

Luke Larner in conversation with Alex Fry

Fr Luke Larner is in his first incumbency and is editor of the volume 'Confounding the Mighty: Stories of Church, Social Class and Solidarity'. His conversation with Alex is in two parts. The first is directly relevant to the wellbeing of working-class clergy and the second explores wider issues of class and church.

Part 1: Luke's experience as a working-class clergyperson

In the first half of the conversation, Luke talks about his background and his journey to ordination, offering rich detail about his working-class roots and his joy at finding intellectual growth and fulfilment through the training process, seeing the rigours of academic inquiry as a gift from the Church for which he is grateful. He also talks about the doubts he had that his call would be recognised because of his background and how he presents himself and describes how at times he has a sense of non-belonging within the Church. Luke's story includes both the significant encouragement he received and the discomfort of some encounters with those in the Church during his journey to ordination.

Questions for reflection and discussion:

- Luke's definition of social class is "both the web of labour relationships and the web of other stuff, socioeconomic, political, cultural, that reproduces and maintains those class relationships in a society and in a global village that we live in." What do you think social class is and what do class differences look like in different contexts of the Church?
- What are the unspoken cultural and social rules that operate in the Church?
- How does ordination affect social class? Do clergy always retain their social class or does it sometimes change after ordination?
- In what ways should clergy be expected to adapt to Church culture and how should culture change to allow people to be themselves?
- How can social class contribute to feelings of precarity or security among clergy? What other factors might be involved?

