



Annual Report Chair - Presentation to Plenary

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Wednesday, October 9th 2024

Morning session

Good morning to all of you! It is great to be with you, and I thank the Cardinal for the opportunity to discuss with you, for a full day the Commission's Annual Report project.

As the Chair of the Annual Report Team, I am pleased to open our conversation around an important part of the Commission's mandate and life. Today we will discuss two Annual Reports. The first is our long-awaited Pilot Annual Report, set for publication on October 29th, here in Rome. Then we have the Instrumentum Laboris for our Second Annual Report, which is now set to embark on its consultation phase with the various stakeholders, around the world.

Importantly, both discussions will bookend the much-anticipated conversation with Mons. John Kennedy, Secretary of the Disciplinary Section at the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, Fr. Robert Geisinger, Promotor of Justice at the Dicastery, and Fr. Brian Taylor, Official at the Dicastery who will join us later this morning. The scheduling of this meeting with the DDF, amidst our discussion around the Annual Report is no coincidence, as I will try to explain further.

This morning, I would like to reflect on the path we have navigated thus far, to highlight the Annual Report's critical role in building a meaningful platform for dialogue and collaboration, around the Church's safeguarding ministry. To recount our journey with the Pilot Annual Report I recall the Holy Father's instructions from April 2022, when he said "I would like you, on an annual basis, to prepare for me a report on the Church's initiatives for the protection of minors and vulnerable adults. This might be difficult at the beginning, but I ask you to begin where necessary..."

As he predicted, given the complexities of such an assignment, our journey with this first report has demanded our very best efforts, perseverance and steadfast commitment. Since receiving that mandate from the Holy Father we have worked through various important stages together. We began by designing an outline for the Annual Report from scratch, that established its four main sections. Then we developed an accompanying methodology, which experience will teach us when and where improvements are necessary. We then applied that methodology to a first set of Church entities, over the course of a full calendar year. This produced a first draft of the Pilot Annual Report that became known as the Instrumentum Laboris. We reviewed that Instrumentum Laboris, in our September 2023 Plenary Assembly and approved it for a synodal phase and initial presentation to the Holy Father. Between September 2023 and March 2024, our document engaged dozens of Church entities,

as well as our members and staff, to directly solicit feedback and contributions on our drafted text. In anticipation of the March 2024 Plenary Assembly, the Annual Report Team worked tirelessly to integrate all the feedback received.

During our March 2024 Plenary Assembly we approved the final document for presentation to the Holy Father and a formal publication, in light of this additional feedback.

Yet, plans for a speedy publication in the months following that Plenary Assembly were slowed down, to give time for further consultation around several important elements of this critical Pilot Report.

Over the past several months, the Commission's leadership, accompanied by myself and our Annual Report Team engaged with numerous critical stakeholders – especially here in the Roman Curia. High-level meetings and robust working sessions were held with the Secretary of State, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Dicastery for the Clergy, and the Dicastery for Legislative Texts. I share my utmost gratitude to all those involved in these meticulous consultations.

Moreover, the past several months also allowed the Annual Report Team to engage in individual conversations with our members and staff. In total, the Annual Report Team met for over 20 hours of personal conversation with almost all of you in this room. Your contributions and reflections were invaluable to the further development of this collective project.

Each of these conversations, within the Roman Curia and with all of you have helped shape the document we now intend to publish on October 29th. I wish to highlight several specific features of our now finalized Pilot Annual Report.

First, we have developed and explained the framework of “conversional justice”, in order to apply Church-language to the principles commonly referred to in human rights law as “transitional justice”. It is our hope that by adopting this term we might embark on a common reflection around how the principles of truth, justice, reparations, and institutional reform might apply to the Church's response to the scourge of sexual abuse. Importantly, this is a reflection we want to spark across the ecclesial community, and therefore we sought to adopt accessible language for both Church leaders, and the broader Catholic community, alike. Certainly, key partners in the development of conversional justice as a theological-pastoral response to abuse in the Church will include, among others, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, and the local Churches.

Second, we have formulated a series of main observations that emerge throughout the Report, as important areas for dialogue and study with our colleagues, especially here in the Roman Curia. With the Holy Father's blessing, we hope to use this Pilot Annual Report, and the main observations therein to begin meaningful conversations with an ever-wider set of dicasteries.



Finally, Section 3 of this Pilot Annual Report represents an unprecedented collaboration and cooperation with two of our most important interlocutors, here in the Vatican: the Disciplinary Section of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Dicastery for the Clergy. I highlight Section 3, in particular, as an example of the Annual Report's ability to truly serve as the tool for conversion that we have long awaited. The story of Section 3's developments over the past several months is one of meaningful progress. It is my belief that this morning's meeting with the Secretary and Under-Secretary of the DDF is a testament to the Annual Report's ability to build bridges in new ways.

