



TUTELA
MINORUM

PONTIFICAL COMMISSION FOR THE
PROTECTION OF MINORS

Executive Summary

The Commission presents its second Annual Report on Church Policies and Procedures for Safeguarding. In this Annual Report, the Commission documents its findings and recommendations for the 2024 reporting period.

Conversional Justice pillar-in-focus: A dedicated study on reparations

Throughout his pontificate, Pope Francis challenged the Church to respond emphatically to the scourge of sexual abuse, consistent with the Church's calling to continuous **conversion away from evil and toward healing for the wounded**. In its pilot Annual Report last year, the Commission detailed the adoption of **Conversional Justice as a pastoral-theological framework** to accompany the Church's essential path of conversion. As explained in the pilot Annual Report, Conversional Justice consists of the following four interconnected pillars:



The Commission committed to a **continuous and rotating study of the various pillars** in each successive edition of the Annual Report. This second Annual Report presents findings on the Commission's detailed study of **reparations** and its **pastoral-theological basis**, understood as the Church's responsibility to accompany victims/survivors in their journey of healing and repair. The study gathered insights from the **local Churches' existing practices of reparations** and the **persistent challenges to making comprehensive reparation**. The Commission's Annual Report Victim/Survivor Focus Group also facilitated essential insight into this study, with input directly from victims/survivors.

The results from this study identify specific practices that the Church must further embrace as **critical means of reparations** — *beyond the partial and often insufficient role of financial compensation in a comprehensive approach to reparations* — such as the following:

- » **assurances of welcoming listening centres for victims/survivors** to be heard and believed by Church authorities
- » the provision of **professional psychological support services**
- » **public acknowledgements and apologies**
- » **proactive and transparent communication with victims/survivors** to provide timely updates on their cases
- » the **inclusion of victims/survivors in the development of the Church's safeguarding policies and procedures.**

»»» Learning from victims/survivors: The Commission's continuously expanding listening ministry

The Commission has benefited from more than a decade of learnings from listening directly to victims/survivors of abuse. Consistent with its victim/survivor-centred approach, the Commission established the **Annual Report Victim/Survivor Focus Group (AR Focus Group)** and piloted its methodology **in one region for the first Annual Report.**

Concurrently, the Commission committed to expanding the AR Focus Group methodology based on its learnings from the pilot implementation. Faithful to this commitment, the Commission expanded its AR Focus Group methodology **to all four regions for the second Annual Report.** The Commission is deeply grateful to the victims/survivors who generously contributed as AR Focus Group participants. Their **perspectives and opinions are summarized in a dedicated section of the Annual Report, right after the discussion of Conversional Justice.** The experiences they shared directly inform the analysis found throughout this Annual Report, especially with regard to the Commission's recommendations to specific Church entities.

The Commission reiterates its **ongoing commitment to further expanding victims'/survivors' contributions** to future editions of the Annual Report, beyond the synodal phase, throughout the various stages of its development.

»»» Main findings and observations: Accompanying the Universal Church's safeguarding ministry

The Annual Report once again offers the Commission an opportunity to summarize its **main findings and observations** on a systematic basis — to be shared with the **Holy Father, victims/survivors, local Churches, and all the People of God.**



This year's main findings and observations include:

1

The elements of an **operational *vademecum* on reparations for victims/survivors of abuse in an ecclesial context based on the Commission's dedicated study**. The *vademecum* aggregates findings into six areas that the Church must further address in order to fulfil its fundamental obligations to victims/survivors: (1) **Welcome, listen, and care**, (2) **communications: public and private apologies**, (3) **spiritual and psychotherapeutic support**, (4) **financial support**, (5) **institutional and disciplinary reforms**, and (6) **safeguarding initiatives in the ecclesial community**.

2

The importance of a **streamlined protocol for the resignation and/or removal of Church leaders or personnel in cases of abuse or negligence**. Based on its findings from the pilot Annual Report and now further confirmed by its study on reparations, the Commission emphasizes the importance of **publicly communicating the reasons for resignation and/or removal, when the decision is related to cases of abuse or negligence**. Such a protocol, and any related communication, would maintain due regard for principles related to privacy and the presumption of innocence.

3

The value of creating **an academic network that includes Catholic university research centres specialising in human rights, abuse prevention, and safeguarding**, to collect relevant data in the countries and regions covered by the Report. Further developing its findings from the pilot Annual Report, the Commission notes that such a network would contribute to **the diversification of sources for the Annual Report methodology**.

