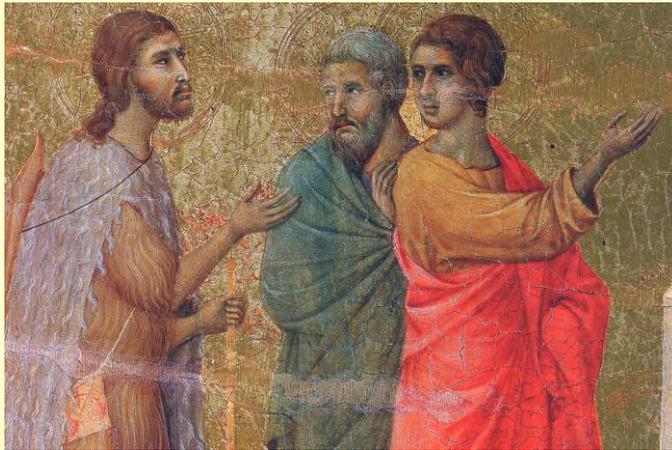


The Art of Accompaniment and its Many Encounters



CDDV Conference Valladolid
5th November 2019
Pete Smallwood

My Background

Firstly, I want you to know that I am not an expert in anything. I have experience, I am blessed to find myself on what Richard Rohr describes as “the edge of the inside.” I am here to learn as much as share. I am in formation. What I will share is stuff I need to hear often. We are all teachers and learners.

Two sessions.

1 exploring the role of accompaniment, the joys and the pitfalls. I want to challenge you as accompaniers asking the questions “what works well and work could be done differently.

In my second session I want to share with you some of the encounters we have with seminarians as well as those we have with clergy through the JP2 Centre. I will make these very general to protect confidentiality and the issues I share are fictitious case studies based on a collection of experience.

When you talk, you are only repeating what you already know. But if you listen, you may learn something new.

Dalai Lama



As a counsellor, I am more accustomed to listening to rather than talking at individuals and groups, although, some Oscotian's may accuse me of the opposite.

So lets start by listening.

Speed Download

Top 3 Roles
of The
Vocation Director

Top 2 Challenges
for The
Vocation Director



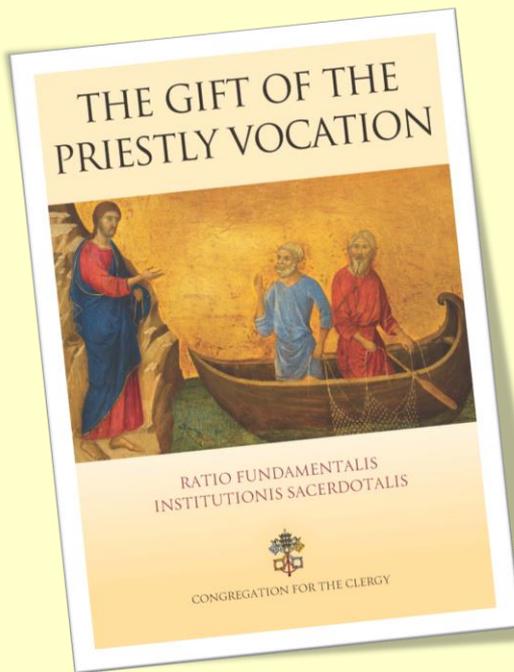
“Man’s experience is indeed a seamless garment. No part of which can be separated from the rest”

Cleanth Brooks



So what do I mean when I talk about accompaniment

As so well described in the recent report of the synod for “young people, faith and vocational discernment” seminaries sometimes “do not take sufficient account of the candidates’ previous experience, underestimating its importance”. We need to recognise and value that discerners and enquirers have already been on a journey of formation. This formation from early years, family, parish, school etc., continues to inform the remaining journey of formation.



“..... so many priests today do not live out **poverty, chastity and obedience** and they end up being one of the **800** applications for dispensations that come to My (Archbishop Patron Wong) desk in the Congregation for the Clergy **every year**”

Rome June 2017



Scrutiny – how do you build a relationship based on accompaniment, judgement, power, institutional needs and fears, risk management, instinct/gut reactions, diagnosis, professional and personal etc.



