

ULRIKE GENTNER · AGNIESZKA BARAN (EDS.)



Protecting Minors in our Schools

Preventing and Responding
to Sexualised Violence

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ZIP
ZENTRUM FÜR
IGNATIANISCHE
PÄDAGOGIK



Jesuit European Committee for
Primary & Secondary Education

A video about the Safeguarding Conference 2022 shows excerpts from the presentations and impressions of shared moments:

<https://zip-ignatianisch.org/videoclip-ueber-die-kinderschutztagung/>

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Preface

José A. Mesa SJ

When the first Jesuits decided to accept schools, they did it because they were convinced that they were great apostolic platforms for sharing the spiritual experience that had radically changed their lives. They wanted the new generations to discover the loving and transforming presence of God in their lives.

Thus, Jesuits knew that the education they were offering was an education that needed more than just sound academics; it required to touch hearts more than minds. Schools must go beyond a mere encyclopedic instruction or preparation for a job; it must be a preparation for life and a commitment to prepare students to contribute to the communal good in the service of God. *Puerilis instituto est renovatio mundi*, “the education of the youth in the renewal of the world” as Fr. Bonifacio used to explain. Fr. Pedro Arrupe described it in more contemporary words: Jesuit education is an invitation to consider life only worthy when we become persons for and with others following Christ’s example.

Therefore, Jesuit education requires a relationship of trust and respect where students feel safe and recognized in their human dignity. Today, this means that any school claiming to be Jesuit must promote a consistent culture of protection where everybody feels welcome and respected.

Without this culture Jesuit education cannot deliver what it promises: an education of the whole person. The new *Living Tradition* (2019) document calls for a commitment to creating a safe and healthy environment for all in our schools (Global Identifier #2).

Safeguarding is not just another task for the school; rather, it is the condition for true learning to happen. We invite our students to consider a human excellence that goes beyond academic excellence so that they can become persons of competence, consciousness, compassion, and commitment. Without a safe and sound environment, free from any form of abuse, this is just impossible.

We know that in the past we have failed in some of our schools to create a consistent culture of protection. Our response to these failures requires that we eradicate any form of abuse today and in the future; achieving less will make our holistic understanding of education just empty words and desires.

Preface

Franck Janin SJ

In recent years, the Society of Jesus has taken important steps by strongly encouraging all Jesuit provinces to put in place clear protocols and policies in their communities, institutions and works, aimed at protecting children and vulnerable adults, welcoming and accompanying victims of abuse, as well as providing ongoing training on these issues. The objective, both ambitious but also necessary and urgent, is to build and promote a culture of safeguarding and protection.

To speak of culture is to indicate the magnitude of the task. It involves a profound transformation of mentalities and habits, of the way we look at each other, we talk to each other, we respect boundaries and exercise authority. The testimonies of abused children and vulnerable adults raise profound questions about our societies and cultures today.

To meet this challenge, we need to bring together all our expertise and capabilities. This is why I welcome the publication of this book, which is the result of close collaboration between the Jesuit European Committee for Primary and Secondary Education (JECSE), the European and Near East network of Jesuit schools, and the Zentrum für Ignatianische Pädagogik (ZIP), which supports Jesuit schools in the Central European Province. This collaboration made it possible to hold a high-level Safeguarding Conference in

March 2022, combining both reflective input and pedagogical application. It continues with the current publication, which I hope will strengthen our efforts to provide a safe and healthy environment for all. Protecting minors in our schools, so that they in turn become responsible, protective adults, is the key to creating the culture of protection we all hope for.

Introduction

Aims, Content, Framework

Ulrike Gentner, Agnieszka Baran

In 2019, all of us involved in the mission of the Society of Jesus have been called to “walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice” (Sosa, 2019, p. 3). In the official letter presenting the Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAP), Fr. General Arturo Sosa SJ pointed out: “We commit ourselves to help eliminate abuses inside and outside the Church, seeking to ensure that victims are heard and properly helped, that justice is done, and that harm is healed. This commitment includes the adoption of clear policies for the prevention of abuse, the ongoing formation of those who are committed to mission, and serious efforts to identify the social origins of abuse. In this way, we effectively promote a culture that safeguards all vulnerable persons, especially minors” (Sosa, A., 2019, Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus, 2019, p. 3).

For several years the Jesuit European Committee for Primary and Secondary Education (JECSE) and the Zentrum für Ignatianische Pädagogik (ZIP) have been jointly responding to this important call for justice and have supported our Jesuit network of schools in Europe and the

Near East to build a culture of protection. As part of an ongoing safeguarding project, at the beginning of 2022 we invited representatives from our schools to discuss the topic at a conference in Ludwigshafen/Germany: “Protecting Minors in our Schools. Preventing and responding to (sexualised) violence”. This important meeting not only raised the awareness of our school staff on the protection of minors, but also helped us to create a platform for the exchange of experiences and strengthen cooperation between safeguarding coordinators in Jesuit schools.

A video about the Safeguarding Conference 2022 shows excerpts from the presentations and impressions of shared moments: <https://zip-ignatianisch.org/videoclip-ueber-die-kinderschutztagung/>

From then on we have continued to reflect together on how to build a safe and supportive environment for everyone in a series of webinars and online workshops. To support staff reflection on this topic, we also produced a video summarising the highlights of our conference and allowing us to revisit the key takeaways from the event.

The book we are handing over to you is another element of our safeguarding project, through which we want to support the creation of a culture of protection in our schools. It is a collection of articles prepared by the keynote speakers of our Safeguarding Conference in Ludwigshafen (2022). The articles presented here move from outlining the context of the problem and describing in detail specific safeguarding issues. Then, the proposed response to the current challenges in this area is presented

with model solutions and practical suggestions for their implementation.

Fr. Klaus Mertes SJ addresses the very important issue of communication with victims in the Church. He outlines an important theological and historical context and encourages in-depth reflection on the question of an ecclesial language that builds bridges with victims rather than triggering trauma. Mr Marek Spitzok explains how abuse works (patterns and perpetrator strategies) and systemic connections. Prof. Dr. Fegert and Fr. Hans Zollner SJ emphasise that the prevention of sexual abuse is an ongoing task that requires responsibility and sustainable processes. The text by Fr. John Guiney SJ and Dr Sandra Racionero-Plaza presents the history on breaking the silence and the first preventive actions in the Society of Jesus, as well as the current actions taken by the Order to create a culture of protection in all its works. Finally, the book closes with a no less important voice relating to the practice of action. Ms Susanna Pradera is showing us how a system for a safe environment, good treatment and care can be successfully built in our institutions.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to all those who made the publication of this book possible. We are grateful to our donors who generously supported the implementation of the entire safeguarding project to strengthen the protection of minors in Jesuit schools in Europe and the Near East. We also thank the authors of the articles for their invaluable contributions and for sharing their experiences and good practices. We would like to extend a special word of appreciation to all those involved in organizing the differ-

ent forums for discussion and all those who participated in them. Without these many important contributions, safeguarding would not grow as it does.