4

The importance of developing a **systematic and mandatory reporting mechanism on the safeguarding ministry of the local Churches**. Consistent with its unique organisational structure, the Church has long possessed the ability to document and collect relevant information about its various ministries. The Commission notes the Church's ability to **promote greater transparency and accountability by leveraging its strong tradition of periodic reporting to include safeguarding policies and implementation**.

5

The key role played by the **Apostolic Nuncios journeying alongside the local Churches**. The Commission notes the importance of its own closeness to the **Holy See's diplomatic corps** around the world, which is uniquely positioned to encourage, support, and **accompany the ministry of safeguarding in the local Churches**.

Sections of the Annual Report

Each section of the Annual Report offers an analysis of a number of Church entities by presenting the following:

1. a detailed **profile**
2. a **safeguarding overview**
3. the Commission's critical observations of the safeguarding **challenges** faced
4. the Commission's ensuing **recommendations**.

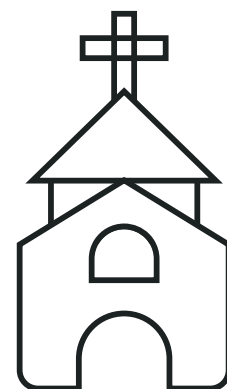
Each phase of the Annual Report methodology adopts a **synodal and pragmatic approach with each of the Church entities** mentioned. Consistent with Conversional Justice, the Church entities that are covered in this Annual Report are invited to participate actively. The Commission thanks all those Church entities who engaged, in earnest, with this second Annual Report process. Their engagement demonstrated a meaningful commitment to **our common safeguarding ministry** across the various episcopal conferences, religious institutes, dicasteries, and lay associations.

Section 1: The Local Church in Focus

As a **stable body of the Roman Curia**, the Commission is uniquely positioned to accompany the local Churches' and religious institutes' safeguarding ministry. The Commission exercises its accompaniment mandate on an ongoing basis, through three main channels: (1) the standard **ad limina process**; (2) a **proactive request** from a given episcopal conference or religious institute; or (3) an **extraordinary request** from one of the Commission's Regional Groups.

The purpose of Section 1 is to present an **account of the safeguarding activities and challenges** in the local Churches and within religious institutes, **along with the Commission's subsequent recommendations**. Section 1 serves as a tool for sustained and continued dialogue, pedagogy, sharing of good practices, and mobilizing solidarity around safeguarding with the local Churches and religious institutes.

This year's Annual Report includes two main progressions to the methodology for Section 1. First, for each country that it covers, the Commission presents observations from the **United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child's reporting mechanism**, including shadow reports from civil society organizations. The Commission reviews and logs any relevant data regarding safeguarding in the local Church within the particular country. This represents a powerful **external dataset — to cross-reference, contextualize, and verify the data submitted by Church authorities**. Second, during the synodal phase, the Commission systematically invites the episcopal conferences and religious institutes to review and comment on the drafted text that presents their reality. This methodology has been expanded to also invite the **Apostolic Nuncio present in the relevant local Church to provide parallel commentary** during the synodal phase, which provides an additional verification mechanism for the data submitted by local Church leaders.



In this Annual Report, the Commission presents its analysis and recommendations for the following episcopal conferences who came on an *ad limina* visit during the 2024 reporting period:

- Italy (including a breakdown by regions)
- Gabon
- Japan
- Equatorial Guinea
- Ethiopia
- Guinea (Conakry)
- Bosnia-Herzegovina
- Portugal
- Slovakia
- Malta
- Korea
- Mozambique
- Lesotho
- Namibia
- Regional Episcopal Conference of North Africa (Algeria, Morocco, Western Sahara, Libya, Tunisia)
- Mali
- Kenya
- Greece

The religious institutes covered in this Annual Report are:

- Brothers of Christian Instruction of St. Gabriel — Monfortains (Male)
- Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa (Female)

Section 2: The Church's Safeguarding Mission in the Continental Regions

The Commission's **closeness to the local Churches' safeguarding ministry** is consistently manifested through the Regional Groups. The Commission's members are grouped according to their country of origin into Regional Groups. With its **members and regional personnel living and working around the world**, the Commission continuously **gathers analysis from some of Church's leading local safeguarding experts**.



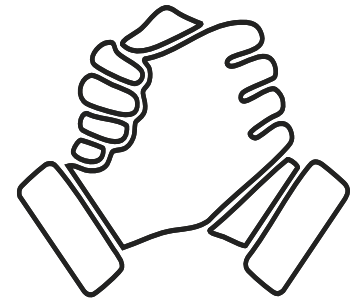
The purpose of Section 2 is to present that first-hand analysis from the Commission's Regional Groups based on their **expertise and knowledge of regional safeguarding realities**. It is particularly informed by the Commission's **engagement with victims/survivors at the local level**.

