



HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE

Digital Press Kit

for the Meeting on the Protection of Minors

21-24 February 2019

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Please Note: The digital press kit is a working document and does not express the position of the Holy See. The information included reflects what has been reported in various public sources. It is subject to updating and correction.

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Background on the Meeting on the Protection of Minors

Working translation

By Federico Lombardi, S.J.

Timeline

- [12 September 2018](#) Council of Cardinals announces that Pope Francis decided to convoke a meeting with the Presidents of Episcopal Conferences on the theme “the protection of minors”
- [23 November 2018](#) Pope Francis designates members of the Organizing Committee and the participants
- [18 December 2018](#) Announcement of the letter of invitation sent to participants with request to meet with survivors
- [16 January 2019](#) Communication regarding the plans for the upcoming meeting, and the information that Fr Federico Lombardi, S.J., will moderate the plenary sessions

Why Pope Francis proposed the meeting

The Pope explained his intention very well on the return flight from Panama. He wants to help the bishops clearly understand what they must do. It was in this sense that he spoke of a “catechesis”. This “catechesis” will begin through the presidents of the episcopal conferences.

Firstly, he wants them to become aware of the tragedy, of the suffering of the victims. Out of this will arise a strong sense of responsibility on the part of individual bishops, on the part of the bishops as a whole, and on the part of the wider community, that is, the Church.

Secondly, he wants them to know what they need to do: what the procedures are, what tasks need to be accomplished at various levels (diocesan bishop, archdiocesan bishop, episcopal conference, Vatican dicasteries). This will lead to mutual accountability of the responsibilities and tasks that each has in relation to other bishops in the Church, and in society.

This presupposes “transparency” regarding tasks, procedures, and the way in which they are accomplished.

In this way, the Church’s credibility and people’s ability to trust the Church might be recuperated.

Who is participating in the Meeting?

- The Pope will be present throughout.
- The Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences: 114 in total:
 - 36 from Africa
 - 24 from North and South America
 - 18 from Asia
 - 32 from Europe
 - 4 from Oceania
- 14 leaders of the Oriental Catholic Churches
- 15 Ordinaries who do not belong to an Episcopal Conference
- 12 Superiors General of men religious
- 10 Superiors General of women religious
- 10 Prefects of Vatican dicasteries
- 4 Members of the Roman Curia

- 5 Members of the Council of Cardinals
- 5 Organizers, Moderator and Speakers
- Total: 190
- For a list of Participants, [click here](#).

How was the Meeting prepared?

The announcement of the meeting happened during a meeting of the Council of Cardinals last 12 September. At the end of November, the Pope appointed an Organizing Committee consisting of 4 people: Cardinal Blase Cupich, Cardinal Oswald Gracias, Archbishop Charles Scicluna, Father Hans Zollner SJ, in collaboration with Gabriella Gambino and Linda Ghisoni, from the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life. In December, the Organizing Committee sent a letter to the participants. Accompanying the letter were a questionnaire with a deadline for the end of January and an invitation that each participant meet with a few victims/survivors of sexual abuse on the part of members of the clergy.

The number of responses received from the questionnaire is very high (almost 90%) and is a rich source of information. Since most of the questions were open-ended, it will take time to evaluate the responses. The information will be helpful in understanding specific approaches to the sexual abuse of minors by members of the clergy in different cultures. This will be the subject of ongoing study after the Meeting.

How will the Meeting proceed?

The fundamental elements of the Meeting are: prayer and listening; presentations and questions; group work; conclusions by the Pope.

- Prayer: There will be moments of prayer at the beginning and at the end of each working day of the Meeting. There will be a Penitential Liturgy on Saturday afternoon, and a concelebrated Sunday liturgy.
- Presentations: There will be nine presentations: 3 per day. Two will be in the morning and one in the afternoon. All will be followed by a question and answer period.
- Group work: There will be two times for group work per day: one in the morning and one in the afternoon.
- Pope Francis: The Pope will speak at the beginning. Then, should he wish, he will do so at the conclusion of the day. He will pronounce a concluding discourse on Sunday morning.

Please [click here](#) to access the Program.

What are the themes of the Meeting?

Each of the three days has a theme: 1) Responsibility, 2) Accountability, 3) Transparency.

Each of these themes will be articulated in three presentations. Each presentation will focus on the theme as it relates to: the person of the bishop and his responsibilities; the relationship of a bishop with other bishops; the relationship of the bishops with the People of God and society.

The presenters were chosen so that a variety of continents, cultures and situations in the Church could be represented.

Please [click here](#) to access a list of the presentations and the presenters.

There will be a brief time for questions and answers at the end of each presentation. Then the participants will meet in their language groups to discuss the presentation(s). Each group will formulate a brief summary of their discussion to be shared with the assembly in the evening.

How will victims/survivors be heard at the Meeting?

Listening to those who have suffered from clerical sexual abuse as minors and understanding that suffering is the necessary point of departure for any serious commitment to combat sexual abuse. Their testimony, therefore, is also included in this Meeting. However, such listening requires adequate time, which is very limited during the Meeting.

Having said this, the primary listening to the victims/survivors is that requested of the participants during the preparation for this Meeting. They were asked to do this so that they might become aware of the gravity of the problem that exists in their own territories.

During the actual Meeting, there are 2 moments which include victim/survivor testimonies: a video containing testimonies from 5 victims/survivors at the beginning of the Meeting; during each of the evening prayer times, one victim/survivor will provide a testimony.

In addition, the Meeting intends to promote an awareness that an ongoing need to listen to victims is necessary.

Will a final document or declaration be issued? Will there be a plan of action for the future?

A final document is not foreseen. The conclusion, within the context of the Meeting, will be the Holy Father's discourse after the closing liturgy on Sunday Morning.

The Meeting itself is a moment in which the participants will be able to listen to each other. It is characterized by co-responsibility. Therefore, a subsequent meeting will take place immediately after the Meeting on the Protection of Minors. There, the Organizing Committee will meet with the heads of those Vatican Dicasteries who need to be involved in order to begin to identify the proposals that resulted from the Meeting and the tasks that need to be accomplished so that the proposals are transformed into actual practice.

Official Curial and Papal Documents

A complete compilation of documents, homilies, and other forms of communication regarding the Abuse of Minors and the Church's Response can be found using this [link](#). Here are a selected few that are more pertinent to the Meeting on the Protection of Minors

Apostolic Letter issued “Motu Proprio” *Sacramentorum Sanctitatis Tutela*, Pope John Paul II, 30 April 2001

With this Motu Proprio, Pope John Paul II promulgated the Norms concerning the more grave delicts reserved to the Congregation of the Faith. Sexual abuse of minors committed by a deacon, priest or bishop is added to those considered to be “most grave delicts,” and placed under the jurisdiction of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

“Article 6, § 1. The more grave delicts against morals which are reserved to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith are:

“1° the delict against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue committed by a cleric with a minor below the age of eighteen years; in this number, a person who habitually has the imperfect use of reason is to be considered equivalent to a minor.”

The Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops, *Apostolorum Successores*, Congregation for Bishops, 2004, Art 209

This document is an updated and revised Directory of a previous one issued in 1973 and prepared by the Congregation for Bishops. It is meant to help bishops “exercise more fruitfully every aspect of their complex and difficult pastoral ministry in the Church and in the modern world. It is intended to help the Bishops to address, with humble trust in God and with constant courage, the challenges and new problems of the present day, amid the great progress and the rapid changes that mark the beginning of this third millennium” (Introduction).

“The modern world manifests grave forms of injustice caused by an ever increasing disparity between rich and poor; by an unjust economic system through which, in many parts of the world, people suffer from hunger and growing numbers become marginalized, while in other parts there is great wealth; by the horrors of war which continually threaten the peace and stability of the international community; by the discrimination which men suffer at the hands of other men; and by the degradation of women, on the one hand by a hedonistic and materialistic culture and on the other by the refusal to recognize their fundamental rights as persons.

“In the face of these challenges, the Bishop is called to be a prophet of justice and peace, a defender of the inalienable rights of the human person. He does this by proclaiming the Church's teaching, especially in defence of the right to life from conception to natural death; in defence of human dignity; and, taking to heart the defence of the weak, he lends his voice to those who have no voice of their own, to assert their rights. In the same way, the Bishop needs to condemn vigorously all forms of violence and to raise his voice in favour of those who are unemployed, oppressed, persecuted or humiliated, and in favour of children who suffer grave abuse.”

Pastoral Letter of the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI to the Catholics of Ireland, 19 March 2010

Pope Benedict XVI addresses his “brothers and sisters of the Church in Ireland” after several reports were made public regarding “the abuse of children and vulnerable young people by members of the Church in Ireland, particularly by priests and religious”. He summarized his meeting with the Bishops of Ireland and acknowledges “the gravity of these offenses, and the often inadequate response to them on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities in your country”. Pope Benedict writes that he has met with victims in the past and will continue to do so.

“You have suffered grievously and I am truly sorry. I know that nothing can undo the wrong you have endured. Your trust has been betrayed and your dignity has been violated. Many of you found that, when you were courageous enough to speak of what happened to you, no one would listen. Those of you who were abused in residential institutions must have felt that there was no escape from your sufferings. It is understandable that you find it hard to forgive or be reconciled with the Church. In her name, I openly express the shame and remorse that we all feel. At the same time, I ask you not to lose hope.”

“To priests and religious who have abused children: You betrayed the trust that was placed in you by innocent young people and their parents, and you must answer for it before Almighty God and before properly constituted tribunals. You have forfeited the esteem of the people of Ireland and brought shame and dishonour upon your confreres. Those of you who are priests violated the sanctity of the sacrament of Holy Orders in which Christ makes himself present in us and in our actions. Together with the immense harm done to victims, great damage has been done to the Church and to the public perception of the priesthood and religious life.

“I urge you to examine your conscience, take responsibility for the sins you have committed, and humbly express your sorrow. Sincere repentance opens the door to God’s forgiveness and the grace of true amendment. By offering prayers and penances for those you have wronged, you should seek to atone personally for your actions. Christ’s redeeming sacrifice has the power to forgive even the gravest of sins, and to bring forth good from even the most terrible evil. At the same time, God’s justice summons us to give an account of our actions and to conceal nothing.”

Norms concerning the more grave delicts reserved to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Pope Benedict XVI, 21 May 2010

“After a serious and attentive study of the proposed changes, the Cardinals and Bishops Members of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith presented the results of their decisions to the Supreme Pontiff and, on 21 May 2010, Pope Benedict XVI gave his approval and ordered the promulgation of the revised text”.(From Historical Introduction, prepared by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith).

The changes introduced are both substantive and procedural. They now include the “acquisition, possession, or distribution” of child pornography.

“Article 6, § 1, 2° the acquisition, possession, or distribution by a cleric of pornographic images of minors under the age of fourteen, for purposes of sexual gratification, by whatever means or using whatever technology.”

Circular Letter To Assist Episcopal Conferences In Developing Guidelines For Dealing With Cases Of Sexual Abuses Of Minors Perpetrated By Clerics, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 3 May 2011

Because of the responsibility that the diocesan bishop has “of assuring the common good of the faithful and, especially, the protection of children and of the young,” this document was written in order to help diocesan bishops respond appropriately “to the cases of sexual abuse of minors by clerics” in their dioceses (see the Introduction). Specifically, it encourages episcopal conferences to develop Guidelines which “will lead to a common orientation within each Episcopal Conference helping to better harmonize the resources of single Bishops in safeguarding minors” (from the Conclusion).