More likely to be a maybe, there is potential, rather than a definite yes.
The importance of “Gut Feeling” – listen to your instincts and share them. Describe how you encounter the enquirer and see how they react.

Is your Bishop Listening?



Collaborative Discernment

So you come to a recommendation... is the Bishop willing to listen?



Boris Johnson - when we ignore our gut feelings all we are doing is leaving a problem for someone else.

Our experience of the other is seen through our lenses and whilst we may not be right or accurate, ignoring our encounters is not fair on the potential candidate



As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another

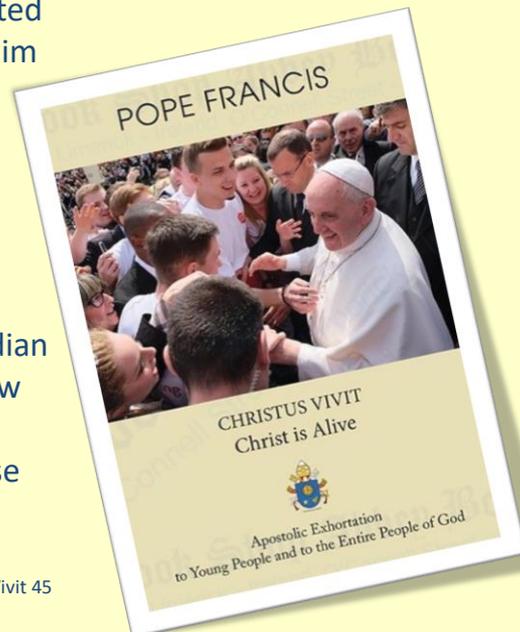


Proverbs 27:17

Romans 15:14 I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another.

“.. Without yielding to evasions or illusions, “she accompanied the suffering of her Son; she supported him by her gaze and protected him with her heart. She shared his suffering, yet was not overwhelmed by it. She was the woman of strength who uttered her ‘yes’, who supports and accompanies, protects and embraces. She is the great guardian of hope... From her, we learn how to say ‘yes’ to the stubborn endurance and creativity of those who, undaunted, are ever ready to start over again””

Christus Vivit 45



Mary as our accompaniment model and mentor
Her inspiration for our JP2 Logo

“Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe”

Abraham Lincoln



SLIDE 5

The woodcutters paradox. The woodcutter knows that in order to do his job effectively he must look after his tools

God has given you the tools to carry out his mission, your mind, body, spirit, and it is up to you to look after them effectively to do his work to the best of your ability.

When I am in demand with many commitments, and I am answering a call to a vocation as a helper, perhaps responding as a people pleaser, I am often left till last on the scale of fulfilling needs.

My desire to serve means that when I prepare my to do list, my list of priorities for the day, I often find it hard to find space for me.

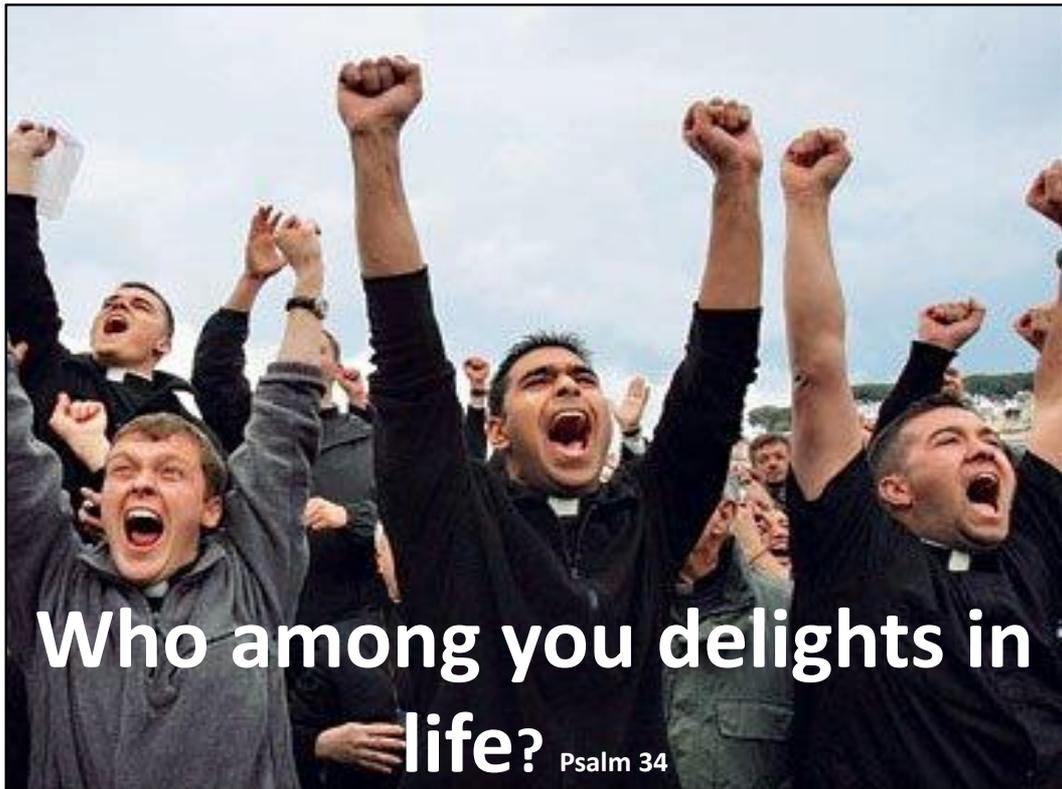
I want you to reflect briefly to your self, if this was a list of your daily priorities, where do you come? (hand gesture)

