSE

This Sunday our parishes begin our 'synodal journey' – and next Friday, we participate in the annual Day of Prayer for those who have experienced abuse. Mike Fox is from Cambridgeshire, and is one of our on-line parishioners, a member of our Monday night gospel sharing group. His four-decade working life has been in Social Care, and in particular Child Protection (including in Scotland). He recently sent a submission to the co-ordinators of the synodal process in his own diocese of East Anglia, the result of weeks of prayer and reflection. This is an excerpt from it, highlighting why we need such a Day of Prayer, and perhaps also why we need a Synodal Process...

6.2 Abuse cover up

6.2.1 Whilst thinking about the organisation of the Church, there is another sad example of organisational pressures that have sometimes mitigated directly against Jesus' message.

6.2.1 Over recent years, massive abuses of children and vulnerable people, mentally scarring them for life, have come to light, in a range of different nations across the world. Official organisational responses have too often at best refused to recognise the abuses, and at worst have sought to hide and cover them up. This repeated refusal to recognise the reality of wrongs being perpetrated, and the failure to acknowledge and deal with the issue, has resulted in cover ups and brushing criminal behaviour 'under the carpet'. This in itself has led to the continuation of abuse. This is one result of an authoritarian 'top down' organisation that sometimes reflects a "clerical autocracy" mentality. Those adhering to this culture do not regard themselves as servants of the faithful – rather the reverse.

6.2.3 The official organisational responses have often been to ignore and deny the truth, thereby placing a higher priority on trying to protect the reputation of the institution rather than the needs of those abused. How on earth does anyone square that with the message of Jesus? Such overly defensive and wholly inappropriate responses are as far away from the simple beauty of Christian love preached by Jesus as it is possible to get.

6.2.4 The manner and organisation of the Church helped to perpetuate these atrocities and renders the human organisation of the Church as unfit for purpose. Such organisational behaviour is indefensible and abusive in itself, sometimes criminally so. For various Cardinals and Bishops around the world, it is not so much a case of 'turning the other cheek' as 'turning a blind eye', on purpose! Well – for what purpose, exactly? And what part of scripture can be quoted to defend such actions? Things need to be reorganised on a more local scale and with laity oversight.