This second Annual Report's **study on reparations is especially manifest in Section 2**. Indeed, the Commission presents a wide range of existing practices and challenges related to reparations in the Church across the regions. While parts of the Church in the Americas, Europe, and Oceania demonstrate **important commitments to reparations**, an **overreliance on financial compensation** hinders an integral understanding of repair and healing for victims/survivors.

A significant part of Central and South America, Africa, and Asia are still **lacking adequate dedicated resources to victim/survivor accompaniment**. Finally, inspiring practices of reparations have emerged from various local Churches in the regions, including a **traditional communal healing practice** in Tonga, known as *Hu Louifi*; detailed **annual reporting on victim/accompaniment services** in the United States; **safeguarding guideline review processes** under way in Kenya, Malawi, and Ghana; and a notable **truth-telling report**, *Il coraggio di guardare*, in the Italian Diocese of Bolzano-Bressanone.

Section 3: Safeguarding Policies and Procedures of the Roman Curia in Service of the Local Church

In its service to the Petrine ministry, the Commission explores the various safeguarding competencies of the Roman Curia, to **promote an “all-of-government” approach**. The Commission particularly aims to increase understanding and transparency with regard to the Holy See’s policies, procedures, and jurisdiction related to safeguarding.



Section 3 allows the Commission to manifest its **closeness to the safeguarding ministry of specific dicasteries**, based on their respective competencies within the Church’s life.

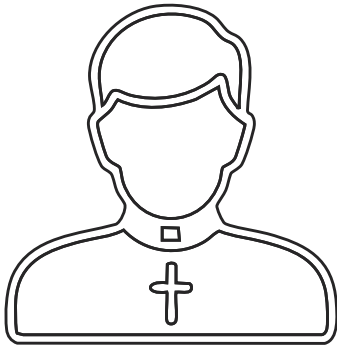
This second Annual Report includes an analysis of the **Dicastery for Evangelization — Section for the First Evangelisation and New Particular Churches**. This Section performs very important functions in **supporting local Churches in the missionary territories**, including supervising their governance and safeguarding initiatives. The local Churches under its purview include **approximately 1,200 ecclesiastical circumscriptions**.

The Commission found a **strong commitment to safeguarding from the Section** and welcomes the **openness with which the Section engaged in the Annual Report process**. The Commission looks forward to collaborating with the Section on implementation of the recommendations contained in this Annual Report.

Section 4: The Church’s Safeguarding Ministry in Society

Each edition of the Annual Report dedicates Section 4 to exploring the myriad of **dimensions of the Church that reach populations in the broader society**. With this section, the Commission highlights the social ministries of the Church — which often champion the rights of children and vulnerable adults — while also emphasizing the importance of **ensuring proper safeguarding standards** in the exercise of those ministries.

In this Annual Report, the Commission begins a **study of lay associations**, which are **formal and recognized groupings of the lay faithful** working together in promotion of some aspect of the apostolate. In his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christi fideles laici*, Saint John Paul II noted that “a ‘cultural’ effect can be accomplished through work done not so much by an individual alone but



by an individual as 'a social being', that is, as a **member of a group, of a community, of an association, or of a movement**. Such work is, then, **the source and stimulus leading to the transformation of the surroundings and society...**" (par. 29, boldface added).

According to the Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium*, these **lay associations are under the competency of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life**. As such, the Commission developed a **pilot methodology to assist the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life** in its accompaniment of the **safeguarding dimensions of these lay associations**.

This Annual Report presents that pilot methodology as well as an initial implementation for one lay association: **Work of Mary — Focolare Movement**.

The Commission welcomes the **important safeguarding reforms recently enacted** by the Focolare Movement. While noting specific recommendations, the Commission also highlights certain particularly good practices, including the establishment of an **Independent Central Commission** for handling cases of abuse within the Focolare Movement; a **Communication Policy** concerning sexual abuse of children and vulnerable adults; and **Guidelines on support and financial reparation** in cases of sexual abuse.

»»» The Memorare Initiative

The Commission has continued expanding its **Memorare Initiative for victims/survivors** as a safeguarding capacity-building initiative in the local Churches of the Global South.

The Commission currently has **20 agreements in place for local Memorare Initiatives around the world**, with another dozen under negotiation.

»»» Financial Report

Each year the Commission presents a brief financial report on its activities and the support received from its donors. The **Commission's financial report for the 2024 reporting period** can be found in the Appendix of this second Annual Report.