Priesthood is A way of being not just doing.

Getting enough sleep, eating well, getting exercise, having fun, being grateful. As pope Francis comments in Laudato Sii, (237) “rest opens our eyes to the larger picture and gives us renewed sensitivity to the rights of others”.

As a counsellor, I know that at the times I have not been attentive to my own needs. It is hard. At these time my clients do not get the best help from me

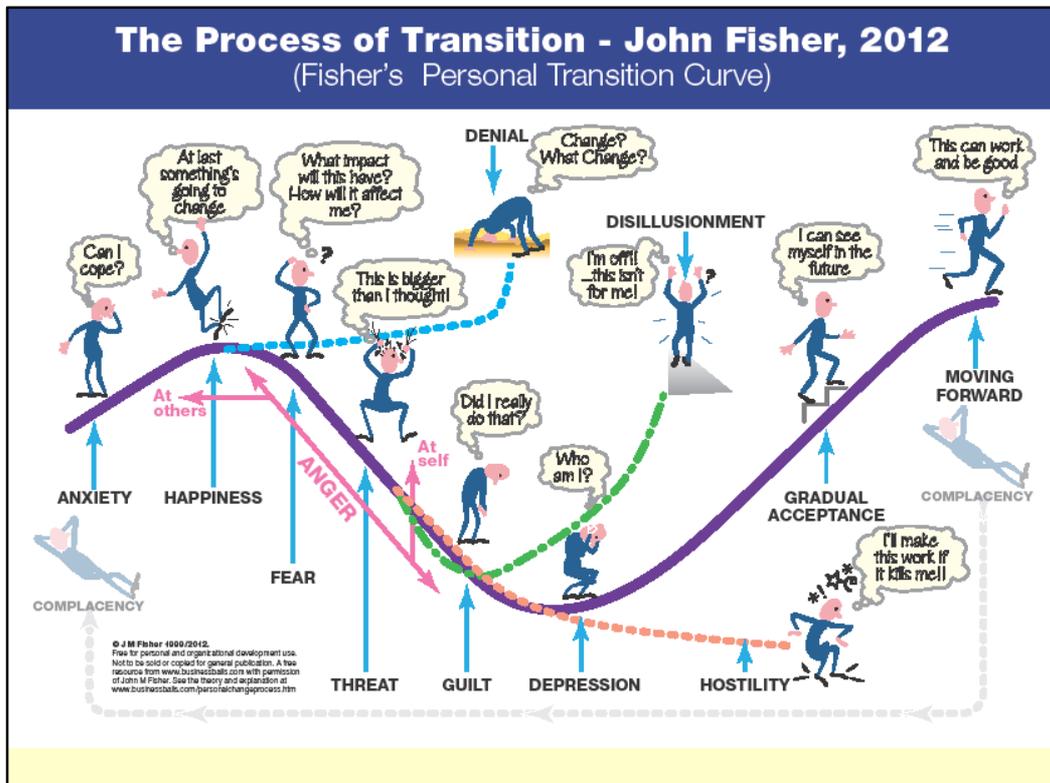
I hope that over the next couple of days, I can challenge you reflect on your own self care and the care of each other. I want you to understand that looking after yourself is an ethical and a moral obligation, a commitment that is filled with love for self and love for others. It is a thread that runs through the best human formation books ever written, the four Gospels and it is the place where mercy erupts from.