We hope that this book will be an impulse for further reflection on safeguarding, an inspiration for improving existing policies and protocols and designing new prevention schemes. We want to sustainably strengthen a culture of protection.

Square or Round? Reflections on the Discourses regarding the Victims in the Church

Klaus Mertes SJ

On June 26, 2021, the Independent Commission for the Reappraisal of Sexual Child Abuse took stock in the FAZ: “As in most other countries, it was victims of sexual violence in Germany who demanded the establishment of a reappraisal commission. In particular, the initiative „Square table“, which was also formed in linguistic distinction to the Round Table, was committed to this.”

1

The distinction between “round” and “square” was already at issue in the conversation that became the trigger for my letter to former students of Canisius College in early January 2010. Matthias Katsch reported on it 10 years later: “We expressed our wish to have access to the school’s alumni mailing list. Because we wanted to reach our classmates and, beyond that, the presumably affected cohorts of the

seventies and early eighties. Mertes immediately made it clear: He would not give us this access. “If I do, I’ll write a letter myself,” he explained. But he would have to think it through first.”¹ I perceive in retrospect that at that time I distanced myself from the idea of starting with a “round” cooperation, that is, writing a letter together. Then, since 2010, the question has stayed with me, which model of communication between representatives of the institution and those affected would be the appropriate one for coming to terms with abuse, the round or the square model, cooperation or confrontation, or both at the same time, somehow intertwined?

A state institution can invite to a round table, as long as it is an independent neutral body, which is not involved in the abuse in the church institution (although it is involved in its own – but that is another topic). The affected institution, on the other hand, cannot. The accusation by the persons affected is a confrontation to the institution. In this respect, the process necessarily starts squarely, with confrontation.² This does not mean that there is no desire and will to cooperate on both sides, including on the part of those affected. However, in the case, this desire sets new old traps, especially for those affected, which result in repetitions of the abuse during the phase of coming to terms with it. This has become visible in recent months in the Archdiocese of

1 Matthias Katsch: *Damit es aufhört – vom befreienden Kampf der Opfer sexueller Gewalt in der Kirche*, Berlin 2020, p.51f.

2 In 2010, the victims of the Jesuit schools twice invited representatives of the Jesuit Order to a “Corner Table” in spring and fall.

Cologne: The project to involve those affected in the reappraisal turned into their instrumentalization.³

This failure is not an argument against the participation of those affected. It just adds: The goal of reappraisal is always to take back the exclusion of the victims from the community⁴, which was given with the abuse. The desire to lift the exclusion resonated with the victims in 2010 in the conversation at the Canisius College: They wanted to participate in the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of their baccalaureate in the fall of 2010, making sure that the perpetrators would not be invited, and that they themselves would no longer have to conceal their history to guarantee the rotten peace in their baccalaureate class. Reappraisal is also about the possibility of “rounding off”. If it is to succeed, the will to cooperate must be inherent in the process of coming to terms with the past and must be appreciated. If reappraisal processes always remain in confrontation, fall back into it, even deepen it and create new injustice, they will fail. This, too, has been observed time and again in recent years.

So what is the significance of the will to cooperate and the will to confront on both sides in the process of coming to terms with the past? And what does this mean for the respective understanding of roles? There is no simple answer to this question. The abuse crisis, according to Hans Joachim Sander, “has not exacerbated the pro-contra

3 Cf. FAZ, 14.11.2020: Abused Affected Persons.

4 Institution is not “only” institution, but represents and structures communities.

binarity. Rather, it has dissolved it.”⁵ He finds the image of the Möbius strip for this: It is “prima facie a ribbon that has a top and a bottom as well as a left and a right side. But because of the twisting of the ribbon, the side at the top is directly connected to the side at the bottom, if one only continues to follow the ribbon. Likewise, the left edge twists into the right edge as it is traversed further.”⁶ With binary codings (right-wrong, good-bad, round-cornered) one does not get further there, even more, one falls from one failure into the next. This also applies to the relationship between confrontation and cooperation between those affected and the institution in the phase of reappraisal.

I recognize in the continuing twists two themes that are also important for theological reflection. First, there is the theme of Pauline “sin” (hamartia), understood not as the transgression of the law by individuals, but – in the singular – as the power that makes us sin, as Paul constructs the concept of sin in the singular. The abuse of power produces the same thing as Adam’s sin: it opens the door to a power that continues to work in the system, permeating everything, or rather: contaminating, poisoning, twisting, and above all: rendering powerless with regard to the good. “The good that I want, I do not do, and the evil that I do not want, I do.” (Rom 7:14) The cycle of failure is also and precisely an experience of the futility of well-intentioned efforts to get

5 Hans Joachim Sander: *Believing Differently, Not Nevertheless – Sexual Abuse of the Catholic Church and the Theological Consequences*, p. 135.

6 *Ibidem*, p.17

out of that very cycle. The power of abuse twists all efforts to break precisely this power in direct confrontation. On the one hand, the church can be assured from the outside that it has done a great deal in the area of education, prevention and help, including changes in canon law procedures. I don’t want to go into detail about that here, and I certainly don’t want to deny it. But on the other hand, all this is not enough, depending on how one determines the goal of the reappraisal; even more: all successes are always overshadowed, for example, by efforts to use what has been done well to polish up one’s own image. Standing under the power of hamartia, the behavioral patterns that are supposed to be overcome are repeated. Self-salvation under the power of evil does not work.

I find the other theological theme in the biblical motif of temptation: the diabolos is the twister, the perverter. He proceeds as clumsily as he does cunningly. He speaks undercomplexly in complex situations, or conversely, overcomplexly in simple situations. He is the know-it-all, the “expert” par excellence, naturally without any background experience of his own, but only with tactical intent. From the internal perspective of a responsible position, I have therefore occasionally saved myself from the over- or under-complexity of the various pieces of advice, expert opinions and voices in the mantra: “Whatever I do, it is wrong. So I do the wrong thing that I think is right.”

