

Week two of Catholic wrap up, more being revealed and more being explained

Francis Sullivan – 17 February 2017

We are now in the second week of the three that will make up the final hearing of the Catholic Church in this Royal Commission. Unlike all the other case studies the Church has been involved with, this hearing is delving into the way the Church, as a whole, dealt with the abuse scandal.

As each topic is explored, be it clericalism, celibacy, the seal of confession or screening and supervision of seminarians, a range of views and positions are on display. There is no doubt that the Catholic Church is a complex and multifaceted organisation.

I suppose this hearing can be best understood as a time for the Church, not just the Commission, to look with new eyes at itself.

As I have said before, for far too long the Church refused to fully and frankly look at itself and admit to its self-protective ways. For too long it gave in to the knee jerk defensiveness that relegated victims to second place and dismissed critics as being ideological enemies.

But now that defensiveness needs to be seen for what it was. A resistance to the truth. A rear-guard attempt to keep at bay the momentum that has finally revealed the depth and extent to which the Church tried to hide, minimalist and even rationalise away this scandal.

Fortunately, for all of us this is breaking down.

Even as recently as the beginning of this week we see once again Pope Francis apologising to victims of abuse and lamenting the suicides that have occurred because of that abuse. For many these apologies have come far too late.

They can seem hollow because they are not backed up with concerted action. The inertia of the Catholic Church has a way of frustrating and leaving people in despair. At times I wonder if the Holy Father doesn't feel just that when he speaks from his heart but the heart of the organisation can so often seem hard, business-like and resistant.

Last week's release by the Royal Commission of the abuse statistics held by the Catholic Church gave some historical perspective to what the Church must answer. I am not sure even if we will get all those answers over this three week hearing.

In many ways the answers only ever come when organisations, like people, can honestly look at themselves, without blinkers and blind spots.

Jesus healing blind men, can we hope that another miracle will unfold!