We have to start with ourselves – are we a witness to the joy of priesthood?
Can we model priesthood for our enquirers?
Are we living a contented priesthood.



The church has always been evolving and changing
We need our enquirers to know that the church they imagine they
are joining will have changed by the time they are ordained.
We need to challenge fixed fantasies about the presbyterate.



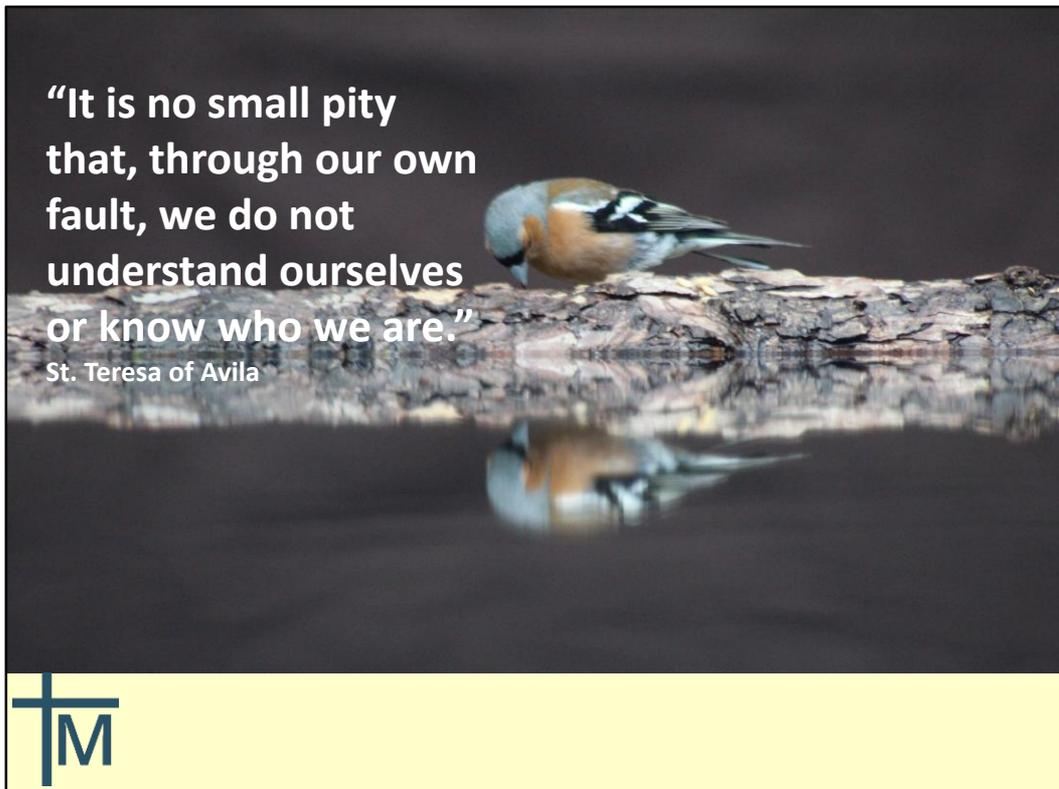
Grace builds upon nature – it does not supplant it
 Learning to prepare for change is a skill that can be learned.
 Preparing for the psychological assessment as part of the human formation programme is essential otherwise it just become a risk assessment tool.

Barriers



The priest should mould his human personality in such a way that it becomes a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ

This bridge needs to be a mega structure not just a plank across a babbling brook and the footplate of the bridge, represents the initial encounter with each other. This is point that we will either bring people to Christ or turn them away. We need to be aware of how we are encountered, accept ourselves and then we can change/grow



Know thy self – what is self? It is the whole of me, body mind spirit., living in and interacting with this world, at this time. Truly secular. Affected by and affecting the world around me.