The same is true of theological interpretations. They can be undercomplex or overcomplex. At its core, after all, the temptation motif is about the simple question of trusting God: Where do I encounter God, his will, his love? It

becomes complex because there is someone who disguises himself as an “angel of light,” as Paul classically puts it. He appears as Christ- or also as God-actor. In relation to abuse, children and young people and in general souls searching for God are led into traps by holders of spiritual power, by their aura and their “expertise”.⁷ Their trust in God is abused by the perpetrators directing it to their person and then using it. This perverse game does not simply stop now in the phase of reappraisal. The critical task of theology is to see through and reject the pious-sounding draperies and the theological presumptions that continue to err. Take, for example, the handling of the concept of “forgiveness” or even that of “love of one’s enemies,” undoubtedly indispensable, central concepts of the Gospel. In 2019, an incident in the Diocese of Münster made national headlines. A priest preached about forgiveness and exhorted the congregation to forgive priestly abusers as well. Several people then stood up and left the room in protest. They wanted to draw attention to the fact that those affected were also sitting in the room.⁸ In this case, several under-complex approaches to coming to terms with the situation can be recognized. And the decision to get up and walk out is the decision that is as simple as it is appropriate to the complexity of the confusion.

So, because the situation is so entangled, there remains first of all the possibility to see through the tempting character of the many good-sounding proposals that want to show

7 Cf. most recently Herderkorrespondenz 8/2021, Statisten beim Fest, p.26 ff.

8 For reporting see katholisch.de, 9.7.2019

the seductively simple way out of the entanglement – and to say no to it, without being able to say right away whether and how reconciliation could become positive. Negative theology is an art of denial, it protects the positive by denial, although the positive is hidden from it. To use the classical phrase, “Si comprehenderit non est Deus.” (Augustine)

If we put the two themes (hamartia and diabolos) together, we see that the institution cannot deal with abuse on its own. Rather, it is led into ever new traps by precisely these attempts. The positive reverse side of this realization is: An authority “from outside” is needed to somehow connect the square of confrontation with the round of cooperation. Theologically speaking, this is a plea for the grace or gift character of successful communication between the victim and perpetrator sides. For the spiritual view, this is an invitation to pay attention to the signs of the times, to the gaps that suddenly open up in the cycle of failure. Structurally, this leads to the need for an independent authority to deal with the past. Since 2021 the Church in Germany has been attempting to take the first steps towards letting go, in particular letting go of the idea that it can itself bridge the gap between the perpetrator side and the victim side, with “Standards for an Independent Reappraisal” and with the “Independent Commission for Recognition Payments” (UKA). Whether the approaches are sufficient or not remains to be seen. Ecclesiologically, at any rate, there is still enough to be done, as can also be seen from episcopal statements that have recently pleaded for the introduction of administrative and disciplinary courts in the church in order to be able to deal with

official failures according to transparent and fair procedures – this, too, is a fruit of the admitted powerlessness of not being able to monarchically get out of the traps of the Adamic sin of abuse by one’s own efforts.

2

Jörg Fegert, director of the Clinic for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry/Psychotherapy in Ulm, reports in retrospect on the congress “Towards Healing and Renewal,” which took place in February 2012 at the Gregoriana in Rome with the participation of bishops and those affected. “A church service also took place within the framework of this congress, which attracted a great deal of attention, and for me it was an incisive experience, since from my point of view it showed the speechlessness and helplessness of the clergy and the instrumentalization of those affected ... In the struggle to find the authors for the program (e-learning), I was aware of many things that reached me emotionally at the moment of the church service with those affected. From my point of view inadequate picture metaphors, with a slide projection of atomic bomb pictures and other catastrophes, were supposed to describe the misery of the people after the fall of man and to make sexual abuse appear as one of many catastrophes. In this service, the victims were given a role which, for my feeling, aimed at reconciliation much too early. The church music was banal and not appropriate to the situation. Thus the liturgy with pseudo-modern

interjections like photo projection and naive, contemporary choir music became for me an expression of encrustation and speechlessness. Again and again, Bach’s motet *Der Geist hilft unserer Schwachheit auf* (The Spirit helps our weakness) ran through my head, and especially the line *denn wir wissen nicht, was wir sollen beten*. That’s exactly what it was: there was no theological position on sexual abuse. They didn’t know what to pray. But instead of resorting to inexpressible groans, here were inadequate metaphors of annihilation visually projected ... That evening in Rome, I got the impression, abuse is something the churches really have nothing to do with, it has nothing to do with their reasons for believing. An inner compass was missing that can’t be bought in from the outside, but must emerge from spiritual discourse.”⁹

Church language fails not only because it is no longer true in the situation of abuse, but because it wants to make words at all, when the words have just been taken from it. For the time being, all that remains is “groaning that is inexpressible” (Rom 8:26). There are several reasons for this. On the one hand, perpetrators of abuse and also cover-ups have made use of ecclesiastical language for their actions and omissions, thus contaminating it. One cannot withdraw from the abuse of language simply by using it correctly. The abuse was more than just outward use. Ecclesiastical language now triggers trauma in those affected. It no longer comforts or edifies. The institution’s attempt to give lan-

⁹ Jörg Fegert, *Sexual abuse: empathy instead of clericalism*, in: *STIMMEN DER ZEIT* 3/2019, p.199f

guage to the experiences of the victims themselves is also ineffectual because the differences in perception between the two sides are too deep. The chasm between perpetrator and victim perspectives cannot be bridged from one side to the other. Neither side has a language at its disposal that could be used to vault the gap completely.

In addition, the church is denied its usual roles in relation to the victims. There is a difference between the Samaritan turning to the beaten man at the wayside, when he has been plundered by others, and plundering him or her himself. In the latter case, compassionate language, pity for the victims, “concern for the victims,” as it is so often said in official church pronouncements, are no longer true. The helper position is closed. Even the Christological appreciation of the victim status (Christ at the side of the victims, Christ as victim in solidarity with the victims) does not free from speechlessness.

At the center of the problem I am trying to address here is the church’s treatment of the judgment parable in Matthew’s Gospel (Mt 25:31–46). It is often used in ecclesiastical discourse to incorporate the reality of the afflicted into Christological discourse: Crucified teddy bears, “child abuse is God’s abuse,” “the afflicted evangelize us,” “the afflicted are the kings,” and so on. With such imagery, the church works its way into proximity to the victims via Christology. On the one hand, this is understandable, insofar as the Church may assume that she is not separated from Christ despite the shameful crimes in her ranks and in her name; so she seeks Christ among the victims. In the situation of abuse, however, this leads into traps. Affected persons experience such language

as assault. At the same time, affected persons report that they encounter an inappropriate bias on the church side, a bias that they in turn experience as a withdrawal of closeness. Again, a strangely twisted starting point. “In the abuse, my longing for closeness was abused, and now I am denied closeness because I was abused.” The bias appears as the reverse side of an encroaching projection of the *Tremendum et Fascinosum* onto the affected, which is not coherent. Incidentally, it is then also no longer a big step to then reconnect with those affected in the self-manufactured closeness to them in a maximum condemnation language about perpetrators, as could also be heard, for example, in Pope Francis’ speech at the conclusion of the abuse summit in February 2019. But the church cannot define itself away from the square constellation in this way or any other. Rather, in the constellation of abuse, the very opposite message strikes her from the parable of judgment: “Away from me.” (Mt 25:41) I also hear in it, “Stay on the other side of the ditch.”