“The Church, in the person of the Bishop or his delegate, should be prepared to listen to the victims and their families, and to be committed to their spiritual and psychological assistance. In the course of his Apostolic trips our Holy Father, Benedict XVI, has given an eminent model of this with his availability to meet with and listen to the victims of sexual abuse. In these encounters the Holy Father has focused his attention on the victims with words of compassion and support, as we read in his [Pastoral Letter to the Catholics of Ireland](#) (n.6): ‘You have suffered grievously and I am truly sorry. I know that nothing can undo the wrong you have endured. Your trust has been betrayed and your dignity has been violated.’ ”

“The Guidelines developed by Episcopal Conferences seek to protect minors and to help victims in finding assistance and reconciliation. They will also indicate that the responsibility for dealing with the delicts of sexual abuse of minors by clerics belongs in the first place to the Diocesan Bishop. Finally, the Guidelines will lead to a common orientation within each Episcopal Conference helping to better harmonize the resources of single Bishops in safeguarding minors.”

Apostolic Letter issued “Motu Proprio” As a Loving Mother, Pope Francis, 4 June 2016

The Church, “like a loving mother, loves all her children, but treats and protects with special affection the smallest and most helpless. This is a task that Christ Himself entrusts to all the Christian community as a whole. Although this care and protection is the responsibility of all the Church, the Holy Father [Pope Francis] emphasises that it is to be carried out in particular through her pastors. Therefore, diocesan bishops, eparchs and those who are responsible for a particular Church must act with special diligence in the protection of the weakest among those entrusted to them”

By this Motu Proprio, Pope Francis specifies that one of the “grave causes” by which a bishop or his equivalent can be removed from office is that of negligence specifically “in relation to cases of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults, as referred to in the Motu Proprio Sacramentorum Sanctitatis Tutela, promulgated by St. John Paul II and amended by Benedict XVI, and establishes a series of procedures to be followed” if a bishop is found negligent in this area. (Citations from a [Bulletin](#) issued by the Press Office of the Holy See on 4 June 2016).

“Article 1, § 1. The diocesan Bishop or Eparch, or one who even holds a temporary title and is responsible for a Particular Church, or other community of faithful that is its legal equivalent, according to can. 368 CIC or can. 313 CCEO, can be legitimately removed from this office if he has through negligence committed or through omission facilitated acts that have caused grave harm to others, either to physical persons or to the community as a whole. The harm may be physical, moral, spiritual or through the use of patrimony.

“§ 2. The diocesan Bishop or Eparch can only be removed if he is objectively lacking in a very grave manner the diligence that his pastoral office demands of him, even without serious moral fault on his part.

“§ 3. In the case of the abuse of minors and vulnerable adults it is enough that the lack of diligence be grave.”

Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to the People of God 20 August 2018

Letter written by Pope Francis after the release of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report. In it, he reminds the People of God that “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it” (1 Cor 12:26).

“The pain of the victims and their families is also our pain, and so it is urgent that we once more reaffirm our commitment to ensure the protection of minors and of vulnerable adults.”

“In recent days, a report was made public which detailed the experiences of at least a thousand survivors, victims of sexual abuse, the abuse of power and of conscience at the hands of priests over a period of approximately seventy years. Even though it can be said that most of these cases belong to the past, nonetheless as time goes on we have come to know the pain of many of the victims. We have realized that these wounds never disappear and that they require us forcefully to condemn these atrocities and join forces in uprooting this culture of death; these wounds never go away.”

“I am conscious of the effort and work being carried out in various parts of the world to come up with the necessary means to ensure the safety and protection of the integrity of children and of vulnerable adults, as well as implementing zero tolerance and ways of making all those who perpetrate or cover up these crimes accountable. We have delayed in applying these actions and sanctions that are so necessary, yet I am confident that they will help to guarantee a greater culture of care in the present and future.”

“It is essential that we, as a Church, be able to acknowledge and condemn, with sorrow and shame, the atrocities perpetrated by consecrated persons, clerics, and all those entrusted with the mission of watching over and caring for those most vulnerable.”

Letter sent by the Holy Father to the Bishops of the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, 1 January 2019

Letter written by Pope Francis on the occasion of a week-long retreat made by the Bishops of the United States at the invitation of Pope Francis.

“The Church’s credibility has been seriously undercut and diminished by these sins and crimes, but even more by the efforts made to deny or conceal them. This has led to a growing sense of uncertainty, distrust and vulnerability among the faithful. As we know, the mentality that would cover things up, far from helping to resolve conflicts, enabled them to fester and cause even greater harm to the network of relationships that today we are called to heal and restore.

“We know that the sins and crimes that were committed, and their repercussions on the ecclesial, social and cultural levels, have deeply affected the faithful. They have caused great perplexity, upset and confusion; and this can often serve as an excuse for some to discredit and call into question the selfless lives of all those many Christians who show “an immense love for humanity inspired by the God who became man” (cf. [*Evangelii Gaudium*](#), 76). Whenever the Gospel

message proves inconvenient or disturbing, many voices are raised in an attempt to silence that message by pointing to the sins and inconsistencies of the members of the Church and, even more, of her pastors.

“The hurt caused by these sins and crimes has also deeply affected the communion of bishops, and generated not the sort of healthy and necessary disagreements and tensions found in any living body, but rather division and dispersion (cf. Mt 26:31).”

Timeline of the Church's Response both on the Local and Universal Levels

- 1984 The Badgley Report, *Sexual Offense Against Children in Canada*, is released in Canada.
- 1987 The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) circulated possible guidelines which could be applied at the diocesan level.
- 1989 Mount Cashel case is exposed, Canada's largest sexual abuse scandal, and one of the largest in the world, involving the Christian Brothers of Ireland in Canada (CBIC).
Diocese of London, Ontario, Canada, develops a policy for dealing with sexual abuse by priests¹. This policy was subsequently revised in 1994.
CCCCB mandated the creation of a committee to elaborate additional policies for individual dioceses.
- 1990 Rix Rogers, Special Advisor to the Minister of National Health and Welfare on Child Sexual Abuse in Canada, published *Reaching for Solutions*.
The Archdiocese of St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada, publishes *The Report of the Archdiocesan Commission of Enquiry into the Sexual Abuse of Children by Members of the Clergy*.
[Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Response of the Newfoundland Criminal Justice System to Complaints](#) is published by the Honourable S.H.S. Hughes, Q.C. Commissioner.
- 1992 The CCCCB publishes [From Pain to Hope](#), a report by the Ad Hoc Committee on Child Sexual Abuse. This is the "first public document of its kind by an episcopal conference anywhere in the world, this report offered advice and guidance for all Catholics, including bishops and others responsible for priestly formation and for the clergy, together with recommendations on how to respond to what it recognized as a pervasive and extensive problem throughout society and within the Church itself." It "was appreciated by episcopal conferences in other countries as well" (PMSA, 14). In it, the Canadian Bishops stated: "We would like to see our Church face, with clarity and courage, the decisions that must be taken in light of the failure that child abuse represents for society and the Church itself.... These decisions will call for change in the attitudes of those who are wholeheartedly to defend children and other vulnerable people in society.... We would like to see our Church take firm steps which would leave no doubt as to its genuine desire to eradicate the phenomenon of child sexual abuse" ([From Pain to Hope](#), 40-41).
The equivalent of what is now the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) codified Five Principles meant to help dioceses respond to allegations of clergy sexual abuse."
- 1993 The USCCB's Priestly Life and Ministry subcommittee on Sexual Abuse organized a "Think Tank". This "Think Tank" released a report and made recommendations to the Bishops' Conference who announced the formation of the Ad Hoc Committee of Sexual Abuse.
- 1995 The Church in the Netherlands established Help & Justice (Hulp & Recht), a body for victims of sexual abuse within the Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands (See

¹ Information specifically regarding Canada: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse: a Call to the Catholic Faithful in Canada for Healing, Reconciliation, and Transformation*, 2018 (PMSA).

[Reporting Centre](#) *Sexual Abuse within the Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands* for all statistics on the Church in the Netherlands).

- 1996 The Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference (ICBC) Advisory Committee on Child Sexual Abuse by Priests and Religious issued a report entitled [Child Sexual Abuse: Framework for a Church Response](#).
- The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) and Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) released *Towards Healing: Principles and procedures in responding to complaints of abuse against personnel of the Catholic Church in Australia*, a pastoral, non-legal response for those who have been abused. This document was subsequently updated in 2000, 2010 and 2016.
- 1997 The Belgian Bishops' Conference initiated [two points of contact](#) to accompany persons who had been sexually abused by priests (one for French speakers and one for Dutch speakers).
- “The Interdiocesan Commission on Cases of Sexual Abuse in Pastoral Ministry appointed by the Bishops of Malta and Gozo in collaboration with the Major Superiors' Conference”² of Malta meet for the first time.
- 1998 The [National Catholic Risk Retention Group](#) convenes national child sexual abuse experts which leads to the creation of the [VIRTUS®](#) program now used in over 80 US dioceses. The program trains those who interact with children in the prevention of abuse.
- The Maltese Ecclesiastical Province Conference and the Major Superiors' Conference approved [On Cases of Sexual Abuse in Pastoral Activity: Statement of Policy and Procedures in Cases of Sexual Abuse](#) presented by the Interdiocesan Commission on Cases of Sexual Abuse in Pastoral Activity.
- 1999 The [National Committee for Professional Standards](#) publishes *Integrity in Ministry: a Document of Principles and Standards for Catholic Clergy and Religious in Australia*. This is the result of a 1996 comprehensive plan of the ACBC and CRA “to respond to the revelations of abusive behaviour that had recently come to light”.
- The Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference published a protocol for the sexual abuse of minors. It was subsequently revised 5 times, the most revision being that of 2013.
- The Maltese Ecclesiastical Province Conference and the Major Superiors' Conference published [On Cases of Sexual Abuse in Pastoral Activity: Statement of Policy and Procedures in Cases of Sexual Abuse](#) and instituted a Response Team responsible for investigating allegations of the sexual abuse of minors. An updated version of the Statement of Policy was later issued in 2014.
- 2000 The Conference of Bishops of France (CEF) address “the difficult problem of Pedophilia” in a Plenary Assembly in Lourdes. They released a [declaration](#), saying “the Church condemns these acts of pedophilia, the French bishops stated: ‘When the aggressor is a priest, there is a double betrayal. Not only does an informed adult impose his impulses on a minor, but his actions contradict the Gospel he proclaims. The bishops understand how deep and how often unspeakable is this injury to children or adolescents. They experience true suffering and the bishops are in solidarity with the victims and their families.’ ”
- The ACBC and CRA update *Towards Healing: Principles and procedures in responding to complaints of abuse against personnel of the Catholic Church in Australia*.

² [On Cases of Sexual Abuse in Pastoral Activity: Statement of Policy and Procedures in Cases of Sexual Abuse](#), page 1.

An official commission is established in Belgium to handle allegations of sexual abuse within the context of pastoral relationships.

2001 Motu Proprio [Sacramentorum Sanctitatis Tutela](#) (SST) is published by which the [Norms concerning the more grave delicts reserved to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith](#) are promulgated. Sexual abuse of minors committed by a deacon, priest or bishop is added to those considered “most grave delicts,” and placed under the jurisdiction of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The *Norms* will be updated again under Benedict XVI to include pornography as well (see below).

Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales (CBCEW) released [A Programme for Action: Final Report of the Independent Review on Child Protection in the Catholic Church in England and Wales](#) (The Nolan Report). This report was initiated by Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor and was entrusted to Lord Nolan who chaired an independent committee to conduct a review on child protection in the Catholic Church of England and Wales.

The ICBC [announced](#) the establishment of a new Child Protection Office.

2002 *The Boston Globe*, reports the cover up of cases of sexual abuse on the part of Cardinal Law and his predecessors. Cases of sexual abuse on the part of certain priests had already received nation-wide attention (for example, the Porter case in 1992).

The USCCB established the [National Review Board](#) for the Protection of Children and Young People (NRB) to collaborate with the Bishops in preventing the sexual abuse of minors by persons serving in the Church.

The USCCB approved the [Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People](#) a “comprehensive set of procedures...for addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy”.

The USCCB formed the [Committee](#) for the Protection of Children and Young People for the purpose of advising the USCCB on “all matters related to child and youth protection and is to oversee the development of the plans, programs, and budget of the Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection”.

