



Annual Report Chair - Presentation to Plenary

Maud de Boer Buquicchio
March 2025 Plenary Assembly

It is my honor once again to guide us in a conversation around the Annual Report pillar of the Commission's mandate. As we begin this discussion, allow me to help situate us in this unique and promising moment. Indeed, our work in this Plenary will take on a new dimension, as we discuss multiple Annual Reports this week.

[Pilot Annual Report]

I believe it is fitting to begin with an acknowledgement of the milestone moment, marked by the official publication of our pilot Annual Report, last fall. As you will recall, in October 2024 we held a Press Conference at the Holy See Press Office to release the long-awaited first edition of the Annual Report. That Report detailed the Commission's findings across 17 episcopal conferences, 2 religious congregations, all of the Commission's 4 regions, 2 dicasteries of the Roman Curia, and 4 different levels of Caritas's realties, around the world. Of course, that pilot Report also introduced the Commission-endorsed concept of Conversational Justice, to underpin our work.

Allowing the contents of that pilot Report to speak for themselves I will briefly reflect on what has occurred since that important day. Over the past months, each of the Church entities cited have received a printed copy of the Report, with a cover letter from the Cardinal, inviting each of them into an ongoing follow-up dialogue. We have been pleased to receive a significant number of responses – a testimony of the openness with which many Church entities have received our Report. These responses have been shared with the relevant Members and Staff on an ongoing basis, for customized follow-up. These are the first signs of the Annual Report serving as the “flywheel” of the Commission – something that we have long envisioned. We are confident that as time goes on this dynamic will only build in momentum. One of the most significant examples of this can be found in Mons. Alí and Mons. Verny's country-visit to Ivory Coast. This is a particularly powerful paradigm of our follow-up efforts, after we published analysis of the Ivorian Church in the pilot Annual Report. Such direct dialogue with one of the Church entities discussed is an impressive model.

In addition to these efforts with our various stakeholders, the Annual Report Team has also dedicated time to an important internal reflection. We produced a SWOT analysis to reflect on the full process of the pilot Annual Report. I look forward to discussing the results of that reflection in more detail, with Stefano and Nathan. Indeed, our learnings from the first full cycle of our methodology are already informing our second iteration.

[Second Annual Report]

With that, I would like to now offer some remarks on our second Report. During our October 2024 Plenary Assembly, Members were given the opportunity to

directly review the draft text, that we have come to know as the *Instrumentum Laboris*. This text included our important introduction on reparations, as the Conversational Justice pillar in-focus, along with the various four sections, of which we are all familiar. At the conclusion of that Plenary Assembly, the Commission approved the text for the synodal phase.

In the ensuing weeks, the AR Team coordinated the dissemination of the relevant excerpts of the *Instrumentum Laboris* to the respective Church entities, mentioned in the text. To date, we have received and reviewed feedback from around 20 stakeholders. This feedback has been received in both written form and through in-person meetings with Church leaders. The text we will review now reflects the insights that emerged from those synodal exchanges.

Importantly, this year – as a commitment to the progressive rollout of our methodology - we also invited synodal feedback on the relevant excerpts of the *Instrumentum Laboris* from the respective Apostolic Nuncios, in the local Churches, covered in Section 1. The Papal Representatives were invited to submit their perspective and any relevant material that might help deepen the study presented in the text. Indeed, these solicitations from the Apostolic Nunciatures have enabled a promising data verification mechanism, given the local presence of the Nuncios.

Similarly, the AR Team is also pleased to have introduced three other elements of the Annual Report's progressive methodology, especially in response to the call for greater external datasets, to help cross-reference and verify the data we collect from Church authorities.

First, this Report works to make good on the Commission's commitment to increasingly center victims' and survivors' voices in the Annual Report methodology. This involved the facilitation of a further diversified consultation with victims and survivors, across all four regions. A select group of Members and Personnel have coordinated the implementation of the Annual Report Victim Focus Group, with reference to the *Instrumentum Laboris*, itself. This methodology is based on the pilot Focus Group, conducted by Patricia, for the first Annual Report. The preliminary results of these consultations are invaluable, especially regarding our study of reparations. Indeed, the Focus Groups powerfully confirm Professor David Smolin's introduction, challenging us to a broader understanding of what constitutes genuine practices of reparations in the Church.

