

Working-group 2

The Challenge of being a Christian and a Leader

Definitions

Being military leaders we are obliged to provide guidance and inspiration to our service men and women in order to achieve particular goals.

Given the extreme nature of some of the tasks that the military leader may be charged with, it is clear that he needs a well balanced mixture of legal authority, charisma, and professional knowledge.

Whereas the leader may have legal authority based on his rank and status he needs a number of qualities ranging from:

- Honesty
- Integrity
- Courage
- Foresight
- Reliability
- Enthusiasm
- Mental robustness

Of course he also needs the required amount of professional ability if he is to be recognised and listened to.

A leader who is tempered by Christian values will have something else.

He will have a sense of humility, he will be trustworthy, he will allow his faith to guide his actions and to steady his resolve in time of crisis, he will have a deep respect for human dignity which will guide him to make the most appropriate choices when faced with ethical dilemmas, in a hostile environment. Above all else, he will have a sense of selflessness.

Being a Christian leader his values and virtues are underpinned and inspired by the person of Jesus Christ and his leadership and service.

Challenges

Being a leader and an effective leader in a military environment is a challenge in itself given the often demanding nature of our calling. The Christian leader today is faced with a number of challenges. Some of these are enduring and will be easily recognised by our forbears. Others are new challenges.

The group listed these as:

- Abuse of power
- Lack of vision
- Poor individual formation
- Lack of spiritual life
- Lack of core beliefs and values
- Excessive secularism
- Pressure to conform
- Informal hierarchies of influence
- Pressures of personal life
- Conflicts of leadership and service

How then can these challenges be tackled?

The group came up with a number of possible answers some requiring attitudinal changes and also some small practical ways that can assist.

- Abuse of power

Moral education and formation to encourage self-reflection

- Lack of vision

Building up capacity to define the ultimate goal in life.

- Poor individual formation and lack of core beliefs and values

Teaching not only the legal basis, but also the biblical principles that underpin these values. It is necessary to encourage those who are Christians to act as role models and when teaching our value system it is always useful to choose role models from history who were guided by a strong moral dimension and where possible a Christian dimension.

- Lack of spiritual life.

We must try and elevate the role of the Chaplain as friend and advisor to all. As all too often the role and status of the Chaplain is undermined in either a careless or deliberate manner. Encourage our military leaders to be role models.

- Excessive secularism

Encourage the recognition that the core values are not material ones.

- Pressure to conform

The military man must exercise a certain degree of pragmatism while not compromising his core beliefs. In other words he must have some flexibility in his integrity. There is no point in taking a moral stand and resigning on an issue that is not important. He must exercise the apostolic virtues of showing "*the wisdom of the serpent and the innocence of a dove*".

Informal hierarchies of influence

It is necessary to offer a better alternative that brings its own rewards. We should encourage altruism and selflessness in our charges by being a living example and then rewarding this when we see it. We as officers and NCOs can reward this in annual assessments and promotion reports.

Pressures of personal life

A Christian Leader must always be available and approachable. He must show himself as a three dimensional human being that way his men are more likely to confide in him and be guided by him.

Conflicts of leadership and service

We agreed that it is essential that from the earliest days in the service that we as officers and NCOs explore the accepted norms and values that our young men and women have entered the service with and where possible we link these to the biblical underpinning of these values. It is not for nothing that one of the ancient and least used titles of the Holy Father is the servant of the Servants of God. A Christian leader displays a particular type of leadership. He is not autocratic, he is a servant leader.

In conclusion it must be said that everyday in small ways the Christian Leader will be challenged by complex moral problems and he has the choice between doing what is easy or doing what is right.

In the absence of Heaven on Earth or utopia where there are no arms or killing, the next best thing is surely to have a military that is at least guided by officers and NCOs who have moral principles and it is surely our wish that where possible these be Christian values.