Indeed, building on our leadership and staff's progress, in dialogue with the DDF over the past several months, it is my hope that we might use the session with Mons. Kennedy and his colleagues to constructively discuss the contents of the Annual Report itself – to solidify its nature as a synodal tool. The main observations and recommendations in Section 3 are powerful suggestions, that will be made available to the public on October 29th. Accordingly, we will be held to account by the public on our ability to accompany the realization of these recommendations. My friends, our work only begins now – let us not be mistaken. Let us commit to the pragmatic, intentional and deliberate reforms, that we propose in this document.

Dear colleagues, as I see it, we are inviting the Church into a greater culture of accountability. We always knew it would be hard at first - our Holy Father said that from the beginning. But let us not shy away from this challenge. Indeed, a culture of accountability is what victims and their families have been asking for all along.

Afternoon session

Good afternoon everyone. I know many of us have had time to reflect on our meeting with the DDF, earlier today.

At its core that meeting was envisioned to help illuminate the path forward in our relationship with them, and especially regarding collaboration on the Annual Report. What lies on the horizon is indeed the topic of this afternoon's session, as well.

It is my pleasure to open our discussions around the *Instrumentum Laboris*, for the Second Annual Report. As we often note on the Annual Report Team: one of the great challenges of this project is the need to often be working on multiple reports at once! To help make sense of that overlap, I want to demarcate our two reports, clearly. Our Pilot Annual Report covers the reporting year 2023 and is set for publication in October 2024. Then, our Second Annual Report covers the reporting year 2024 and will be set for publication around October 2025.

As I trust you will recall, our methodology provides for an important synodal phase, in consultation with all the stakeholders covered in the drafted Annual Report, for a given year. This is the famous concept of our *Instrumentum Laboris*. Therefore, the document that we review this afternoon is the first draft of the Second Annual Report, on the eve of its synodal phase.

Now for a word on the contents of this document. To do so I begin by recalling our adoption of the concept of conversional justice as the theoretical framework guiding our methodology. To develop this concept further, we have decided to devote the introduction of each edition of the Annual Report to deepen our exploration of one specific pillar of conversional justice, year-to-year. Therefore, in this document, you will find an introduction devoted entirely to the pillar of reparations. This part of the text was originally drafted by Prof. David Smolin, who we have built an important relationship with, as our expert consultant on these concepts. I am pleased to welcome his participation in this afternoon's session, via Zoom. He is available to answer any questions that you might have. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on his initial ideas, based on your own experiences in the regions.

Then, this document covers a large range of specific Church entities.

- In Section 1: the Episcopal Conference of Equatorial Guinea; the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Ethiopia; the Episcopal Conference of Guinea (Conakry); the Bishops' Conference of Bosnia and Herzegovina; the Portuguese Episcopal Conference; the Bishops' Conference of Slovakia. Each of these conferences visited the Commission on their ad limina visits in 2024. I know many of you were able to follow these visits closely, through the robust ad limina documentation produced and presented to you by the PCPM personnel. Then, as our male religious congregation for Section 1, we have already included the Monfortain Brothers of St. Gabriel.
- In Section 2 we cover all four regions, with contributions provided directly by the Regional Groups. I thank you all for this important analysis.
- In Section 3 we cover the First Section of the Dicastery for Evangelization, commonly known as Propaganda Fide. This data collection is largely based on our Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Dicastery, in April 2023. This Section of the Annual Report represents meaningful fruits of our collaboration.
- In Section 4 we begin work on covering the complex reality of the lay associations and movements. As we have discussed, the methodology for Section 4 is always the most flexible so that each year we can capture a different facet of the Church's expansive safeguarding ministry to the broader society.

As we did this time last year with the Pilot Instrumentum Laboris, we will have time this afternoon to engage directly with the text, and provide feedback in our regional groups. Your input and ideas will shape the important months ahead. I thank you for your involvement.

I also wish to provide an update on the Porticus/Gallup project that we briefly mentioned during our September Zoom Plenary Assembly. Over the past several months the Annual Report Team, along with a mixed groups of members and staff have been discussing and evaluating a possible collaboration between the Commission and the Porticus/Gallup Team, around this most interesting surveying methodology. In short their project proposes a data collection project that might complement our Annual Report in a very meaningful way. We recognize the importance of cross-referencing our current data sets, collected through internal Church sources. Their methodology offers us the possibility of collecting data from the general Catholic population, to hear better from the People of God, as to their experience with



safeguarding policies and procedures. We are in advanced stages of our discussions and are now confirming an in-person meeting with them, next month, in November.

I conclude by reiterating the power of this Second Annual Report, in establishing the regularity necessary for any robust reporting mechanism. Let us not forget, the Annual Report's effectiveness as part of our theory of change model is over the longer term. We need multiple data points to properly track the Church's progress and persistent challenges. The October 29th publication of the Pilot Annual Report will mark a great milestone but from there we must work continuously to establish the necessary cadence and rhythm for this project. I count of you - we are in this together!