Second, the AR Team has developed a methodology to include data from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's online documentation. As part of its periodic review of States Parties, the Committee's database includes mandatory reports submitted by States Parties (governments), parallel reports submitted by civil society organizations (CSOs), reports submitted by National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), and official statements during the Committee's sessions. The AR Team has developed a pilot methodology to log and code any direct references in this documentation to the Catholic Church and/or clerical sexual abuse. It also documents any additional information deemed relevant for addressing sexual abuse in the local Churches. I look forward to hearing your reactions to these most interesting findings.

Third, the Commission's AR Team, under the close guidance of the Secretary, has engaged various UN entities, in follow-up to the First Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children, attended by Mons. Alí and Nathan, in November 2024. Detailed follow-up meetings have been held with both the Office

of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence Against Children and UNICEF's Data Division. A series of valuable external data sources and collaborations are being explored with these two offices. Stefano and Nathan will be able to provide us with more details.

Allow me to conclude my remarks on the second Annual Report by also recalling the wealth of insights that the AR Team collected through another round of individual meetings with Members and Personnel. In total, the AR Team conducted over 14 hours of individual meetings to directly receive feedback on the *Instrumentum Laboris*. At the conclusion of this Plenary Assembly, we will ask the Commission's consensus to proceed with the final steps towards publication, in dialogue with our relevant stakeholders, especially in the Roman Curia. I trust you will feel confident in supporting these next steps, after sharing so much of your invaluable feedback and perspective, in the text that we now review.

[Third Annual Report]

The last Annual Report that we will discuss this week is the third Annual Report, with reporting year 2025. As you will recall, we are largely focusing this third Report on religious life, given the temporary pause of the *ad limina* visits, during the Jubilee year. As such, we have begun our outreach to the Dicastery for Religious, the two Unions of Superiors General and the various Regional Federations of Major Superiors, to select in a synodal manner the specific religious Congregations that we will review. Our standard data collection methodology with these Congregations will begin next month.

Additionally, I would like to briefly mention our extraordinary coverage of the Philippines, in Section 1 of the third Annual Report. As you will recall, our methodology provides for the Regional Groups to freely request the review and inclusion of a given local Church, even if it is not scheduled for an *ad limina* visit. Coinciding with the PCPM-sponsored safeguarding Conference in the Philippines on October 22-24 of this year, the Regional Group Asia/Oceania formally triggered this accompaniment mechanism. As such, the Cardinal wrote to the Filipino Episcopal Conference, requesting their completion of our safeguarding-specific questionnaire. We are pleased to continuously be receiving responses to those questionnaires.

Additionally, as another sign of the Commission's closeness to that local Church, we have been exploring the implementation of a pilot survey methodology, that has been scrupulously developed by Gallup, over several years. The AR Team has been closely following developments of this project, in sustained dialogue with the Gallup team, tasked with its design. Several specific Members have also been directly involved throughout the various stages of its elaboration. At its core, it serves to capture the broader public's perspective on the local Church's implementation of its safeguarding guidelines. We believe such an independent survey is consistent with the Commission's commitment to further cross-referencing the data provided by Church authorities. Encouraged by the maturation of Gallup's methodology, we believe that a pilot implementation in the Philippines might be a meaningful exercise of data verification. We are also pleased to report that funding has been secured to support such a pilot. During this Plenary we would like to discuss this proposal with you further.

[Conclusion]

With that I conclude with a reflection on the promise of the Annual Report, more broadly. With each of the Annual Report's developments, we are laying another brick to build an unprecedented tool in the Church's history. I remain convinced

that our backing of this methodology is a legacy endeavour, to accompany the Church on its path of conversion. It is a way of bringing these notions of accountability and transparency to life, far beyond our own time as Members. I think that is something we can be proud of – but more importantly, it is something that our little ones might learn helped keep them safe.