Self awareness is often misinterpreted as introspection, naval gazing, selfish overindulgence in me me me. Of course, the few who think like this are those who most lack self-awareness. They are often fearful , scared of the unknown.

However, a lack of self-awareness leads to a splitting between who we are and who we appear to be. There is an incongruence between who I think I am, the image I have drawn of myself, and the way that others encounter me.

Lack of accurate self awareness is a denial of those parts of me I would rather not see. Interestingly many of us accept criticism and reject compliments.. I call this the Teflon man. The criticism sticks but the compliments, the affirmation often flies off.

This denial of a part of me lies in the secret world and is where the roots of acedia, self-harm and self-limiting beliefs live.

Ask yourself, on your list of priorities each day..... (Where do you come? Hand gesture)

Our mission in human formation is to shine a light on “who am I” and who am I when I am with you”

Fraternal Correction

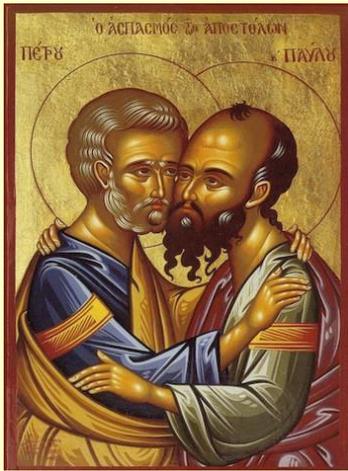


Wounds from a
true friend are
better than
kisses from a
flatterer
(Proverbs 27:6)



We need to encourage our seminarians to affectively and effectively encourage each other towards holiness.

Brotherly Correction



If your brother does something against you, go and have it out with him, between your two selves. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother. (Matthew 18:15)



However, the voices in the community are not always helpful or free from an agenda so we need to ensure (as formators who are doing our own self-discovery) that we are aware of the messages that the seminarians and those outside the formation community are contributing in a helpful and cohesive way rather than being divisive or opinionated.

A good Thing?



- Would we seek out personal correction
- What would stop us giving or receiving this feedback?



So, is feedback a good thing?

Then what would get in the way of of us offering it.

Unconditional Positive Regard (Acceptance)



Love thy neighbour as thy self

Do I like myself?

Do I love my self?

Carl Rogers – The curious paradox is that if I can accept who I am right here right now then I can change.

Jung – I am not what happened to me – I chose what I become

Stephen Colley – We do not see the world as it is, we see it as we are.

Giving & Receiving Feedback



Giving and receiving feedback are two of the most important skills in the helping professions.

Telling people how we see them and how we feel about them, hearing others tell us how they see us and how they feel about us.

How we give feedback through verbal and non-verbal communication will effect how it is heard and we can notice how we respond to others when they give us feedback. Gentle or harsh, direct or beating around the bush. A welcoming smile or inclusive wink or a stern stare or completely ignored.