The USCCB forms the [Secretariat](#) of Child and Youth Protection to assist the US Bishops “on all matters related to child and youth protection, and to oversee the development of the Conference’s plans and programs for child and youth protection”.

The German Bishops’ Conference introduces Guidelines.

Pope John Paul II meets with the [Cardinals of the United States](#).

The CEF released the first edition of *Lutter contre la pédophilie*.

The Swiss Bishops’ Conference published *Sexual Abuse in Pastoral Ministry: Diocesan Directives*. A second edition is published in 2011, and a third, in 2014 under the title *Sexual Abuse in the Ecclesial Context: Directives of the Swiss Bishops’ Conference and the Union of Major Superiors of Switzerland*. [Directives in German](#). [Directives in French](#). [Directives in Italian](#).

The [Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons](#), received the *recognitio* of the Holy See and are promulgated. The United States is the only territory in which particular law in addition to universal law applies to clerical sexual abuse of minors.

2003 The USCCB published the [Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People](#).

2004 Functions of the members of the NRB are revised slightly and reconfirmed by the USCCB.

The NRB engaged the John Jay College of Criminal Justice to conduct research regarding “the nature and scope of the problem of sexual abuse of minors by clergy”. The [John Jay Report](#), entitled *The Nature and Scope of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States 1950-2002* is released.

The National Committee for Professional Standards of the ACBC and CRA updated [Integrity in Ministry](#): *A Document of Principles and Standards for Catholic Clergy and Religious in Australia*.

2005 Marcial Maciel, Founder of the Legionaries of Christ, is judged guilty by the CDF.

The ICBC publishes [Towards Healing](#): *a Lenten Reflection* on child sexual abuse.

An official government investigation into the allegations of clerical sexual abuse in the diocese of Ferns, County Wexford in Ireland, issued the [Ferns Report](#). The Ferns Inquiry identified more than 100 allegations of such abuse committed between 1962 and 2002 and 21 priest perpetrators. It also detailed the Church response during that time.

The ICBC held a [special meeting](#) in which the Irish Bishops “apologised to all those people hurt at the hands of abusers in the Church. Bishops expressed their deep sadness at the findings of the Ferns Inquiry and especially those pages retelling the pain experienced by those who have suffered.”

The first accredited Diocesan Child Protection Trainers are certified in Ireland.

The ICBC, the Conference of Religious of Ireland (CORI) and the Irish Missionary Union published [Our Children Our Church](#): *Child Protection Policies and Procedures for the Catholic Church in Ireland*.

The USCCB revised its [Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People](#) for the first time. The [Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons](#) was developed by the Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Abuse of the USCCB and by the Vatican-U.S. Bishops’ Mixed Commission on Sex Abuse Norms. They were approved by the full body of US bishops at its June 2005 General Meeting.” Later they received the subsequent *recognitio* of the Holy See and were promulgated in 2006. The revised [Statement of Episcopal Commitment](#), developed by the USCCB’s Ad Hoc Committee on Bishops’ Life and Ministry is approved by the USCCB in 2005, 2011 and 2018.

2006 The [National Board](#) for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church (NBSCCC) in Ireland is established to provide best practices and monitor the safeguarding of Children.

The first annual Child and Youth Protection Leadership Conference, sponsored by the USCCB Secretariat for Child and Youth Protection is held. These conferences allow “Child protection and victim assistance leaders from Catholic dioceses across the United States...to discuss key issues related to abuse and learn from international experts”.

The John Jay College of Criminal Justice, on the request of the USCCB issued a [Supplementary Report](#) to its 2004 report.

“The Church in Slovenia has placed great emphasis on protecting minors from the outset, limiting damage and acting in advance. With the communist dictatorship, which lasted from 1945 to 1992, Catholic education was almost non-existent and for this reason the potential abusers did not have direct contact with minors. With the arrival of democracy, some Catholic schools have opened but they represent less than 3% of the school population in the country. **Prevention actions, on the other hand, were already adopted in 2006**, with the introduction of the first [guidelines](#).” (citing information solicited from the spokesperson for the Slovenian Bishops’ Conference).

- 2007 The Cumberlege Commission, an ecclesiastical commission chaired by Julia Cumberlege, released its [review](#) of the CBCEW’s prevention policies.
The Polish Bishops’ Conference begin to prepare Guidelines.³
- 2008 The CBCEW and the Conference of Religious of England and Wales (CoR) formed the [National Catholic Safeguarding Commission](#) based on the results of the Cumberlege Commission.
The diocese of London, Ontario, Canada publishes a [Safe Environment Policy](#). It was subsequently updated in 2014 and 2016.
- 2009 The ICBC held a special meeting on Safeguarding Children in response to the NBSCCC’s [Report on the Management of Two Child Protection Cases in the Diocese of Cloyne](#) published in 2008 and the [HSE Audit of Catholic Church Dioceses](#) reports published in 2009. The Irish Bishops admit that “victims who have come forward, and those who are unable to do so for a variety of complex reasons, have once again had their wounds of abuse opened by Church failure” and agree to [three items](#).
Ireland’s NBSCCC publishes [Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland](#).
Apostolic Visitation of the Legionaries of Christ is mandated by Pope Benedict XVI, leading to the revision of their Constitutions.
Benedict XVI grants special faculties to the [Congregation for the Clergy](#), one of which allows it to present cases in which a priest has violated his vow of celibacy directly to the Pope.
The [Ryan Report](#) is published in Ireland regarding abuse (all forms of abuse) that took place in institutions which provided services to children, mostly under the auspices of the Catholic Church.
The results of the [Murphy Report](#), which looked at abuse over 30 years by members of the clergy of the archdiocese of Dublin, is published.
The Church in Slovenia formed a dedicated group of experts. This group is “formed by a civil lawyer, a canon lawyer and a psychotherapist to recommend the procedure to be followed to individual Ordinaries regarding complaints received. The main objective is the maximum prevention of every possible crime against the safety of minors and vulnerable adults as well as the “zero tolerance” towards behaviors considered risky as well as crimes that have been reported” (citing information solicited from the spokesperson for the Slovenian Bishops’ Conference).
The Diocese of Hong Kong implemented the Code of Conduct for Ministry to Minors and a Code of Action for Handling Complaints of Sexual Abuse of Minors in Diocesan Organizations.
The Polish Bishops’ Conference issue the first Guidelines on prevention.
- 2010 The Canisius College case erupts in Germany and the Episcopal Conference of Germany initiates public debate on the topic of the sexual abuse of minors and renews their Guidelines.
The [ICBC and representatives](#) of four groups representing victims of abuse met together. It was decided that a group of bishops would continue to meet with survivors.

³ All information regarding the activities of the Polish Bishop’s Conference regarding the protection of minors is taken from [Activities of the Church in Poland in terms of prevention and protection of children and youth 2005-2019](#).

Pope Benedict XVI called all the Bishops of Ireland to Rome and issued a [pastoral letter to all the Catholics of Ireland](#).

[Pope Benedict XVI](#) meets with the Bishops of Ireland. He “observed that the sexual abuse of children and young people is not only a heinous crime, but also a grave sin which offends God and wounds the dignity of the human person created in his image. While realizing that the current painful situation will not be resolved quickly, he challenged the Bishops to address the problems of the past with determination and resolve, and to face the present crisis with honesty and courage”.

Apostolic Visitation of all dioceses and seminaries in Ireland is mandated by Pope Benedict XVI and took place from November 2010 to March 2012.

Benedict XVI introduced changes, in substance and procedure, to the [Norms concerning the more grave delicts reserved to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith](#), which now include the “acquisition, possession, or distribution” of child pornography.

The CEF released the second edition of [Lutter contre la pédophilie](#).

The John Jay College of Criminal Justice presented [The Causes and Context of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests in the United States, 1950-2010](#).

The Austrian Bishops’ Conference published the first edition of [Die Wahrheit wird euch frei machen: Rahmenordnung für die katholische Kirche in Österreich \(The Truth Will Make You Free: General Regulations for the Catholic Church in Austria\)](#). This text will later be updated in 2016.⁴ These Guidelines are also available in [Croatian](#), [Serbian](#), [Bosnian](#), [Polish](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#).

The Austrian Bishops’ Conference established an Independent Victim Protection Advocacy Office ([Unabhängige Opferschutzanwaltschaft](#)), an independent commission available to all victims of abuse and violence in Church and society.

The Austrian Bishops’ Conferences established [Ombudsstellen gegen Gewalt und Sexuellen Missbrauch im kirchlichen Bereich](#), a network of diocesan public advocates on behalf of the victims of clergy sexual abuse. The Austrian Federal Government established a similar entity, called the Independent Victim Protect Commission, based on the model of the Church-sponsored entity, and tapped into its staff as well.

The Austrian Church established the Catholic Church’s Foundation for Victim Protection, founded to enact the recommendations of the Independent Victims’ Commission.

The ACBC and CRA updated [Towards Healing: Principles and procedures in responding to complaints of abuse against personnel of the Catholic Church in Australia](#).

The Archdiocese of Luxembourg initiates a hotline and publishes a report on cases of abuse within the Church in Luxembourg.

The Bishops’ Conference of Spain published [Protocolo de actuación de la Iglesia en España para tratar los casos de los delitos más graves cometidos contra la moral por parte de clérigos](#) (Procedure for handling cases of the most serious moral crimes committed by clerics in the Church in Spain) and [Protocolo de actuación según la legislación del estado](#) (Procedures according to State legislation).

The Swiss bishops publicly asked forgiveness for abuses committed.

A stream of complaints from victims of sexual abuse within the Catholic Church in the Netherlands followed the publication of reports by NRC Handelsblad and the

⁴ See [The Austrian Church’s measures against abuse and violence](#) for more detailed information. [German version](#).

Wereldomroep (the Dutch world broadcasting service). Practically all of the cases were barred from action under criminal and civil law by the statute of limitations.

The Conference of Bishops of the Netherlands and the Conference of Dutch Religious initiated an independent inquiry by a commission chaired by former minister and Speaker of the Dutch House of Representatives, Wim Deetman.

The Deetman Commission published an interim report, which called mainly for the reorganisation of Help & Justice. The Conference of Bishops of the Netherlands and the Conference of Dutch Religious decide to delegate implementation of the recommendation to a committee chaired by Mr. Ronald Bandell, a former mayor of Dordrecht.

The Belgian Episcopal Conference established a commission, led by professor Adriaenssens of the Catholic University of Louvain.

2011

[“Towards Healing”](#), a new Counselling and Support Service for Survivors of Clerical and Religious Abuse and a Helpline is launched in Ireland, taking the place of the Faoiseamh Counselling Service which had been in existence since 1997.

[Circular Letter](#) to assist Episcopal Conferences in developing guidelines for dealing with cases of sexual abuses of minors perpetrated by clerics is published by the CDF and includes a summary of applicable canonical legislation. Each Conference was asked to prepare or update Guidelines within one year.

Fr Fernando Karadima is found guilty by the Vatican of the sexual and psychological abuse of minors.

The National Committee for Professional Standards of the ACBC and CRA released [Integrity in the Service of the Church: A Resource Document of Principles and Standards for Lay Workers in the Catholic Church in Australia](#).

The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Scotland established the [McLellan Commission](#) to review safeguarding policies in the Catholic Church in Scotland.

The USCCB revised the [Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People](#) for the second time.

The Episcopal Conference of Chile(CECH) established the [Consejo Nacional](#) de Prevención de abusos y Acompañamiento de Víctimas (National Council for the Prevention of Abuse and the Accompaniment of Victims).

The Archdiocese of Luxembourg published [Leitlinien](#) der Erzdiözese Luxemburg für den Umgang mit sexualisierter Gewalt an Minderjährigen und erwachsenen Schutzbefohlenen im kirchlichen Bereich (Guidelines of the Archdiocese of Luxembourg for dealing with sexual violence against minors and vulnerable adults in the Church). An updated version was released in 2014.