But what remains on the other side of the ditch? I mean: Christ’s closeness to the sinful Church in His solidary substitution. “The Son of Man came to give his life as a ransom for the many.” (Mt 20:28). In this perspective, Christ stands precisely not vicariously for the victims, but vicariously for the sinner’s side, that is, for the other side of the ditch, making atonement. This presupposes the self-critical view of one’s own ugly side, precisely not the narcissistic transfiguring, classically speaking: Confession as well as active repentance afterwards. That is why it is right, especially from a Christological point of view, that the church has embarked

on the path of coming to terms with the past. If it did not do so, it would not follow the Son of Man who was advancing.

Again, all this is not to be understood – there is no end to differentiation – in the sense of a privatization of the relationship with Jesus past the persons concerned, as it was claimed and granted to them in a misguided practice of confession and absolution by offenders. Nor is the closeness of Christ in any way denied to those affected, if he is also close on the other side. It is only a different closeness, not the same. A central aspect of the incarnation becomes visible: Christ enters into the logic of the ransom payment, which is to be made from the sinner’s side: acceptance of consequences of failure, especially also vicariously, conversion, not only individually, but in relation to one’s own self-understanding as an institution. That is why it is indispensable for the reappraisal to speak about the favoring systemic factors, which must be rethought in the sense of “metánoia”. Whoever speaks here of “abuse of abuse” has not understood something essential. “What is crooked shall become straight” (Is 40:4), what is angular round, and this can succeed if one neither evades nor only wants to do it oneself, but remains in the following of Christ.

Note

In Germany, at the request of those affected, out of respect for the survivors of the Holocaust, we do not speak of “survivors” but of “affected persons”.

Four Circles of Silence – Sexualised Violence in Catholic Institutions

Marek Spitzczok von Brisinski

“I think it is time to speak out on this issue that, up until now, each individual survivor has primarily dealt with on their own.” (Documentation “Eckiger Tisch” (2.) p. 21, from an open letter, 2009).

How does the system of sexual transgressions and violence function? How do perpetrators manipulate social environments: Children and youth, parents, colleagues, superiors, the entire institution? How can they deceive everyone in order to conceal and cover up their actions? The following explanations show how survivors of sexualised violence are made to feel insecure, confused and pushed into silence on many levels. Such insecurity and other consequences often last for years and decades after the events have passed. The aim here is to gain insights from the past and to clarify structural responsibilities. An additional aim of this article is to encourage and build confidence for the process of coming to terms with the past, and through structured findings to perhaps offer more understanding and support for those affected.

This text is based on published reports with personal accounts as well as on my own experience as a counsellor of affected youth and adults. (3.) The situations reflected on here occurred before there was a wider public awareness in Germany due to press reports of sexual and other violence in catholic institutions from 2010 onwards. However, perpetrator strategies and systemic structures that may bring forward abuse can still be found in institutions today. The publicised reports cited here provide further information on events in different institutions.

As a note of caution, strategies of perpetrators and generalised harmful situations are portrayed here as well as implications for those affected. No explicit actions of violence are described, but structural contexts and effects are analysed. Such descriptions can lead to personal stress and perhaps activate own memories. If signs of stress do appear, it is advisable to try and distance oneself as best as possible and to use personal ways of stress relief. Taking a break, perhaps physically moving to a different place and practising personal self-care can be helpful. It may also be helpful to talk to a professionally trained person or a counselling centre specialised in sexualised or other forms of violence.

Background

Young people may be exposed to sexualised violence in schools, boarding schools, parishes, recreational facilities or in pastoral ministry. They are involved in social contexts

and actions that have an effect on different personal levels and their development: physically, emotionally, mentally and in their world view. Experiences of violence and perpetrator strategies can lead to personal stress long after the events are over. They sometimes lead to years of silence, feelings of guilt and shame, fears and confusing reactions. Survivors of (sexualised) violence often mobilise many helpful resources and find individual ways of dealing with this. Healing processes may begin at any time and people have reported that finding more inner calm is possible, also with professional assistance and self-help groups.

The years and decades following experiences of violence may be characterised by silence. It is difficult to understand what has happened, to find suitable words to express and communicate with others.

For a helpful dialogue, someone who listens, believes what is said, gives space and holds back on their own views and judgements can be very helpful. These can be people trained in this area such as professionals from qualified counselling centres and specialised therapists. It can also be helpful if affected people speak to and support each other, for example in advocacy groups or self-help groups., and when people feel solidarity and support, also from friends and family members.

The following model of the four circles of silence describes the special circumstances of sexualised violence in church institutions. The term “institution” is defined broadly. For example, a pastor in a parish is a part of the institution, as they clearly belong to the church, its duties and

rules. The first two circles of silence are generally found in all institutionalised contexts of sexualised violence, while the following two are specific to religious contexts.

First circle – Control of spaces and physical isolation

When young people enter an institution and thus new social system, they adopt its rules, regulations and habits, because they want to be included. Perpetrators or offenders who plan and carry out sexualised violence often select certain children for their “inner circle“, as privileged individuals. In doing so, they create their own spaces to which they alone regulate access. Thus, the boundary between public and private spaces often becomes blurred. Perpetrators invite children and youth into their private rooms or they redefine public spaces as their own. They organise excursions and trips so as to create a spatial distance from everyday life and to have control over people and processes.

The children and youth are invited to participate either individually or in small groups in selected activities. Thus, the boundaries of usual activities of those under one’s supervision are shifted, or generally valid rules are suspended. Reported examples have been sharing of alcohol or violent, intimidating or humiliating actions. Such events are often referred to as initiation; it is considered important to participate in them in order to belong to the group. In addition, participants are obliged to keep things secret. This is a test

to find out if the selected young people are willing to follow these different rules and to remain silent.

Increasingly, such activities are then sexualised on the pretext of education or special care. These can include nudity (in showers, saunas, swimming areas), viewing pornographic material, or intimate physical contact. This is where the sexual assaults begin, they usually increase over time.