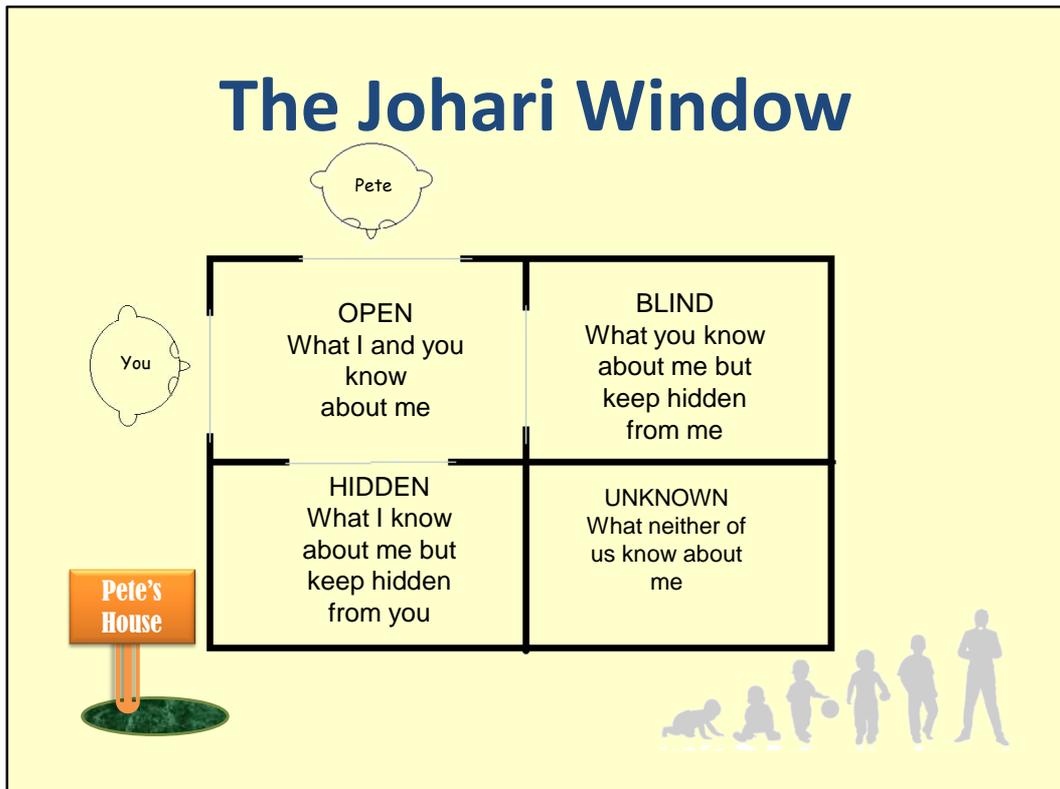
Feedback can be offered or received as a weapon or a gift regardless of how it is shared.

Giving & Receiving Feedback



An ability to offer feedback that is..... According to Socrates or may be Aquinas

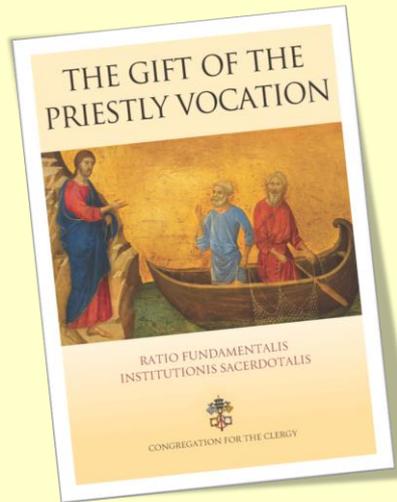
- Helpful
- Kind
- True



Joseph Luft and **Harrington Ingham** in 1955^[1] in the United States, used to help people better understand their relationship with self and others. It is used primarily in [self-help](#) groups and corporate settings as a [heuristic](#) exercise.

The aim is that by sharing something of me and you telling me how you encounter me, I can become more aware and reduce the stuff in the hidden room

One must constantly feed the 'fire' that gives light and warmth to the exercise of the ministry, remembering that, "the heart and form of the priest's ongoing formation is pastoral charity'



What Pope John Paul II described as strands or pillars of formation in *Pastoris Dabo Vobis*, the *ratio fundamentalis* produced in 2017 now describes as dimensions of formation. These dimensions remain the four areas that seminaries continue to focus on. I want to just remind you of your obligation, as part of your self-care, remember, because THEY are worth it, towards maintaining your growth as a spiritual leader.

Just as I have described self-care as an ethical and moral obligation, attending to your own growth, our ongoing transformation, our own conversion, is more than just a canonical requirement, it is what feeds the fire of your ministry. The people will see this fire in you. They will certainly notice when the fire goes out.

Your ongoing formation will impact and influence the future formation of your enquirers and discerners

“Responsible To” vs. “Responsible For”

I want to journey alongside you and care for you. I cannot take responsibility for your feelings nor you for mine, as painful as that can be. I am responsible for what I do and what I say. I am not responsible for how you hear what I say.



Burdon, burn out,
increase stress,
need for self care,
need for comfort (punch & judy?)



Healthy Boundaries

“When we begin to set boundaries with people we love, a really hard thing happens: they hurt. They may feel a hole where you used to plug up their aloneness, their disorganization, or their financial irresponsibility. Whatever it is, they will feel a loss. If you love them, this will be difficult for you to watch. But, when you are dealing with someone who is hurting, remember that your boundaries are both necessary for you and helpful for them. If you have been enabling them to be irresponsible, your limit setting may nudge them toward responsibility.”