The Swiss Bishops’ Conference published the 2nd edition of *Sexual Abuse in Pastoral Ministry: Diocesan Directives*. A 3rd edition would be released later in 2014 under the title *Sexual Abuse in the Ecclesial Context: Directives of the Swiss Bishops’ Conference and the Union of Major Superiors of Switzerland*. [Directives in German](#). [Directives in French](#). [Directives in Italian](#).

The Bandell Commission recommended the establishment of an independent Reporting Centre for Sexual Abuse of Minors within the Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands, with a Victim Support Platform, a Complaints Committee and a Compensation Committee. Oversight is to be exercised by an independent body, the Management and Monitoring Foundation on Sexual Abuse within the Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands (Stichting Beheer en Toezicht).

The Deetman Commission published the report '[Sexual Abuse of Minors in the Roman Catholic Church](#)'.

The Bishops in Finland published *Den katolske Kirkes beredskab over for seksuelle overgreb mod børn og unge begået af præster eller andre kirkelige medarbejdere* (The preparedness of the Catholic Church against sexual abuse of children and adolescents committed by priests or other ecclesiastical staff). It contains regulations as well as an overview of the history of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church and specifically in Denmark.

2012

The CBCEW's National Catholic Safeguarding Commission published the [Procedures Manual: Towards a Culture of Safeguarding](#).

"Toward Healing and Renewal", an international symposium coordinated by Fr Hans Zollner, SJ, and organized at the Pontifical Gregorian University, is attended by representatives of 110 episcopal conferences and 35 religious institutes. Participants received input on different aspects of the issue and how to face them in their own countries by developing Guidelines and other adequate instruments.

The Italian Bishops' Conference (CEI) approves *Linee guida per i casi di abuso sessuale nei confronti dei minori da parte di chierici*. They are subsequently revised according to requests from the CDF and published in 2014.

Robert Spanó, President of the Faculty of Law at the University of Iceland published an independent [report](#) commissioned by Bishop Peter Bürcher. The report is the result of an independent investigation into practices and responses regarding accusations on the part of the Catholic Church.

The Bishops' Conference of Belarus published "Guidelines regarding the way to proceed in cases of sexual abuse of minors committed by the clergy". Link not available.

The Korean Bishops' Conference approved *Guidelines for Dealing with Cases of Sexual Abuse of Minors Perpetrated by Clerics in Korea*. (Not published online.)

The former Deetman Commission published its first monitoring report in the Netherlands. It was discussed in the House of Representatives' Standing Committee on Security and Justice.

The CDF [published](#) that it opened 29 judicial penal processes and 163 administrative penal processes. 57 cases were submitted to the Holy Father to make a non-appealable decision to dismiss the accused from the clerical state. 67 other cases ended in dismissing the accused from the clerical state.

The Belgian Bishops and the major superiors of Belgium published [Une Souffrance cachée: Pour une approche globale des abus sexuels dans l'Eglise](#) (Hidden Suffering: For a Global Approach to Sexual Abuse in the Church).

The Belgian Bishops established the Commission of the Belgian Church to protect children and youngsters, led by professor Manu Keirse of the Catholic University of Louvain.

The CEF approved [Directives pour le traitement des cas d'abus sexuel commis par des clercs à l'égard de mineurs](#) (Guidelines for handling cases of sexual abuse of minors by clerics). It would later be published in 2015 after the text went through an examination process with the CDF.

2013

The German Bishops' Conference published [Guidelines for dealing with sexual abuse of minors and of adult charges by clergy, religious and other staff within the domain of the German Bishops' Conference](#). [Guidelines in German](#).

The German Bishops' Conference published [Framework Regulation: Prevention of sexualized violence against minors and adult charges within the domain of the German Bishops' Conference](#). [Regulations in German](#). [Regulations in Italian](#).

The Apostolic Administration of Estonia prepared guidelines regarding the abuse of minors.

The Episcopal Conference of Uruguay published [Protocolo ante denuncias contra clérigos por abuso sexual de menores](#) (Protocol regarding allegations against clerics regarding the sexual abuse of minors).

The Polish Bishops' Conference named a person to coordinate the Bishops' activities for the protection of minors.

The Diocese of Reykjavík in Iceland published [Almenn tilskipun varðandi ásakanir um ofbeldi eða kynferðislega misnotkun barna eða fullorðinna innan Kaþólsku kirkjunnar á Ísland](#) (Guidelines on Allegations of Violence or Sexual Abuse of Children or Adults in the Catholic Church in Iceland).

The Bishops' Conference of Argentina approved [Líneas-Guía de Actuación en el caso de denuncias de abusos sexuales en los que los acusados sean clérigos y las presuntas víctimas sean menores de edad \(o personas a ellos equiparados\)](#) (Guidelines and Procedures in the case of the accusation of clerical sexual abuse of a minor). (This link needs to be copied and pasted into browser:

http://www.episcopado.org/DOCUMENTOS/14/lineas_guia_CEA.pdf.)

The Korean Bishops' Conference published *Guidelines for Dealing with Cases of Sexual Abuse of Minors Perpetrated by Clerics in Korea*. These Guidelines reflect the observations and suggestions of the CDF (Not published online.)

The Standing Committee on Security and Justice held a hearing in the House of Representatives in the Netherlands on Mr. Deetman's first monitoring report, of 28 September 2012. Representatives of the church and of victim groups came face to face. After the meeting, agreements were made for regular consultation.

The Commission for Help, Recognition and Reparation for violence against minors in the Roman Catholic Church (HEG Commissie) was established in the Netherlands with responsibility for arranging recognition and reparation solely for victims of violence.

The CDF [published](#) that it received 443 cases considered grave delicts in 2013. The majority involved sexual abuse of minors by clerics. No precise number was given.

The Diocese of Port-Louis (Mauritius) promulgated protocol indicating the procedures to be followed when allegations surfaced.

Former Auxiliary Bishop of Ayacucho, Peru, Gabino Miranda is dismissed from the clerical state for having sexually abused minors.

2014

Pope Francis instituted the [Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors](#) for the purpose of studying and proposing ways and solutions that are appropriate for an efficacious protection of minors at different levels of the life of the Church.

The Swiss Bishops' Conference published *Sexual Abuse in the Ecclesial Context: Directives of the Swiss Bishops' Conference and the Union of Major Superiors of Switzerland*. This is the third edition of the publication *Sexual Abuse in Pastoral Ministry: Diocesan Directives* first published in 2002. [Directives in German](#). [Directives in French](#). [Directives in Italian](#).

The Italian Bishops' Conference issued [Guidelines](#) for cases of sexual abuse against minors by clerics intended to facilitate the correct application of Church law and to situate the issue in relationship to Italian regulations.

Pope Francis publishes a ["Rescriptum ex audientia ss.mi"](#) regarding the creation of a college, within the congregation for the doctrine of the faith, for the examination of ecclesiastical appeals involving delicta graviora.

The Archdiocese of Luxembourg updated [Leitlinien](#) der Erzdiözese Luxemburg für den Umgang mit sexualisierter Gewalt an Minderjährigen und erwachsenen Schutzbefohlenen im kirchlichen Bereich (Guidelines of the Archdiocese of Luxembourg for dealing with sexual violence against minors and vulnerable adults in the Church).

The Senate of the Ignatianum Academy established a Child Protection Center in Poland. This was an initiative undertaken by the person coordinating the Bishop's activities on a national level.

The Episcopal Conference of Colombia prepared [Líneas – Guía](#) para la redacción de los decretos diocesanos de protección de menores to aid the preparation of protocol at the diocesan level.

The Bishops' Conference of Lithuania published [Prevenčiosios Gairės Dėl Katalikų Bažnyčioje Dirbančių Dvasininkų, Vienuolių, Savanorių Ir Kitų Darbuotojų Elgesio Saugymo](#) (Safeguarding Guidelines)

The Polish Bishops' Conference published [Wytyczne dotyczące wstępnego dochodzenia kanonicznego w przypadku oskarżeń duchownych o czyny przeciwko szóstemu przykazaniu Dekalogu z osobą niepełnoletnią poniżej osiemnastego roku życia](#) (Guidelines relative to the preliminary canonical investigation in cases in which a cleric is accused of the act against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue with a minor). [Available for download](#) in Italian. These guidelines are subsequently revised in 2017 due to changes in civil law.

Theresa May, in her capacity as Home Secretary, commissioned the [Independent Inquiry](#) into Child Abuse.

The CDF [published](#) that it received 544 cases considered grave delicts in 2014. No precise number regarding the cases specifically regarding the sexual abuse of minors was given.

The Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops drafted [Safeguarding Children: Policy and Procedures](#).

The Belgian Commission Interdiocésaine pour la Protection des Enfants et des Jeunes (Interdiocesan Commission for the Protection of Children and Young People) published [Du Tabou à la Prévention: Code de conduite en vue de la prévention d'abus sexuels et de comportements transgressifs dans les relations pastorales avec les enfants et les jeunes](#) (From Taboo to Prevention: Code of Conduct for the Prevention of sexual abuse and transgressive behaviour in pastoral relationships with children and young people).

The Maltese Ecclesiastical Province published an updated edition of [On Cases of Sexual Abuse in Pastoral Activity: Statement of Policy and Procedures in Cases of Sexual Abuse](#).

The Bishops' Conference covering the Indian Ocean (Comoros, Mauritius, Réunion, Seychelles), published [Directives communes](#) (Common Directives). They invited each diocese and vicariate of CEDOI to publish diocesan [Protocol](#).

The Bishops' Conference of Slovakia published [Postup v prípadoch sexuálneho zneužívania klerikmi](#) (The procedure in cases of sexual abuse by clerics).

The Polish Bishop's Conference approved the *Guidelines for the preliminary investigation in the case of accusations against a cleric for the transgression of the Decalogue's sixth commandment with a minor under age eighteen* and the "Prevention of sexual abuse against children and young people and people with disabilities in the pastoral and educational work of the Church in Poland".

2015

The CEF published the *Directives pour le traitement des cas d'abus sexuel commis par des clercs à l'égard de mineurs, Instruction*, approved by the Bishops' Conference in 2012 and updated with modifications suggested by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 2013.

CECH published *Cuidado y Esperanza: Líneas Guía de la Episcopal Conference of Chile para trartar los casos de abusos sexuales a menores de edad*.

The Archdiocese of Luxembourg and Trier in Germany organized an international congress attended by people in charge of prevention in their local churches. 14 countries were represented.

The Bishops' Conference of Argentina published *Líneas-Guía de Actuación en el caso de denuncias de abusos sexuales en los que los acusados sean clérigos y las presuntas víctimas sean menores de edad (o personas a ellos equiparados)* (Guidelines and Procedures in the case of the accusation of clerical sexual abuse of a minor). (This link needs to be copied and pasted into browser:

http://www.episcopado.org/DOCUMENTOS/14//lineas_guia_CEA.pdf.)

The Conference of Bishops of the Netherlands and the Conference of Dutch Religious established a Reporting Centre for Transgressional Behaviour.

The Conference of Bishops of the Netherlands and the Conference of Dutch Religious adopted rules for a 'final action' for victims whose complaints were initially declared unfounded, but were believed to be authentic.

Pope Francis accepted the resignation of Bishop Robert Finn of Kansas City-St. Joseph in the United States. Finn had previously been convicted of the failure to report an accusation of child abuse in 2012.

Pope Francis accepted the resignation of Archbishop John Nienstedt and Auxiliary Bishop Lee Anthony Piché of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis in the United States. Prosecutors had charged the Archdiocese for failure to respond to reports of the "troubling conduct" of a former priest of the Archdiocese.

The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life appoint Bishop Fortunato Urcey Apostolic Visitor of the Sodalitium Christianae Vitae of Peru.

The CDF [published](#) that it received 518 cases considered grave delicts in 2015. The majority involved sexual abuse of minors by clerics. No precise number was given.

The [Safeguarding Commission](#) is founded by the Archdiocese of Malta, the Diocese of Gozo and the Conference of Religious Major Superiors. The aim of the commission is that of advising Church leaders on policies and practices in the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.

