



The JP2 Network & Directory

Ethos and Shared Vision
Of the
Counselling Network

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 @JP2Network

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Background

The St John Paul II Centre for Human Formation was established in 2014 originally providing a space for seminarians of St Mary's College Oscott where they can explore the humanity of their priesthood. The centre provides counselling, pastoral accompaniment and training. The centre's aim is simple. To provide seminarians with the self-awareness and resilience that they need to ensure they have a lifetime of thriving ministry.

As a "helping profession" priesthood requires the priest to immerse himself into the lives of others. As Pope Francis puts it, to "be shepherds with the odour of the sheep".ⁱ As counsellors we know that this level of inter-personal immersion has a cost that needs attending to.

The JP2 Network grew out of this work as a way that we could support seminarians beyond ordination and into parish ministry. Launched at a gathering of twenty counsellors in the Archdiocese of Birmingham on 23rd January 2016 and this *community of counsellors* has grown to have over forty members of counsellors and is now working to support similar networks in dioceses across England and Wales.

This project has been hugely supported by the Archdiocese of Birmingham and in particular His Grace, Archbishop Bernard Longley, the Vicar General, Monsignor Timothy Menezes, and the Rector of St Mary's College Oscott, Canon David Oakley.

Our observations have informed us that historically there has been support for priests who have encountered difficulties or perhaps become physically or mentally unwell. This support often focuses on a curative or fixative nature. The value of this should not be understated and our observations have suggested that to compliment this a more proactive or preventative approach could be established.

Learning from other denominations and organisations which aim to support similar helping professions the JP2 Network seeks to improve access to both counselling and pastoral accompaniment whilst offering learning opportunities for likeminded counselling professionals.

Definitions

The JP2 Network

The JP2 Network is a network of *communities* of counsellors who come together voluntarily on a regular basis to explore issues of faith, religion and spirituality with an emphasis on working with Catholic clergy. With a shared generosity, the JP2 Network supports each other to create an environment where we can all be teachers and all be learners. The JP2 Network is a community where we have the opportunity to feel supported and support each other. This informal community of self-regulating professionals come together on a voluntary basis and as such there are no membership fees. The community is self-governing building on a simple ethos.

The JP2 Directory

The JP2 Directory is an online directory for Catholic clergy who are seeking accompaniment support. This support might be counselling or pastoral accompaniment. This directory provides clergy with information on how to access support and contains a list of counsellors who are members of the JP2 Network, hold the appropriate membership of an accountable professional association and who hold adequate professional indemnity and public liability insurance.

We do not aim to offer a directory that is a “recommendation” or “referral route” but simply to improve access to support in a focussed way. As such, we do not attempt to regulate members of the network or directory and rely upon each member taking responsibility for their work by being a member of an accountable professional body and adhering to the requirements of that association. We value each counsellor discerning their own ethical way of working and the benefit of sharing our experience with each other.

Counselling

We understand the process of counselling to be a *therapeutic relationship* that works within boundaries and is confidential and uses the guidelines of an accountable ethical framework such as the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, National Counselling Society, UK Council for Psychotherapy, etc.

Pastoral Accompaniment

Sometimes referred to as *pastoral supervision* this is a professional relationship which might meet less frequently than counselling and focuses more on the working environment of the priest being a supportive, learning, caring space whilst remaining a therapeutic relationship. Those familiar with the “seven generic tasks” model of supervisionⁱⁱ might understand that the tasks here are similar with perhaps a greater emphasis on the counselling role within the supervision/accompaniment. This relationship is still bound by an accountable ethical framework.

Ethos

The JP2 Network has organically grown from a desire to improve access to psychological support for Catholic clergy whilst also providing opportunities for counsellors to grow in this area of work and in their own journey. What is emerging is a sense of an interdependent network of small communities of counsellors who seek to help Catholic clergy to thrive.

We use the term “community of counsellors” to express our desire to have a facilitated, shared support organisation rather than being *officer led*.

This means that whilst the JP2 coordinators facilitate community meetings and directory listings, we expect our members to support the network. This may be by sharing information, attendance at gatherings, helping to shape future growth of the network or perhaps offering to lead a meeting / training session.

There is a thirst for support in the church and we are seeing growing interest in this model from other Dioceses. We are keen to share our emerging learning as well as learning from others.

We do not aim to offer a *franchise* as such but aim to support and encourage others to provide clergy with similar support. This way we can all learn from each other’s local experience.

His Grace, the Archbishop of Birmingham is generously hosting an online directory that other dioceses can access. Counsellors do not work on a diocesan boundary and as such clergy of neighbouring dioceses may want to access counsellors of another diocese counselling network.

In order for dioceses to access this web based directory we expect some basic criteria to be met;

- A JP2 Coordinator is appointed in the diocese to coordinate network meetings and manage the local directory list. We aim to facilitate regular JP2 coordinator meetings via the St John Paul II centre in Birmingham.

- At least two annual local JP2 Network events in each diocese are held to help build relationships between counsellors.
- To help us meet a duty of care toward the clergy who might access The JP2 Directory we ask members of the JP2 Network who wish to be visible on the JP2 Directory to meet certain verifiable criteria so that each member of the Directory takes responsibility to be;
 - A contributing member of the local JP2 Network
 - Self-employed or employed by an agency supporting the work of the JP2 Network
 - A full member of a recognised counselling/psychotherapy professional body which has an accountable ethical framework.
 - Is covered by appropriate professional indemnity and public liability insurance as necessary.

Protecting Personal Data

The JP2 coordinators will need to retain JP2 Network members contact details however this will be treated with upmost respect and care. We ask that group emails (two or more recipients) originating from either the coordinators or amongst members, are only blind copied (BCC) to respect the members who do not wish to have their information made public.

Coordinators will also need to hold more detailed information for members of the JP2 Directory, some of which will already be public information. Again, this will be held with great respect and care in line with counselling good practice. Each Diocese will have their own policies to meet their General Data Protection Regulations obligations and coordinators will need to comply with these policies.

The agreed data that is published on our web based directory will inevitably be accessible by all internet users. Each counsellor will be responsible for entering their own details into the directory and as such will be agreeing to make this information public.

The JP2 Directory is hosted and owned by the Archdiocese of Birmingham and coordinated through St Mary's College Oscott. We have agreed to abide by the GDPR policy of the college, a copy of this can be found on the directory resources page.

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ⁱ Pope Francis' Homily, Chrism Mas 28th March 2013

ⁱⁱ Carroll M. (1994) *The Generic Tasks of Supervision*. (available at <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/103166.pdf> last accessed on 1st October 2018)