- Henry Cloud & John Townsend; *Boundaries*

Safer Recruitment

Safeguarding

Psychometric assessment & the small print

Pope Francis wants us to “befriend the young”

Grooming

Likes / Dislikes

Gut Feeling



The potency of a relationship is often at the boundary line. So we need to embrace all that safeguarding can offer us and ensure that it is fully integrated into the human formation process. We want safe pairs of hands that are resilient and self-aware rather than scared or rigid.

This means that we have to fully explore boundaries and expectations, building a culture of reflective practice that will see a priest through a lifetime of contented and fruitful ministry

RESPONSIBILITY & ACCOUNTABILITY

A Form of Clericalism



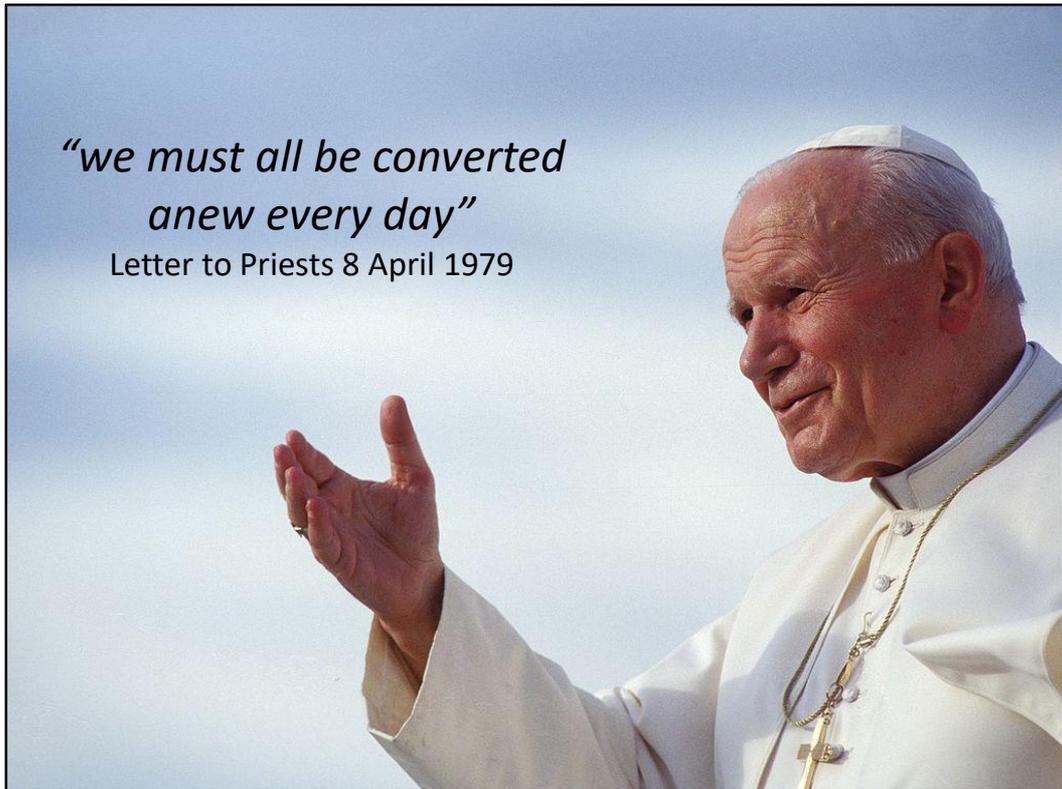
Having your eye on the goal of
seminary for a long time
Humanity

RESPONSIBILITY & ACCOUNTABILITY

A Form of Clericalism



It's a bit like abseiling
Top roper. Lets out some slack
Tight at first as we learn to walk down the rock face. As we start to take bigger
steps or even jump, we need more slack to make mistakes and to learn.
We need to give the guys enough slack to make mistakes in a safe enough
way, to have faith in their autonomy to make choices and to be held
accountable for the consequences of those choices



And this is a daily commitment. Just like obedience or celibacy, a commitment or promise made once at ordination is unlikely to be sustainable. These commitments need to be renewed frequently.

Remember the art of self-acceptance. Accepting what we did well and what we need to do differently is the key to effective transformation.