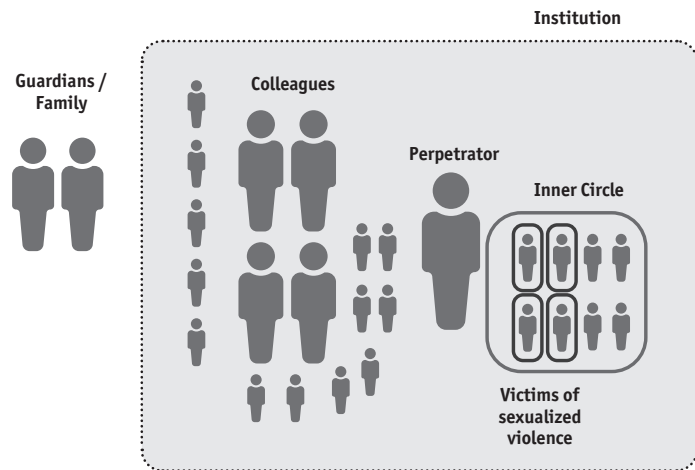
Perpetrators restrict spatial movements as closely as possible. Often they keep the children and youth busy in activities or in social media exchanges so that they have only little time to spend outside of the perpetrator’s influence. Contacts with peers or family are discouraged and thus also a social distancing from potentially helpful people.

Reports from survivors describe this approach in a variety of ways. A small selection from published reports:

“I became increasingly aware that he would invite individual students to his room in the evening, lock the door and turn off the light” (Merzbach Report, p. 10).

“I owe my first alcoholic intoxication and the first pornographic images I saw to [Father R.]. I myself experienced how [he] personally ‘looked after’ drunken boys and put them to bed.” (Documentation Eckiger Tisch, p. 23)

“Father H apparently took advantage of every opportunity to act out his sexual inclinations in a wide variety of places. There were indications of abuse during a holiday trip with young people to Portugal or towards children of a care home. [...] Completely secured, however, is an abuse of adolescents during a tent camp.” (Merzbach Report, p. 21)



The diagram depicts a system of social control set up by perpetrators in institutions

These and many other reports describe the control over spaces and an influence on young people that perpetrators use to achieve their goal of sexual assault.

By creating this inner circle, perpetrators control certain spaces and activities of children and youth. Those who express their rejection of such systems are often excluded and devalued. As a result, however, they may also experience severe psychological stress. There is immense social and psychological pressure through which perpetrators can greatly influence the behaviour of young people, their friendships, relationships and family contacts. Thus, often group dynamics are created which enforce obedience and subordination, and against which young people can hardly defend themselves due to their young age and the high pressure to conform.

“The head [of the institution] was oriented towards this ‘self-created reality’ wherein he was the centre, and subsequently there was a certain disconnection from the ‘normal world’”. (Bintig Report, p. 73)

If questioned about such group dynamics, perpetrators always have an explanation at hand for their actions and for the behaviour of the young people. They deliberately stand between those affected and other young people, colleagues and parents who could help. They usually maintain close contacts with their superiors in order to protect their actions in grey areas and to exercise more power. Thus, they also entangle third parties in perpetrator strategies. They give colleagues or other adults special attention, gifts or extraordinary assistance. They try to estrange those who are critical of their unprofessional actions, up to the point of defamation and bullying. Critical voices are often depicted as untrustworthy or envious. The children and youth are thus deprived of opportunities of receiving help from outsiders.

Second circle – Emotional and mental manipulation

As part of their manipulation system, perpetrators involve young people in emotional entanglements and thereby create dependencies. Through attention, gifts and, also punishment they present themselves as special confidants of the affected young people or as unquestionable authorities. This

special position is then used for sexualised and violent acts, which are even justified by this special privilege.

Sexualised violence involves an abuse of power, proximity, and care. This understandably leads to confusion, doubt and ambiguity in young victims towards themselves and the world. If biological sexual impulses occur within the context of sexualised violence (sensation of pleasure, erection, ejaculation), this leads to further confusion. In situations where the adults who carry responsibility should offer support and orientation for personal development, perpetrators cause isolation, disorientation and self-doubt, even up to deep despair.

Affected young people suffer from fear, shame and guilt for events they are made to feel responsible for, although objectively they are not. For example, it can be suggested to them that sexual acts are a natural part of life, even of children and that they willingly participated in them, although the opposite is true. This creates confusion, shame and feelings of guilt, even about not stopping the abuse. On the one hand, perpetrators elevate the young people as special and exceptional, on the other hand they demand a closeness that is not wanted, and engage in intimate private acts that emotionally overwhelm young people.

It is often not possible to speak about (sexual) assaults in a helpful supportive setting directly or in a short time afterward. Young people often feel alone and even if they know of others who could also be victimised, they may be unable to help each other in such situations. Sexual abuse is also an emotional and mental abuse, with serious consequences that often take a long time (up to many decades) to be dealt with.

“Quite target-oriented, he maintained a system of education designed to make the boys obedient. At its core, it was a perfidious system of rewards and punishments. Those who were submissive received attention or important information and assistance for their school career. A sense of belonging, pride and recognition was created. In this way, Father S was able to gain affection for himself by being idolised. The price the young people had to pay was immense. [...] Once they belonged to this circle, it was almost impossible to escape. One risked being deprived of attention as well as punishment. As soon as one of the affected persons broke out of the system of power and dependence, he would feel the full force of the perfidious severity of Father S.. He abused his position and duties against deviators and those who resisted his advances. The students were thus exposed to an extreme system of tensions between shame and sin on the one hand, and fear of Father S’s wrath and mistrust of fellow students on the other hand.” (Merzbach Report, p. 15f.)

“Father D himself seemed to be omnipresent. To conceal anything from him seemed hopeless. Through his own spying, which disregarded any privacy of the children as well as by an ingenious system of student informants, Father D was always aware of supposedly deviant behaviour of individual children and was able to launch targeted punitive expeditions. The whole atmosphere of drills, as well as fear and terror was intensified by cutting all ties to the family of origin. Intensive control of the personal mail was his means for this.” (Merzbach Report, p. 6f.)

“I was inwardly hurt, desperate, lonely, frightened, broken. The only person in whom I trusted, hurt me, defiled me, and now frightened me.” (Merzbach Report, p. 10)

“It was only much later that I realised that the Reverend was satisfying himself. Despite intensive therapy, to this day, this first encounter with sexuality with its internal conflicts has left its mark on me.” (Merzbach Report, p. 17)

“It’s a problem for me that someone has sexually assaulted me, of course, but what really bothers me is not having fought back.” (Merzbach Report, p. 18)
(As noted above, victims who have fought back against sexual assault also report subsequent psychological distress).

In summary, anger, fear, guilt, and shame are always associated with mental confusion. The massive pressure, the unwanted acts, the obligation to remain silent, and a seemingly hopeless situation often lead to long-lasting psychological stress and harm.

“The suffering of the affected students associated with these criminal acts stems from the fact that they could not escape from the net imposed on them. They remained trapped and subjected to the abuse of power by their educator, with all the accompanying negative feelings of guilt, sin and shame.” (Merzbach Report, p. 16).