The book *Mitad monjes mitad soldados* (Half Monks, Half Soldiers) uncovered physical, psychological and sexual abuse in Peru of the leaders of Sodalitium Christianae Vitae, founded by Luis Fernando Figari Rodrigo.

- The CEF published [*Directives pour le traitement des cas d'abus sexuel commis par des clercs à l'égard de mineurs*](#) (Guidelines for handling cases of sexual abuse of minors by clerics).
- 2016 The ACBC and CRA updated [*Towards Healing: Principles and procedures in responding to complaints of abuse against Personnel of the Catholic Church in Australia*](#).
- Pope Francis published the Motu Proprio *As a Loving Mother* as an Apostolic Letter which states that Bishops who “through negligence or omission” cause “grave harm to another person or the community” can be dismissed. In addition, in the “case of the abuse of minors and vulnerable adults, a bishop can be removed even for lack of diligence”.
- The Congregation for the Clergy published [*The Gift of Priestly Vocation, Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*](#), which includes a section on the Protection of Minors and the Accompaniment of Victims (Art 202).
- The Catholic Bishop’s Conference of the Philippines published [*“You Did it to Me!”: Pastoral exhortation on the Pastoral Care and Protection of Minors*](#)
- The CEF [announced](#) the creation of La Cellule permanente de lutte contre la pédophilie (CPLP), an “independent national commission of experts”, “chaired by qualified lay people, and composed of experts...to advise the Bishops in the evaluation of the situations of priests who have committed reprehensible acts”.
- The Conference of Major Superiors in France (CORREF) held an assembly with the participation of experts.
- CPLP of France held its first national assembly of personnel in charge of the fight against the sexual abuse of minors on the diocesan level.⁵
- The Irish NBSCC published the [*Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland*](#).
- The Austrian Bishops’ Conference published a revised and supplemented edition of [*Die Wahrheit wird euch frei machen: Rahmenordnung für die katholische Kirche in Österreich \(The Truth Will Make You Free: General Regulations for the Catholic Church in Austria\)*](#). These Guidelines are also available in [Croatian](#), [Serbian](#), [Bosnian](#), [Polish](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#).
- Pope Francis wrote a [letter](#) to the Bishops and asked them to “take all necessary measures and to protect in every way the lives of our children, so that such crimes may never be repeated” and that they “adhere, clearly and faithfully, to ‘zero tolerance’”.
- The Bishops’ Conference of Uruguay released a [statement](#) and instituted a hotline to receive complaints regarding the sexual abuse of minors by clergy.
- The Interritual Episcopal Conference of Bulgaria published [*Linee Guida per I case di abuso sessuale nei confronti di minori da parte di chierici*](#) (Guidelines for cases of sexual abuse of minors by clerics).
- Mr. Deetman published his final monitoring report on five years of activities on behalf of victims of sexual abuse in the Netherlands.
- The Mexican Episcopal Conference of Bishops published [*Líneas Guía del Procedimiento a Seguir en Casos de Abuso Sexual de Menores por Parte del Clérigo*](#) (Guidelines for the Procedure to Follow in Cases of Sexual Abuse of Minors by the Clergy).

⁵ Dates regarding CPLP taken from: *Rapport de la Conférence des Évêques de France sur la lutte contre la pédophilie dans l’église*, 2018.

The CDF [published](#) that in 2016 it received 415 cases involving the sexual abuse of minors by clerics or the acquisition, possession, or distribution by a cleric of pornographic images of minors under the age of fourteen.

The Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops published [Safeguarding Children: Policy and Procedures](#).

The Inter-diocesan Commission for the Protection of Children and Young People in Belgium released [information](#) regarding the intake of allegations through its 8 diocesan hotlines, the hotline for religious orders, and the hotline for the Episcopal Conference.

2017

In Australia, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse released its [report](#). The report studied sexual abuse in schools, churches, youth groups, scout troops, orphanages, foster homes, sporting clubs, group homes, charities, and in family homes. This report contains a number of suggestions specifically for the Catholic Church.

The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, on the conclusion of the Apostolic Visitation undertaken by Bishop Urcey, decreed that its founder, Luis Fernando Figari, was prohibited from any contact with Sodalitium Christianae Vitae. This decision would be upheld on appeal in 2019.

[Catholic Professional Standards](#) is founded in Australia by the ACBC and CRA in response to the Royal Commission report. It is a lay board operating independently of the Church to hold leaders and members of Catholic organizations “accountable for the safety of children and vulnerable adults who come into contact with the Church and its works”.

The CEF published the third edition of [Lutter contre la pédophilie](#).

CPLP in France held the first national formation program of Superiors and those working in seminary formation.

CPLP held its second national assembly of personnel in charge of the fight against the sexual abuse of minors on the diocesan level.

The Episcopal Conference of Argentina created the Consejo pastoral para la protección de menores (Pastoral Council for the Protection of Minors).

The Polish Bishops' Conference issued the 2nd edition of [Wytyczne dotyczące wstępnego dochodzenia kanonicznego w przypadku oskarżeń duchownych o czyny przeciwko szóstemu przykazaniu Dekalogu z osobą niepełnoletnią poniżej osiemnastego roku życia](#) (Guidelines relative to the preliminary canonical investigation in cases in which a cleric is accused of the act against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue with a minor). [Available for download](#) in Italian. These guidelines were revised due to changes in civil law.

The Bishop's Conference of Mexico issued the [Protocolo de Protección de Menores](#) based on legislation in force in Mexico.

The Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands agrees with the government that it will treat any later reports seriously and will continue to offer support for victims.

The CDF [published](#) that it received 410 cases considered grave delicts in 2017. The majority involved sexual abuse of minors by clerics. No precise number was given.

Peru's Congress of the Republic created the Comisión Investigadora de Abusos Sexuales contra Menores de Edad en Organizaciones (Investigative Commission regarding the Sexual Abuse of Minors within Organizations). A report before Congress is forthcoming in May 2019.

2018

In January, Pope Francis defended his appointment of Bishop Juan Barros Madrid to lead the diocese of Osorno, saying that accusations that he covered up the sexual abuse perpetrated by Fernando Karadima were calumnious. The Pope subsequently sent two envoys to Chile to investigate. In April, after viewing their report, Pope Francis wrote a letter to the Bishops of Chile in which he acknowledges he made “serious errors in the assessment and perception of the [Barros] situation”. He called the Bishops of Chile to Rome to meet with him. This meeting took place from 15-17 May. Pope Francis then wrote a [Letter to the People of God](#) in Chile at the end of May. Pope Francis met in Rome on two separate occasions (April and June) with victims of clergy sexual abuse in Chile and He subsequently met in August with a representative of the Chilean Bishops’ abuse prevention council and a Bishop to discuss steps being taken there to address the clerical sex abuse crisis. At the end of the meeting, all of the Bishops of Chile submitted their resignations to Pope Francis. In June, Pope Francis accepted the resignations of 5 of them (including that of Bishop Barros). In October, Pope Francis dismissed from the clerical state two Chilean Bishops because of manifest abuse of minors.

In January, the Reporting Centre for Sexual Abuse within the Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands closed. The Victim Support Platform continues to assist victims under the auspices of the Reporting Centre for Transgressional Behaviour.

The CECH established the [Departamento](#) de Prevención de Abusos (Department for the Prevention of Abuse). The Consejo Nacional de Prevención de Abusos y Acompañamiento a Víctimas released a [summary](#) of the efforts undertaken by the bishops in Chile.

The Consejo Nacional de Prevención de Abusos y Acompañamiento a Víctimas of the CECH released [Buenas Prácticas: para ambientes sanos y seguros en la Iglesia: Documento Ad experimentum 2018-2021](#) (Good Practices for a healthy and safe environment in the Church).

The CECH issued an official statement entitled [Declaración, Decisiones y Compromisos de los Obispos de la Episcopal Conference of Chile](#) (Declaration, Decisions and Commitments of the Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of Chile). Some of the points are already in progress while others are pending.

The [Truth Justice Healing Council](#) concluded a 5-year response coordinating the Church in Australia’s response to the Royal Commission.

The ACBC and CRA established the [Implementation Advisory Group](#) with the task of “monitoring the Catholic Church’s ongoing response to the child sexual abuse scandal.”

The Bishops Conference of Scotland published [In God’s Image: Instruction on Safeguarding for implementation in all Catholic canonical jurisdictions in Scotland and by all other groups and organisations in Scotland subject to a legitimate canonical authority of the Catholic Church](#).

The USCCB revised its [Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People](#) for the third time. [Charter in Spanish](#).

Pope Francis accepted the resignation of Cardinal McCarrick from the College of Cardinals after the Archdiocese of New York released that its investigation proved that an allegation against the Cardinal regarding the sexual abuse of a minor, which had taken place 47 years earlier, was credible.

Pope Francis dismisses Fernando Karadima from the clerical state.

The [Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report](#) is released.

Pope Francis wrote a [Letter to the People of God](#) in response to the ongoing crisis of sexual abuse in the wake of the release of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report.

The CCCB published [Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse: A Call to the Catholic Faithful in Canada for Healing, Reconciliation, and Transformation](#). Contains Lessons Learned, guidelines for moving forward along with updated canonical norms, helpful resources. The canonical norms were “were assessed by the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith to ensure compliance with the expectations of the Holy See, which it so confirmed” (PMSA, 5).

The ACBC and CRA [responded](#) to the Australian Royal Commission’s report.

Archbishop Philip Wilson, of Adelaide, Australia, is convicted of covering up child sexual abuse; resigns his position, and is subsequently acquitted.

Cardinal George Pell is accused of sexual abuse of minors alleged to have been committed 40 years ago. Legal proceedings are ongoing.

The CEF plenary assembly included a presentation by Father Hans Zollner, SJ, President of the Center for Child Protection.

The CEF published [Rapport de la Conférence des Évêques de France sur la lutte contre la pédophilie dans l’église](#), 2018. It “provides an update and a progress report” to *Lutter contre la pédophilie* issued in 2017.

CORREFF held a second assembly with the participation of victims of clergy sexual abuse.

The General Secretariat for Catholic Education of CEF published [De la lutte contre la maltraitance à la bientraitance éducative](#) and *Procédures en matière de protection des mineurs*.

Victims of clergy sexual abuse participated in the CEF Plenary Assembly.

The "[Sexual abuse](#) of minors by Catholic priests, deacons and male members of orders in the domain of the German Bishops' Conference" is released. [English summary](#). This study was initiated by the German Bishops’ Conference in order to “determine the frequency of the sexual abuse of minors by diocesan priests and deacons, as well as by priests within religious orders who are governed by “Gestellungsverträge” (a contract conferring a form of stipend), within the sphere for which the German Bishops’ Conference is responsible, as well as to describe the forms of sexual abuse and to identify structures and dynamics within the Church which might favour abuse”.

The German Bishops’ Conference released a [statement](#) regarding their deliberations in the Autumn Plenary Assembly regarding the study "Sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests, deacons and male members of orders in the domain of the German Bishops' Conference" (MHG study). [Statement in German](#).

The Plenary Assembly of the USCCB is dedicated to three proposals regarding accountability for Bishops who have covered up abuse or have committed abuse. Victims of clergy sexual abuse participated with testimonies.

The USCCB’s NRB delivered a [report](#) to the USCCB Plenary Assembly in which it [urged the Bishops](#) to broaden the scope of the [Charter](#) to include bishops, “the publication of lists of credibly accused members of the clergy in all dioceses, improving the audit process and enhancing accountability for bishops regarding cases of abuse”.

The Instituto Teológico de Vida Religiosa Escuela Regina Apostolorum launched a [Course on Child Protection](#).

The Diocese of Santiago de Cape Verde created the Comissão Diocesana para a Proteção de Menores (CDPM-DS, Diocesan Commission for the Protection of Minors). It is an advisory board on matters relating to the sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults.

