

# The nature and expression of servant leadership among contemporary Church of Ireland clergy.

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## Abstract

Servant leadership is a popular subject in various spheres of organisational life, including churches. Beginning from Greenleaf's seminal work in the 1970s, this leadership model and metaphor attempts to reflect the counter-cultural nature of Jesus' ministry as opposed to more authoritarian models. This dissertation first attempts to define servant leadership from a biblical base, exegeting the most powerful demonstration of the model, the foot-washing episode of John 13, whilst acknowledging other references by Christ to servant leadership. It then surveys current thinking on the subject from Greenleaf to Spears and Christian critiques such as Tan and Augsburg, including feminist and liberation theologians such as Zaragoza. Page and Wong's Servant Leader Profile is also discussed. The three-fold orders of ordained ministry (the diaconate, priesthood and episcopacy) in the Church of Ireland are examined, including reflections on the model of an Internship year for the Diaconate. Theologies, such as baptismal ecclesiology that lend themselves to servant leadership, are discussed. Certain clericalist tendencies in language, vestments and liturgy in the Church of Ireland are evaluated against the servant leadership found in the Benedictine Rule. The evaluation of the expression of servant leadership in the Church of Ireland used a questionnaire as a piece of qualitative research. Results of the research are woven throughout the dissertation. Servant leadership was found to be present and meaningful to most respondents, although in varying degrees. The questionnaire was framed in such a way as to ascertain whether respondents self-referenced as individuals and leaders, or whether their individual spirituality fed into their leadership. Further research into the topic is called for, possibly using Page and Wong's Servant Leader Profile and Augsburg's Motivations for Service questionnaire for parishioners, to gain a perspective from those being led by Church of Ireland clergy.