Third circle – Inversion of religion

Most of the affected young people came from catholic families, went to church regularly, were familiar with the religious rituals and the special position of the consecrated persons. It was clear what was good and bad, what moral expectations there were and that there was a duty to obey. In such an environment, it is particularly difficult to oppose emotional, mental, physical, and religious encroachments. This is especially true in the case of assaults by ordained clergy. Their self-evident religious authority derives from various contexts:

- They are representatives of God on earth;
- They interpret the Bible and perform religious rites and rituals;
- They evaluate which behaviour is desirable and correct, what is wrong and sinful;
- They prescribe the way to salvation from sins;
- They are seen as particularly pure and faultless, including in the context of sexual abstinence (celibacy). Those who are not allowed to live a sexual life were also assumed to not have misconduct in this area;
- In the Catholic Church with its hierarchical order and corresponding obedience there was hardly any room for criticism or complaints by young people or parents.

Sexuality is a controversial topic in the Catholic Church, which is gradually being discussed more openly. Physical adult sexuality is placed within the framework of marriage. Anyone who thinks about or lives sexuality in other ways was in the past deemed a “sinner” with expectations to confess their own thoughts and deeds.

Within the framework of spiritual ordination, sexuality is spiritualised and detached from the world.

Nuns become a “bride of Christ” and priests stand “in persona Christi” as His representatives on earth. In this way, clergy who practice sexualised violence also use religion for their own purposes. In their function and status, they are seen as above worldly things and above “low” sexuality. As authority figures, they define who and what is sinful.

“[Perpetrators were (author’s note)] clergymen who, in the perception of many children, had not only embodied a worldly, but almost Godlike authority. The misuse of this authority is particularly likely to deprive children of their spiritual and emotional support in the long term, perhaps even permanently.” (Zinsmeister et. al. Report, p. 10)

Confession also served priests to influence young people and to create in them feelings of guilt for the sexualised violence they were made victims of.

“As a confessor, he could interrogate the children confessing to him about first sexual experiences, branding them as sins and thus already selecting victims for later

abuse. Ultimately, he considered it his personal right to inflict punishment as the appropriate reaction to misconduct, which he exaggerated as an offense against divine will. Thus, the faithful children were traumatised twice. It is obvious that such circumstances form an ideal breeding ground for sexual abuse.” (Merzbach Report, p. 7)

“The boy had felt ‘indescribable disgust’ in these recurrent situations and experienced himself as extremely powerless and at the same time sinful, because everything physical and sexual was – as he had been repeatedly taught – sin.” (Zinsmeister et. al. Report, p. 43)

“Boys entering puberty were taught that their own feelings were impure and sinful.” (Zinsmeister et. al. Report, p. 204)

“Religious instruction was also very strict and rigid. A fear of sin lurking everywhere was instilled in us. I learned to distrust all my spontaneous impulses and desires.” (Merzbach Report, p. 25)

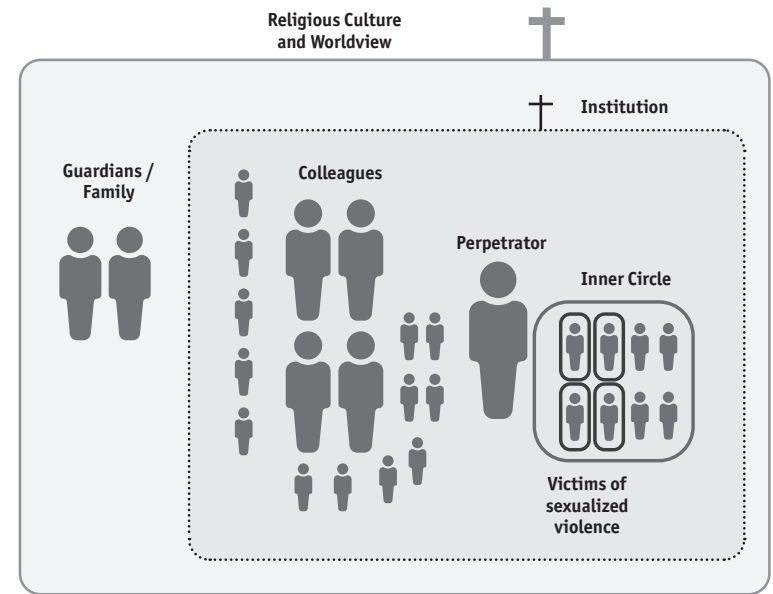
“On the one hand, a former student reported, everything physical and sexual was described as damnable, but on the other hand the permanent emphasis on possible doom and the monitoring of the boys’ ‘purity’ continually focussed their attention on this. A former boarding school student writes: ‘The eradication of every sexual impulse was the central concern of education and the overriding

theme from the first to the last day of my time at the boarding school. There was a very strongly sexualised atmosphere – ex negativo, of course.’ Contact with girls had been considered sinful and therefore dangerous.” (Zinsmeister et. al. Report, p. 38)

Sexualised violence was often suggested to the young victims as their own misconduct and – similar to secular contexts – they were blamed for it. In some cases, victims had to confess to the perpetrator priests the sexualised violence they had been subjected to and to ask for redemption.

Sexualised assaults by clergy mean an inversion of the religious worldview: the very people who are supposed to be particularly pure are violent and manipulative; where sexuality is not supposed to be practiced, perfidious and punishable sexual acts occur; and where a religious path is supposed to lead to salvation, it is linked with massive harm and anguish. Such disturbing events in what is actually a clearly defined framework, have in many cases existentially shaken the basic trust of those affected, their worldview and their faith.

“This mixture of guilt and atonement, hypocrisy, sexual oppression and psychological terror turned me into a person who approached his environment with the greatest mistrust. For many years my relationship to girls and young women was deeply disturbed.” (Merzbach Report, p. 10)



The above diagram, applied to church run institutions, depicts the further consequences of such a system of abuse in a religious context.

“The exaggerated awareness of sin made me timid about doing anything of my own impetus. The danger of violating rules and the fear of the ensuing punishment would lurk everywhere.” (Merzbach Report, p. 25)

“Every thought, every dream which did not conform with the educator’s requirements appeared in my consciousness as a sin. Only absolute, unquestionable readiness for subordination could save me.” (Merzbach Report, p. 25)

“If only to be able to keep his crimes secret and to continue them, Father D had to close this net of dependencies tightly. Escape from it was impossible. To confide in the family by dropping anyway the only possible subtle hints about the sexual assaults of the priest seemed hopeless. How could they, with the usual devotion to the church at that time, believe what their child said? After all, they thought their child was so well taken care of.” (Merzbach Report, p. 8)

Fourth circle – Institutional structures of concealment

“The affected children did not find any protection, neither in the institution, nor in the structures of the order.” (Merzbach Report, p. 8)

In almost all church institutions where sexualised violence took place, the reputation of the institution by far took precedence over the protection of the children. Indications of problems in the behaviour of the personnel regarding closeness and distance were not followed up in a structured way, they were trivialised or ignored. The young people concerned were left alone or even discredited if they spoke out (in whatever form) on what had happened. Even if they could not name the sexual assaults in all clarity, many

of them made hints that something was wrong.¹ In the vast majority of cases, they were not listened to, their concerns and needs were not taken seriously. If an institution had to assume that young victims might disclose assaults, it often perceived this as a threat to the institution and accused the children and young people of misconduct on their part. Some boys who had experienced sexualised violence were expelled from schools on the basis of “sexual misconduct” when a suspicion of abuse arose.