During its [Plenary Assembly](#), the French Bishops welcomed and listened to the “victims of pedophilia”. The Bishops of France decided to establish an independent commission to investigate the sexual abuse of minors in the Church in France since 1950, and evaluate measures enacted by the CEF since the first decade of the 21st century. A report will be issued within 18 months to 2 years.

The Diocese of Port-Louis (Mauritius) updated its protocol indicating the procedures to be followed when allegations surfaced. This protocol has been adopted by the Diocese of Port Victoria (Seychelles), and the Apostolic Vicariate of Rodrigues (Mauritius).

The Bishops’ Conference of Mexico [created](#) “Equipo Nacional para la Protección de Menores” composed of bishops, priests and lay experts to address the sexual abuse of minors.

The Polish Bishops’ Conference published a “[Position of the Polish Bishops’ Conference](#) regarding the sexual abuse of minors by some clerics”.

2019

Pope Francis sent a [Letter](#) to the Bishops of the United States gathered in retreat so as to make the “necessary step[s] forward toward responding in the spirit of the Gospel to the crisis of credibility you are experiencing as a Church”.

The President of the Polish Bishops’ Conference issued a letter announcing a meeting with persons sexually abused by members of the clergy.

The Conference of Bishops of Mexico released a [statement](#) saying the establishment of the Equipo Nacional de Protección de Menores (National Team for the Protection of Minors) had been approved. They also reported that the Apostolic Nunciature in Mexico reported that there are approximately 152 cases of priests committing abuse against minors.

CORREF of France held a meeting attended by about 100 religious and victims on the theme: Spiritual Abuse, Sexual Abuse and Abuse of Conscience.

The Kerala Catholic Bishops’ Council published [Guidelines for Safe Environment Programme for Church Personnel connected with institutions where minors or vulnerable adults are given particular care](#).

The Belgian Bishops’ Conference published a 400-page [report](#) on clergy sexual abuse.

The CDF [communicated](#) that Theodore McCarrick was found guilty of “solicitation in the Sacrament of Confession, and sins against the Sixth Commandment with minors and with adults, with the aggravating factor of the abuse of power” and is definitively dismissed from the clerical state.

The Belgian Bishops’ Conference and the Major Superiors of Belgium published *Abus sexuels de mineurs dans une relation pastorale dans l’Église de Belgique: Vers une politique cohérente*.

A court in Costa Rica issued an international detention request for Mauricio Viquez, a priest who in 2003 allegedly abused two minors.

Archbishop José Rafael Quirós, of San José, and President of the Conferencia Episcopal de Costa Rica did not attend the Meeting on the Protection of Minors in the Church due to an allegation of covering up for Mauricio Viquez.

Dioceses in the United States publish list of priests with credible accusations of the sexual abuse of minors. These dioceses include [Trenton](#), [Houston](#), [Paterson](#), [Sioux City](#), [Evansville](#), [Richmond](#), [Norwich](#), [Oakland](#), [Newark](#), [Brooklyn](#).

Msgr. Joseph Punderson is included in a preliminary list of “clergy ordained for/incardinated in the Diocese of Trenton who have been credibly accused of the sexual abuse of a minor”. Diocesan records indicate that Msgr. Punderson submitted his resignation in 2004 when the allegation was “reported to the Holy See”. “The Holy See, however, permitted him to continue in office but under specific restrictions regarding public acts of ministry initially imposed by the Diocese of Trenton in 2003. Msgr. Punderson was instructed to resign his Vatican position by the Bishop in late fall 2018 and his resignation was accepted. He has been removed from all public ministry.”

Bishops in France agree to compensate persons sexually abused by priests when minors whose cases are beyond France’s statute of limitations.

A booklet in Finland will be distributed in parishes with the most important information. When available, it will be published on the diocesan website.

The Plenary Assembly of the Peruvian Episcopal Conference decided to establish a Centro de Escucha contra el Abuso de Menores y la Mujer (Listening Center Combatting the Abuse of Minors and Women) to be located at the Episcopal Conference headquarters.

The Bishops’ Conference of Mexico released a [statement](#) containing *Líneas de Acción para la Protección de menores* (Guidelines for the Protection of Minors).

The President of the Mexican Episcopal Conference admitted in a press conference that 101 Catholic priests in Mexico have been prosecuted for sexual crimes since 2010.

A [statement](#) is released by the Archbishop of Santiago, Chile containing an outline of the case against Rivera Muñoz and the penalties imposed on him.

The Swiss Bishops’ Conference published the fourth edition of *Abus sexuels dans le context ecclésial: Directives de la Conférence des Evêques suisses et de l’Union des Supérieurs Majeurs religieux de Suisse* (Sexual Abuse in Pastoral Ministry: Diocesan Directives). [Directives in German](#). [Directives in French](#). [Directives in Italian](#).

The [Meeting](#) on the Protection of Minors in the Church takes place in the Vatican. Participants include Presidents of Episcopal Conferences and representatives of men and women religious.

The Peruvian Bishops’ Conference released a statement saying that the Comisión de Protección del Menor del Episcopado had met with a former member of the Sodalitium Christianae Vitae.

Cardinal Piat, of the diocese of Port-Louis (Mauritius), [announced](#) a new diocesan protocol indicating procedures to be followed regarding allegations of sexual abuse of minors by members of the clergy. The diocese also announced that they will begin a long-term training program in June 2019 aimed at raising awareness, prevention and intervention regarding clergy sexual abuse.

The Apostolic Administrator of Hong Kong wrote a [Pastoral Letter](#) announcing new measures to be observed by Church personnel when working with children. It was also announced that the Code of Conduct for Ministry to Minors and a Code of Action for Handling Complaints of Sexual Abuse of Minors in Diocesan Organizations would be updated.

A [study](#) containing the results of data collected by the Secretariat of the Polish Bishops' Conference and the Secretariat of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men. The study was carried out by the Institute for Catholic Church Statistics.

The Polish Bishops' Conference released a [statement](#) after their 382nd Plenary Assembly which ended on March 14. They announced the release of a study on “the statistics on the scale of the abuse of minors by some clerics in Poland. The Bishops also stated that they “strongly condemn all forms of abuse of minors”.

The Polish Bishops' Conference elected Msgr. Wojciech Polak, Primate of Poland and President of the Commission for the Clergy, as Delegate for the Protection of Children and Youth (in addition to the Coordinator for the Protection of Children and Youth, Fr. Adam Żak SJ, elected in 2013).

A month after the conclusion of the Meeting on the Protection of Minors held in the Vatican, a meeting greatly desired Pope Francis, [three very significant documents](#) were published. Each responds to the concrete demands expressed by the People of God to address the scourge of the sexual abuse of minors. They are: the laws on the protection of minors in Vatican City State, the Motu Proprio which applies the norms to the Roman Curia, and the Guidelines for the Vicariate of Vatican City. Each document was signed by the Holy Father. Together, these acts reinforce the protection of minors by strengthening the normative framework.

- 2019 Catholic Professional Standards of Australia hopes to publish the [National Catholic Safeguarding Standards](#) (currently in draft form)
- The Bishops' Conference of Uruguay will publish their Safeguarding Policy.
- June 2019 The Conférence Épiscopale Centrafricaine (CECA) plans to produce their safeguarding guidelines in the context of the upcoming June Plenary Meeting.
- Soon The diocese of Rabat in Morocco are about to set up a Diocesan Listening and Reception Commission where there will be at least one priest, a psychologist, a lawyer. This commission will also draft guidelines for priests and all pastoral agents of the diocese.
- The Comissão Diocesana para a Proteção de Menores (CDPM-DS) of Cape Verde plans on conducting internal training regarding both civil and canonical issues, and holding prevention training sessions in parishes.

Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors

[Website](#)

History

- Pope Francis [established](#) the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors (PCPM) on 22 March 2014. He defined its mandate and appointed the first eight [Founding Members](#), representing experts from the fields of safeguarding.
- The PCPM mandate is twofold: 1) to advise the Roman Pontiff on effective policies for the protection of minors and vulnerable adults; 2) to offer support to local churches in the development of their protection policies through advice, formation, education, research and project development in the area of safeguarding.
- Pope Francis approved the PCPM's [Statutes](#) in April 2015.
- In February 2018, Pope Francis confirmed the [mandate](#) and nominated [sixteen professionals](#).

Priorities

The PCPM has identified two priorities: 1) Working with victims/survivors; 2) Developing mechanisms to monitor and assess compliance with safeguarding norms.

Accomplishments

- [National Day of Prayer](#) for victims/survivors of abuse approved by the Pope in 2016;
- Protocols for outreach to victims/survivors and for receiving information from those who contact the PCPM;
- Researched global safeguarding guidelines and best practices and created a [template](#) for safeguarding policies to help church leaders at the local level in the development of their own policies;
- Conducted safeguarding guidelines workshops through interdisciplinary teams drawn from among expert Members with regional and national bishops conferences on six continents.
- Conducted two pilot projects in safeguarding outreach and data collection in [Colombia](#) and [Zambia](#).
- Held an International Symposium on Safeguarding in Schools and Communities in 2017 with a focus on Latin America.
- Participated in over [240 educational events](#) on six continents.

Ongoing Priority Projects

Survivor Advisory Panels (local SAPS)—from April 2017

The local [Survivor Advisory Panel \(SAP\)](#), based on that established by the Episcopal Conference of England and Wales. Local SAPs are safe spaces where victims/survivors can actively collaborate with their local Church and the PCPM to improve safeguarding outreach and methodologies from the perspective of someone who has experienced abuse. The program was piloted in Brazil, the Philippines and Zambia with the support of the local episcopal conferences.

Guidelines Implementation and Audit Project—from September 2018

The PCPM, through its Safeguarding Guidelines and Norms Working Group, is developing a program to assist episcopal conferences to create and implement guidelines and programs. The PCPM plans to release a developed program by the end of 2019.

Research

The PCPM is currently conducting research in view of making recommendations regarding the Church's response to the sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults. Subjects being researched include:

- focusing the Church's response on the rights of the victims/survivors of this abuse, through appropriate transparency and confidentiality;
- compliance to reporting laws with civil authorities and the implications for the seal of confession;
- addressing aspects of the Church's canon law and penal process that may need to be adapted (e.g. statute of limitations);
- presenting accountability issues regarding the crimes committed, as well as the mishandling of complaints by bishops and other Church leaders.

The PCPM is organizing a major seminar for the end of 2019 in which it intends to further explore many of these questions.

General background regarding how cases of sexual abuse of minors by a deacon, priest or bishop are processed in the Church

Procedure for cases at the local level⁶

- Once the local Church authorities receive an accusation of the sexual abuse of a minor by a deacon, priest or bishop, they are required to conduct an investigation ([CIC⁷ 1717, § 1](#); [CCEO⁸, 1468](#)).
- The Church acknowledges that the sexual abuse of minors is also a “crime prosecuted by civil law”. Taking into consideration that “relations with civil authority will differ in various countries, nevertheless it is important to cooperate with such authority within their responsibilities” (*Circular Letter to assist Episcopal Conferences in developing guidelines for dealing with cases of sexual abuses of minors perpetrated by clerics*).
- The local ecclesiastical authority,⁹ or his delegate, initiate a preliminary investigation. Accusations are investigated, regardless of whether the alleged sexual activity occurred recently or not, and whether the person who experienced the alleged abuse is still a minor or not ([CIC 1717, § 1](#); [CCEO 1468, 2](#); for the territory of the United States, *Essential Norms, Art 6, 11¹⁰*).
- Care is taken to keep the identity of the person who experienced the alleged abuse¹¹ and the alleged offender¹² from being revealed. For the former, the motivation is to protect their right to privacy. For the latter, the motivation is to protect the alleged offender’s reputation since there is the presumption of innocence until proven guilty ([CIC 1717, § 2](#); [CCEO 1468, 2](#); for the territory of the United States, *Essential Norms, Art 6, 13*).
- If on the conclusion of the preliminary investigation on the local level the accusation “has the semblance of truth”, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is to be informed. The Congregation may “call the case to itself”. In general practice, it indicates to the local competent authority how to proceed in accord with relevant canonical norms (*SST/Norms2010*, Art 16).
- The local ecclesiastical authority may: remove the alleged offender from performing his ministry, remove him from office, may restrict where he resides or from participating in the liturgy in public ([CIC 1722](#); [CCEO 1473](#); for the territory of the United States, *Essential Norms, Art 6-9*).

