

Commission on Ministry page 381 and following

The Rt Rev Dr Michael Jackson

One of the particularly interesting suggestions to come out of the various meetings of The Summit on Ministry to date is that we seek to discern diaconal, priestly and episcopal gifts in the whole people of God alongside those three ministries as historically intrinsic to the life of the Church of Ireland. The importance of this insight which emerged at the Armagh Meeting seems to me to lie in its recognition that lay and ordained ministries are complementary and ought not to be subject either to confusion or competition.

The continuity of ministry in three orders which is essential to Anglicanism is assured. So also the respect for and overlap with lay ministry when the Church seeks to discern such gifts in those who minister in the name of the Church. By being complementary, lay and ordained ministry will more easily be collaborative as the discernment continues while these gifts infuse the life of the Church.

What is vital in this discernment is an insight given voice by David Porter, director of ECONI, recently. He warns us off glib and facile models of leadership. He expresses his alarm that too much discussion of Christian leadership focuses increasingly on technique and authority – or I should be more content with the word: power in this context - with little attention to its true spiritual nature. Marking ministerial cards about the excessive concern today with fulfilling my calling, my purpose, and protecting my ministry, he earmarks as an essential component in Christian ministry the ability to guide the people of God through a changing world in full knowledge of their mortality.

This came home to me forcefully when I recently gave a copy of the BCP 2004 to a member of another part of the Christian family. He went straight for the Funeral Services and in saying it he said it twice: For that's what it's all about.

The perspectives of sacrifice and service alongside thanksgiving and glory need to feature largely in our faithful exploration of lay and ordained ministry if we are to avoid the caricature of ministry as a customized and individualized elite. And we must.