“The content of the letters from the then-principal to me is an incredible mockery. Since the reasons for the expulsion were also taboo at home, feelings of shame both to my parents and to myself, as well as to the fellow victims remained with me.” (Merzbach Report, p. 21)

“No consideration was given to the boys’ feelings and their physical and emotional developments. Many boys found no words for their feelings of shame and oppression. No one had educated them about sexual boundary violations; there was no room for them to talk about it. They were also ashamed towards their parents or were

¹ At one German Jesuit school in 1981, there was a letter from students complaining to the school administration about the priest leading the youth ministry. While it did not explicitly mention sexual assault, it did refer to problems in the priest’s methods of sex education, in the way he related to the young people and his outright discriminatory behaviour on the issue of homosexuality. A copy was sent to the Jesuit leadership, the federal association of catholic youth work and parents’ representatives. (see documentation “Eckiger Tisch”, p. 106).

not taken seriously by them. Rigid sexual morals and the taboos of sexualised violence make it difficult for children and youth to have their own age-appropriate experiences and to report violations.” (Zinsmeister et. al. Report, p. 204)

Even when a suspicion was too obvious to be ignored, the issue was not resolved, but the problem was shifted somewhere else. Those accused were regularly transferred to other institutions, without mentioning the actual reasons. Frequently, however, they then continued the sexual assaults there as well.

“On the basis of archival material and on conversations with former responsible persons, the reactions of the then provincial leadership to personal violations which it had become aware of, were – as far as we can tell – mainly limited to a one-time conversation with the accused. If the accused showed insight, the superiors considered the issue as settled. [...] In none of these cases did the perpetrators or the order seriously consider how those responsible should behave towards the victims and society, whose laws had also been violated.” (Zinsmeister et. al. Report, p. 218)

“Action was only taken when the pressure had become too high. One boy had confided to his father, who threatened to go public. Rumours that [...] there is something amiss had been ignored consistently. It was

acted on the principle what must not be, cannot be and keeping up a facade. With these parameters it does not surprise that the only correct decision, i.e. to file criminal charges with the police or the public prosecutor’s office, was not made. Instead, publicity was avoided at all costs and facts were covered up wherever possible. Without making the slightest hints to the school community of the underlying reasons, Father D was transferred from one day to the next. Even in internal communications it was only noted that there was an urgent need for action. [...] Whether those responsible had ascertained that Father D would not continue his previous misconduct and commit further abuses at the new place, remains open. [...] The decisions taken at that time were solely characterised by protecting the order and its rules, but not the children.” (Merzbach Report, p. 8)

“Furthermore, it is terrible that many cases of abuse by Father S may have been prevented had the abuse by Father D been dealt with more consequentially.” (Merzbach Report, p. 17)

Until far into the 1970s sexual abuse was not discussed in German society and only widely from the 1990s which added to the difficulty of reporting and receiving responsible intervention. The general attitude towards children was often authoritarian and characterised by violence. For example, the right to corporal punishment in schools was not abolished until 1973. However, this does not

absolve the institutions from their responsibility. Sexual abuse of children was a punishable offence also in the post-war years (German criminal code §176 “fornication with children”).

“The taboo of sexuality and sexual violence made it difficult not only for the children, but also for members of the order and employees to perceive sexual encroachments and to address them openly.” (Zinsmeister et. al. Report, p. 204)

Developments and limitations

In recent decades, the topic of sexualised violence has been more broadly perceived and discussed. Since the late 1980s, specialist counselling centres and prevention projects have been established by dedicated professionals in Germany. In 2010 sexualised violence in a catholic school in Berlin from the 1970s to 1990s was disclosed by former male pupils who had been harmed. Following the widespread press reports many more people reported sexualised violence in catholic institutions. There followed a round table by the federal government, funding for research and support, an independent commissioner (www.beaufragte-missbrauch.de), who installed an anonymous federal help telephone and a help portal with nationwide addresses for assistance. In addition an Independent Commission for Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in all societal areas was set up by the federal government, starting in 2016 (www.aufarbeitungskommission.de/english/).

Since 2010 prevention and intervention structures have been installed in catholic schools and institutions in Germany, with contact persons, prevention and training for all employed and volunteer staff. Safeguarding concepts are now mandatory, intervention guidelines prescribe how suspected cases are investigated, including criminal charges. There are now guidelines for intervention and an obligation to cooperate with state law enforcement agencies.² Delegated contact persons of the dioceses and religious orders have been appointed, to whom affected persons can turn and who are responsible for handling suspected cases, past and present. As of 2010 catholic institutions make payments in recognition of harm and pay for therapy costs for those affected by sexualised violence.

There are still many social and political challenges for professionalised intervention and inquiry into past cases and systemic factors. The topic of sexualised violence is still highly emotionalised and difficult to discuss in a factual way. Disclosure often means stigmatisation of those affected, with serious private and professional consequences if made public. Accordingly, few public figures or professionals –such as politicians, high level managers or even priests– have come forward as survivors of sexualised violence. This clearly shows how little the widespread fact of sexualised violence is accepted as a phenomenon of society as a whole. A way of dealing with it in a generally supportive and helpful way in everyday life and in society has yet to be found.

² Guidelines for prevention and intervention are listed below in the references.

However, in the broader discourse various aspects of sexualised violence have been addressed and reflected upon only marginally. This is also due to a relatively low level of research and general knowledge in this field.

Some areas where it would be very useful and helpful to have both a broader and deeper knowledge and more public discussion can only be mentioned here and this list is far from complete.

- Gender-specific aspects: Consequences and effects of sexualised violence for own identity constructions, e.g., of masculinity and femininity; transgender and intersex people and those who do not wish to be assigned to a clear gender; sexualised violence against girls and women in catholic contexts (e.g. #nunstoo).
- Structural male dominance in the Catholic Church.
- To what extent people with impairments and disabilities are affected in church care.
- Trafficking of people for sexual exploitation in church contexts.
- Long-term consequences: ongoing and recurring stress and strain, relationship issues and consequences for personal and sexual development.
- Impairments that occur as consequences, including: health, occupational, and financial impairments; stigmatisation; need for anonymity and other protective mechanisms.
- Ways of processing healing and effective support in doing so, both informally and in a professional environment.