Applicable Church law regarding cases of clerical sexual abuse of minors

- Cases are generally sent to the CDF through diplomatic post via the Apostolic Nuncio.
- Cases that are reserved to the CDF regarding minors are:
 - “the delict¹³ against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue committed by a cleric with a minor below the age of eighteen years; in this case, a person who has imperfectly the

⁶ The local level can be diocesan, eparchial, or the territory over which a Major Superior of an institute of consecrated life or a society of apostolic life has jurisdiction.

⁷ *Code of Canon Law (Codex Iuris Canonici)*.

⁸ *Code of Canons of the Oriental Churches*.

⁹ A local ecclesiastical authority can be the Ordinary of a diocese, an Eparch of an eparchy, or the Major Superior of an institute of consecrated life or a society of apostolic life (see [CIC 368](#); [CCEO 313](#)).

¹⁰ As of 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops is the only episcopal conference by which particular law applies to the sexual abuse of minors by a Catholic cleric. This set of norms received recognition by Rome in a [Decree](#) on 8 December 2002.

¹¹ Referred to as the “accuser” in canonical language (see [SST/Norms2010, Art. 24](#)).

¹² Referred to as the “accused” in canonical language (see [SST/Norms2010, Art. 24 and 30](#)).

¹³ A “delict” is the equivalent of a crime.

habitual use of reason is to be considered equivalent to a minor” ([SST/Norms 2010](#), Art 6, § 1, 1°).

“the acquisition, possession, or distribution by a cleric of pornographic images of minors under the age of fourteen, for purposes of sexual gratification, by whatever means or using whatever technology” ([SST/Norms 2010](#), Art 6, § 1, 2°).

- The crime must have been committed by a deacon, priest, or bishop, after the date on which he was ordained a deacon.
- Since 2010 The **prescription**¹⁴ for clerical sexual abuse of minors expires when the person who experienced the abuse reaches the age of 38, that is, 20 years after the person’s 18th birthday. In individual cases, the CDF can derogate¹⁵ from prescription ([SST/Norms 2010](#), Art 7, § 1 and § 2).
- **Exceptions to the period of the statute of limitations:** The law applicable to each case is that which was in force at the time the crime was committed. If the crime was committed between 2001 and 2010, the statute of limitations is ten years. Before 2001, it is five years.
- As of 2001, the canonical age of **majority**, that is, the canonical age by which a person is no longer considered a minor is when one turns 18. Those persons who have “imperfectly the habitual use of reason” are considered minors (see [SST/Norms 2010](#), Art 6, § 1, 1°; [CIC 97 §1 and 99](#);)
- **Exceptions to the age of majority:** The law applicable to each case is that which was in force at the time the crime was committed. Regarding the canonical age of majority, the 1917 Code defined the age of majority as 16. The Code of Canon Law promulgated in 1983 retained this definition. This age was raised to 18 only for the United States in 1994, followed by the United Kingdom and Ireland in 1997. It was then changed with the Motu Proprio [Sacramentorum Sanctitatis Tutela](#) for the universal Church in 2001 and is defined in [SST/Norms 2010](#) Art 6, § 1, 1°.
- Two types of ecclesiastical processes are possible: a **judicial penal process** which is a trial, and an **administrative penal process** which concludes with an “extrajudicial decree”. The first type of process involves a trial conducted by a tribunal authorized by the CDF. The second is an abbreviated process and may take place through correspondence with the accused. The accused cleric is presented with the evidence against him and is given an “opportunity for self-defense” ([CIC 1720](#); [CCEO 1486](#)).
- **Penalties:** Taking into consideration the gravity of the crime, among the penalties that can be applied in the case of the sexual abuse of a child by a cleric are “dismissal or deposition”¹⁶ ([SST/Norms 2010](#), Art 6, § 2).
- The CDF may present the “most grave cases” to the Pope to make a decision to dismiss the accused from the clerical state. This is often done when the crime committed is “manifestly evident” and the accused has had the opportunity to defend himself ([SST/Norms2010](#), Art 21, § 2 2°). In this case, the accused may not appeal.
- To date all cases that fall under Article 6 of [SST/Norms2010](#) are subject to the Pontifical Secret ([SST/Norms 2010](#), Art 30, § 1).
- Cases that fall under Article 6 of [SST/Norms2010](#) generally do not become part of the public record. There are rare cases when results are made public. In cases when the accused is dismissed or deposed from the clerical state, it is within the local ecclesiastical authority’s competence to release the decision, according to local practice.

¹⁴ A “prescription” is commonly known as the statute of limitations. In this case, the CDF can make exceptions and extend the statute of limitations based on individual cases.

¹⁵ A “derogation” is commonly known as an exception.

¹⁶ “Dismissal or deposition” is commonly known as laicization.

Applicable Church law regarding cases of negligence by bishops

- According to the Motu Proprio *As a Loving Mother*, issued by Pope Francis on 4 June 2016, a Bishop, an Eparch, or the Major Superior of an Institute of Consecrated Life (religious congregation) or Society of Apostolic Life of Pontifical Right can be removed from office if he lacks the diligence demanded by office. The case of the lack of diligence “in the case of the abuse of minors and vulnerable adults” is enough grounds for the dismissal of a person invested with this authority ([*As a Loving Mother*](#), Art 1, § 2, § 3 and § 4).
- If the allegation is deemed credible, a preliminary investigation is conducted at the local level.
- If the allegation is substantiated in the preliminary investigation, the case is sent to the appropriate Vatican Dicastery generally via diplomatic post through the Apostolic Nuncio. The Apostolic Nuncio does nothing procedural in the case.
- Each case is taken into consideration by the applicable Vatican Dicastery under whose jurisdiction the person comes:
 - Congregation for Bishops for Bishops of the Latin Rite in Dioceses under their jurisdiction
 - Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples for Bishops of the Latin Rite in dioceses under their jurisdiction
 - Congregation for the Oriental Churches for Eparchs of any Eastern rite
 - Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life for Major Superiors of those Institutes and Societies of Pontifical Right
- The competent dicastery “can open an inquiry” if the case has “foundational proof” ([*As a Loving Mother*](#), Art 2, § 1).
- Once a case goes to the competent dicastery, the person against whom the allegation was made is informed and given the possibility of defending himself ([*As a Loving Mother*](#), Art 2, § 1 and § 2).
- The competent dicastery “may decide to open a supplementary investigation” based on the defense provided by the bishop ([*As a Loving Mother*](#), Art 2, § 3).
- Should the removal of the bishop be deemed “opportune”, the competent dicastery decides either to issue “in the briefest possible amount of time, a decree of removal” or to encourage the bishop to submit his resignation within 15 days. If the bishop does not respond within that designated period of time, the dicastery is free to proceed with a “decree of removal” ([*As a Loving Mother*](#), Art 4, § 2 and § 3).
- The case then goes to the Pope for “specific approval”. The Pope first seeks counsel from a “special College of Jurists designated for this purpose” before making a final decision ([*As a Loving Mother*](#), Art 5).

Safeguarding Boards and Guidelines by Country

The episcopal conferences of the following countries have developed Structures and/or Safeguarding Guidelines:

Argentina: Conferencia Episcopal Argentina

[Safeguarding Guidelines](#)

Australia: Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC)

[National Committee for Professional Standards](#)

[Catholic Professional Standards](#)

[Truth Justice and Healing Council](#)

[Implementation Advisory Group](#)

[The Melbourne Response](#)

[Safeguarding Guidelines](#) (currently draft form)

Belgique (Belgium): Conférence épiscopale de Belgique

[Safeguarding Guidelines](#)

Bългария: (Bulgaria) Mejduritualnata Episcopska Konferenzia vâv Bâlgaria

[Safeguarding Guidelines](#)

Canada: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB)

[Safeguarding Guidelines in English](#)

[Safeguarding Guidelines in French](#)

Chile: Conferencia Episcopal de Chile

[Consejo Nacional de Prevención de Abusos](#)

[Safeguarding Guidelines](#)

Colombia: Conferencia Episcopal de Colombia

[Safeguarding Guidelines](#)

Danmark: Scandinavian Episcopal Conference / Nordiska biskopskonferensen

[Safeguarding Guidelines](#)

Deutschland: Deutsche Bischofskonferenz

[Website on Sexueller Missbrauch](#)

[Prävention in der katholischen kirche in Deutschland](#)

[Safeguarding Guidelines in German](#)

[Safeguarding Guidelines in English](#)

[Safeguarding Guidelines in Italian](#)

England and Wales: Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales (CBCEW)

[National Catholic Safeguarding Commission](#)

[Catholic Advisory Safeguarding Service](#)

[Survivor Advisory Panel](#)

[Safeguarding Guidelines](#)

España (Spain): Conferencia Episcopal Española
[Protocol](#)

France: Conférence des évêques de France (CEF)
[Lutter contre la pédophilie](#)
[Cellule Permanente de lutte contre la pédophilie](#)
[Safeguarding Guidelines](#)

Iceland: Scandinavian Episcopal Conference / Nordiska biskopskonferensen
[Safeguarding Guidelines](#)

Indian Ocean: Conférence Episcopale de l’Océan Indien (CEDOI)

CEDOI has published common directives.

The Dioceses of Port-Louis, Port Victoria and the Apostolic Vicariate of Rodrigues use a common protocol developed by the Diocese of Port-Louis

The Dioceses of Saint-Denis, Réunion and the Apostolic Vicariate of the Archipelago of the Comoros belong to the Conférence des évêques de France (CEF)

Ireland: Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference (ICBC)
[National Board for Safeguarding Children](#)
[Safeguarding Guidelines](#)

Israel: Conference of the Latin Bishops of the Arab Regions
[Keeping Our Children Safe](#)
[Safeguarding Guidelines](#)

Italia: La Conferenza Episcopale Italiana (CEI)
[Safeguarding Guidelines](#)

Kenya: Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops
[Safeguarding Guidelines](#)

Kerala: Kerala Catholic Bishops’ Council
[Safeguarding Guidelines](#)

대한민국 (Korea): Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Korea

Safeguarding Guidelines were published in 2013. They are not available online.

Lietuva: (Lithuania) Conferentia Episcopalis Lituaniae
[Safeguarding Guidelines](#)

Luxembourg
[Kontaktstelle für Missbrauchsopfer](#)
[Safeguarding Guidelines](#)

Malta: Maltese Ecclesiastical Province
[Safeguarding Commission](#)

[Safeguarding Guidelines](#)

México: Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano

[Safeguarding Guidelines](#)

Nederland: Nederlandse Bisschoppenconferentie

[Code of Pastoral Conduct](#)

Österreich: Österreichische Bischofskonferenz

[Unabhängige Opferschutzanwaltschaft](#): Initiative gegen Missbrauch und Gewalt (Independent Victim Protection Advocate's Office)

[Ombudsstellen gegen Gewalt](#) und Sexuellen Missbrauch im kirchlichen Bereich (Advocates against violence and sexual abuse in the Church)

[Safeguarding Guidelines in German](#)

[Safeguarding Guidelines in English](#)

[Safeguarding Guidelines in Croatian](#)

[Safeguarding Guidelines in Bosnian](#)

[Safeguarding Guidelines in Serbian](#)

[Safeguarding Guidelines in Polish](#)

[Safeguarding Guidelines in French](#)

[Safeguarding Guidelines in Spanish](#)

Perú: Conferencia Episcopal Peruana

[Safeguarding Guidelines](#)

Polska (Poland): Konferencja Episkopatu Polski

[Safeguarding Guidelines in Polish](#)

[Safeguarding Guidelines in Italian \(available for download\)](#)

République centrafricaine: Conférence Épiscopale Centrafricaine

Safeguarding Guidelines will be published in June 2019

România: Conferința Episcopilor din România

Safeguarding Guidelines are in the process of being finalized

Schweiz/Suisse/Svizzera: Schweizer Bischofskonferenz/Conférence des évêques suisses/Conferenza dei Vescovi svizzeri

[Fachgremium "Sexuelle Übergriffe im kirchlichen Umfeld" Commission d'experts "Abus sexuels dans le contexte ecclésial" / Commissione d'esperti „abusi sessuali in ambito ecclesiale“](#)

[Safeguarding Guidelines in German](#)

[Safeguarding Guidelines in French](#)

[Safeguarding Guidelines in Italian](#)

Scotland: Catholic Bishops' Conference of Scotland

[Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Service](#)

[Safeguarding Guidelines](#)

Slovenskem (Slovenia): Slovenska Škofovska Konferenca

[Zaščita otrok v Cerkvi na Slovenskem](#)

[Safeguarding Guidelines in Italian](#)

Slovensko (Slovakia): Konferencie biskupov Slovenska

[Code of Pastoral Behavior](#)
[Safeguarding Guidelines](#)

South Africa: Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference

[Professional Conduct](#)
[Safeguarding Guidelines](#)

Sri Lanka: Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka

[Safeguarding Guidelines](#)

Suomi (Finland): Scandinavian Episcopal Conference / Nordiska biskopskonferensen

A booklet in Finland will be distributed in parishes with the most important information. When available, it will be published on the diocesan website.

Sweden: Conferentia Episcopalis Scandiæ

Diocese of Stockholm [Safeguarding Guidelines](#)

United States: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

[Committee for the Protection of Children and Young People](#)
[Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection](#)
[National Review Board](#)
[Safeguarding Guidelines in English](#)
[Safeguarding Guidelines in Spanish](#)

Uruguay: Conferencia Episcopal Uruguay

[Protocol for reporting abuse](#)

Will publish their Safeguarding Guidelines in March 2019.

Catholic Relief Services

[CRS Statement on Harrassment and Protection Policies](#)

Caritas Internationalis

[Child Protection Policy Framework](#)

Experts by Country

Australia:

- Advisory body to monitor Catholic reforms in response to child sexual abuse tragedy [website](#)
- Counseling and professional support in Melbourne by Carelink [website](#)
- [Canon Law Society](#) of Australia and New Zealand

Chile:

- Departamento de Prevención de Abusos, Director Ejecutiva Pilar Ramírez Rodríguez. [Contact](#)

Deutschland:

- Experts and responsible contacts of the dioceses [website](#)

Czech Republic:

- Fr. Marek František Drábek, O.Praem [mail](#)

England and Wales:

- Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service, Dr Colette Limbrick (director) [website](#)
- Safeguarding coordinators [website](#)
- Survivor Advisory Panel [contact](#)

France:

- Cellule permanente de lutte contre la pédophilie, Mgr Luc Crepy, c.j.m., président [website](#)

Hungary:

- Pedagogical Institute of the Catholic University, Marianna Barcsák (director) [email](#)

Ireland:

- National Board for Safeguarding Children, list of tutors website. Teresa Devlin, Chief Executive Officer [mail](#)

Italia/Vaticano:

- Organizzazione Meter Onlus, Don Fortunato di Noto [website](#)
- Centre for Child Protection, Fr Hans Zollner [website](#)

Österreich:

- Diocesan contacts and Ombudsstellen website
- Stabsstelle für Missbrauchs- und Gewaltprävention, Martina Greiner-Lebenbauer mail [website](#)

Poland:

- Centrum Ochrony Dziecka, Fr. Adam Żak SJ, co-ordinator for the activities of the Polish Bishops' Conference on the protection of minors [website](#)

Schweiz/Suisse/Svizzera:

- Fachgremium „Sexuelle Übergriffe im Kirchlichen Umfeld“, Joseph. M Bonnemain (Sekretär) mail [website](#)

Scotland:

- Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Service, Rt. Rev Joseph Toal (president), Tina Campbell (co-ordinator) [contact](#)

United States:

- Dr. Francesco Cesareo, chairman National Review Board [website](#)
- mons. Timothy L Doherty, Bishop of Lafayette, chairman Committee for the Protection of Children and Young People, [website](#)
- [Canon Law](#) Society of America

Articles and Interviews in various languages

English

[Cupich](#), Cardinal Blase, *America*, May 10, 2010

Twelve Things the Bishops Have Learned from the Clergy Sexual Abuse Crisis

[Zollner](#), Fr Hans, November 2017

The Spiritual Wounds of Sexual Abuse

[AA.VV.](#), *La Civiltà Cattolica*, *Perspectives 04*

Safeguarding (contains 11 articles on the topic)

[Reis](#), Sr Bernadette Mary, *Vatican News*, 25 July 2018

Cardinal O'Malley addresses sexual abuse involving bishops

[Zollner](#), Fr Hans, *Vatican News*, 18 August 2018

Child protection expert: PA abuse report horrific

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A look at child abuse on the global level

Working translation

Useful links:

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Premise: The true gravity of the phenomenon is unknown

Sexual abuse of minors, an historical phenomenon which can be found in every culture and in every society, has relatively recently become the object of systematic study. This is due to the changed sensibility of public opinion on a topic that in the past was considered a taboo. Even today, however, the available statistics gathered by various national and international organizations (WHO, UNICEF, INTERPOL, EUROPOL, etc.) do not represent the true extent of the phenomenon which is often underestimated, primarily because many cases of sexual abuse of minors are not reported. In fact, **1 out of 3 tell no one** (THORN, 2017). Research conducted by UNICEF in 30 countries confirms this fact. A small percentage of victims said that they asked for help. Behind this reluctance could be the fear of vendetta, feelings of guilt, shame, confusion, distrust in institutions, cultural and social conditioning, but also misinformation regarding the services and structures that can help. The one thing that is certain is that millions of children in the world are victims of exploitation and sexual abuse.

General Data¹⁷

The Victims

► **Global level:** In 2018, the WHO [estimated](#) that, “in the past year”, up to **1 billion minors between the ages of 2 and 17 years of age endured violence** either physical, emotional, or sexual. Sexual abuse (from groping to rape), according to some UNICEF estimates from 2014, affected over **120 million children**, representing the highest number of victims. In 2017, the same UN organization reported that in 38 low and middle income countries, almost 17 million adult women admitted having a forced sexual relationship during their childhood.

► **Europe:** In 2013, the WHO estimated that **almost 18 million children** had been victims of sexual abuse in Europe: 13.4% of all girls and 5.7% of all boys. According to UNICEF, in 28 European countries, about 2.5 million young women have reported sexual abuse, with or without physical contact, before the age of 15 years (data published in 2017). In addition, 44 million (about 22.9%) have been

¹⁷ The data reported here refers to a sampling of countries chosen on the basis of the availability of reliable data.

victims of physical violence, while 55 million (29.6%) have been victims of psychological violence. And this is not all: in 2017, an INTERPOL report on the sexual exploitation of minors led to the identification of 14,289 victims in 54 European countries.

► **Asia:** In India, between 2001 and 2011, the "Asian Center for Human Rights" reported a total of **48.338 cases of the rape of minors**, with an increase of 336%: from 2,113 cases in 2001, to 7,112 cases in 2011.

► **North America:** In the United States, official government data reports that over **700 million children** are victims of violence and abuse every year. According to the International Center for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC), one out of 10 children experiences sexual abuse.

► **Oceania:** In Australia, according to data published by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) in February 2018, covering the years 2015-2017, 1 out of 6 women (16%, or 1.5 million) reported that they were abused physically or sexually before the age of 15, and 1 out of 9 men (11%, or 9.92 thousand) reported that they were abused when they were boys. Between 2015-2016, about 450 million children were under child protection measures and 55,600 minors had been removed from their homes to treat the abuse suffered and prevent further abuse. The risks that the native populations experience should not be forgotten: according to AIHW, between 2015-2016, indigenous children were 7 times more likely to suffer abuse or abandonment in respect to their non-indigenous peers.

► **Africa** In South Africa the results of research conducted by the Center for Justice and Crime Prevention revealed that in 2016, 1 out of 3 South Africans, male or female, was at risk of sexual abuse before reaching the age of 17. According to that study, the first of its kind on the national scale in South Africa, **784.967** teenagers between the ages of 15 and 17 had already experienced sexual abuse. The victims in this case are prevalently boys. Not even 1/3 had reported the violence to the police.

In other African countries, the sexual abuse of minors is part of the wider context of violence linked to conflict which plagues the continent and makes it difficult to quantify. The phenomenon is also closely connected with the practice of **early marriage** which is widespread in various African nations.

Who commits the abuse?

► On the **global level**, it has emerged that such violence (whether physical, sexual or emotional) is committed mostly by **parents, relatives, spouses of child brides, or teachers**. In addition, according to UNICEF data from 2017 regarding 28 countries, out of 10 adolescents who have reported forced sexual relations, 9 revealed that they were victims of a person they know or was close to the family.

► The home is not the only theater of violence. Others, such as **schools and the world of sports** are also environments in which episodes of sexual abuse can occur. Research done by the UK's National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in 2011 reported that 29% of the children interviewed reported that they had experienced sexual harassment (physical and verbal) in the sporting centers they frequented.

Online

► With the develop of the internet, cases of abuse and violence perpetrated online is clearly growing. According to data from 2017 from the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), **a web page displays images of children being sexually abused every 7 minutes**. In 2017, 78,589 URLs were identified that contained images of sexual abuse, concentrated particularly in the Netherlands, followed by the United States,

Canada, France and Russia. 55% of the victims are less than 10 years old. 86% contained images of girls, 7% of boys, and 5% contained images of both boys and girls.

Sex tourism

► According to data from 2017, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), each year **3 million** persons take a trip in order to have sexual relations with minors. The most popular destinations are **Brazil, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Thailand and Cambodia**, and more recently, some African and Eastern European countries.

► The first six countries of origin of those who perpetrate the abuse are: France, Germany, the United Kingdom, China, Japan and Italy. Not to be overlooked is the growing number of women traveling to developing countries seeking paid sex with minors. In total, they represent about 10% of the world's sex tourists.

► In addition, according to a study conducted by ECPAT International (End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism) between 2015 and 2016, 35% of these sex tourists are regular customers, while 65% are occasional customers. It is a significant fact that the perpetrators of such crimes, in most cases, are oblivious of the fact that they are committing a crime.

“Best Practices”

Under the leadership of the WHO, a group of 10 international agencies¹⁸ developed an approved a series of strategies called **INSPIRE**, in total **7 strategies to put an end to violence against children**. Each letter of the word INSPIRE represents one of the strategies, most of which have proven to be effective in preventing various types of violence, as well as being beneficial in such sectors as mental health, education, and crime reduction.

The seven strategies are:

- **Implementation and enforcement of laws:** e.g. prohibiting violent discipline and limiting access to alcohol and firearms.
- **Norms and values:** e.g. modifying the cultural norms that permit the sexual abuse of girls or aggressive behavior between boys.
- **Safe environments:** i.e. identifying the “hot spots” for violence in the neighborhood and then addressing local causes through policies aimed at resolving the problems and providing other types of intervention.
- **Parent and caregiver support:** e.g. providing formation for parents of young people, and first-time parents.
- **Income and economic strengthening:** such as microfinance fostering economic equality between men and women;
- **Response and support services:** e.g. guaranteeing children who have been exposed to violence adequate access to emergency care and to psychiatric and social services.
- **Education and life skills:** such as ensuring that children attend school and providing life training and other social skills.

¹⁸ CDC: United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; CRC: Convention on the Rights of the Child; End Violence Against Children: The Global Partnership; PAHO: Pan American Health Organization; PEPFAR: President's Emergency Program for AIDS Relief; TfG: Together for Girls; UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund; UNODC: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; USAID: United States Agency for International Developme; WHO: World Health Organization