- Reducing formal barriers to applications in the health care system and in law enforcement, easier and wider access to trauma therapy.
- Sexualised violence as a mandatory topic of training in social, educational, nursing, law enforcement and judicial professions.
- Speaking about and reducing blind spots in all areas of society on the topic (private, institutional, scientific, political).

There are still many obstacles to an open and supportive discussion and assistance structures in churches and society. The more people speak up and encourage action, even in small ways, in their own institutional and personal settings, the more helpful it will be for everyone.

As a note on some developments: Following the publication of the research project “Sexual abuse of minors by catholic priests, deacons and male members of orders in the domain of the German Bishops’ Conference” in 2018 a synodal path was developed (www.synodalerweg.de/english/).

In January 2022 100 LGBTIQ+ German Catholics, including priests, publicly spoke out about difficulties and discrimination due to institutional norms and regulations and are continuing to further the discussion for a church without fear. They have grown to over 500 people in 2023 (www.outinchurch.de)

Support in disclosure processes

Perpetrators' strategies and their systematic use of institutional structures and resources allow them to expand their power and manipulate people at all levels, including the survivors of violence, leaders and colleagues in the institution, families and friends.

In the process of coming to terms with such events it is useful to establish protected spaces for people from these different areas. Those affected should be directly involved in these processes and help to shape them. A prerequisite should be that trained professionals consult and support them.

Possible measures include:

- Counselling and support for survivors of violence, individually and in groups;
- Counselling for supportive families and friends;
- Education, counselling, supervision for colleagues of the institution;
- Independent inquiries and reviews in the orders or ecclesiastical structures in whose institutions the (sexualised) violence took place;
- Moderated forums for the encounter of survivors with responsible persons of that time and of today, and with empathetic representatives of the institution;
- Learning from the past in order to implement measures of change and future prevention.

Beside the perpetrators, the institutional system is responsible for the (criminal) acts committed in their institutions, since what happened was prohibited and could have been prevented in some cases. In the past, too, there should have been preventive measures and interventions, especially as there were repeated indications of assaults. These were either ignored or the perpetrators were transferred to other places where they often continued to perpetrate sexualised violence on children and youth. In these cases, the institutions and their decision makers were directly responsible for further harm to young people.

A review of structural safeguarding and corresponding changes is indispensable and should be carried out in all institutions, regardless of whether incidents have been reported or not. Taking responsibility and implementing effective prevention and intervention measures should be an integral part of every institution that works with young people or those in need of help.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to show how the mechanisms of sexualised violence function and why it is difficult for survivors to speak out about their experiences and receive helpful assistance.

Perpetrators, as a part of the institutions, build up their own systems of abuse and manipulate all around them through systematic deception and hypocrisy. Leaders in

responsible positions are also often influenced in such a way that they do not assume responsibility for the young people in their care, but protect the institution, themselves and thus perpetrators.

Survivors of sexualised violence were left alone for a long time, were isolated, had hardly any language and possibilities to understand what happened to them. This left behind injuries and serious burdens for them personally, their families and friends.

Survivors took many courageous steps before they were able to break through the various circles of silence. The fact that they managed to do this is to be highly valued and appreciated. They have exposed structures of violence and initiated processes of independent inquiries. Through supportive assistance, prevention, intervention, independent inquiries and a well-informed public can such circles of violence be broken and young people and those in need of help be better protected.

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The Prevention of Sexual Abuse

An ongoing Task that requires Perseverance and sustainable Processes

Prof. Dr. Jörg M. Fegert and Prof. Dr. Hans Zollner SJ

While a comprehensive, victim-oriented reappraisal is still a long time coming, the efforts made to prevent sexualised violence in Germany's Catholic Church should be seen as positive. However, the authors claim that the guidelines and directives must also be followed by correct action within each specific context. This requires more knowledge and sensitivity on the part of all those involved. Hans Zollner SJ is a psychologist, psychotherapist and theologian, President of the IADC – Institute of Anthropology. Interdisciplinary Studies on Human Dignity and Care (formerly the Centre for Child Protection) at the Gregorian University. He has been a founding member of the Pontifical Commission for Child Protection from 2014–2023 and is a consultant on Safeguarding for the Diocese of Rome as well as for the Dicastery for Clergy. Jörg Michael Fegert is Medical Director of the Clinic for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry/Psychotherapy at University Hospital Ulm. His main research areas include neglect, maltreatment, sexual abuse and other adverse child-

hood experiences, early intervention, the relationship between youth welfare and child and adolescent psychiatry and other legal and forensic issues. He established a focus on e-learning and dissemination, especially in the field of child protection and trauma research.

Serious crimes of sexualised violence against children and young people have deeply shaken trust in the Church. Even more so in recent months, when the lack of courage on the part of bishops and ministers and their failure to take responsibility in the face of cover-ups of abuse cases has been the reason for many believers either to leave the Church or to resign. Resignation also seems to be spreading with regard to prevention, as people increasingly doubt the honesty of the Church's efforts, with the adoption of prevention rules and the appointment of prevention officers being interpreted as a fig leaf. In his New Year's address in 2019, the Bishop of Rottenburg, Gebhard Fürst, suggested external auditing as a possible quality assurance measure, especially with regard to prevention at Catholic childcare facilities.¹ His idea was based on a neutral, quality-assuring service similar to the Hertie Foundation's "Beruf und Familie Audit" (work and family audit). Like an annual seal of quality, this promotes a process in each facility and, at the same time, confirms that, in addition to adhering to principles, work is actually being carried out to change attitudes. Together, Bishop Fürst and

¹ Gebhard Fürst: Damit die Aufarbeitung des Missbrauchs am Ende nicht wieder am Anfang steht. New Year's Address 2019, at: <<https://www.drs.de/ansicht/Artikel/bischof-dr-gebhard-fuerst-neujahrs-ansprache-2019-6195.html>>.

Professor Jörg M. Fegert, as a member of the Child Protection Commission in Baden-Württemberg, presented this proposal to the Ministry of State in Baden-Württemberg and the Child Protection Commission in Baden-Württemberg also accepted such a proposal in the end, from among numerous recommendations.² Then came the COVID pandemic and the initiative ground to a halt.

Not least because of the repeated failure of attempts to account for abuse and its cover-up, the efforts made by the Church in terms of prevention have been called into question, as well as the people involved in this work. Not infrequently this leads to a feeling of extraordinary burden ("safeguarding fatigue") since, with each new scandal, all the efforts being made are called into question again, as in the myth of Sisyphus. Nevertheless, it can be said that such prevention measures clearly help to raise awareness and increase sensitivity regarding the issue of child protection worldwide, both in society as a whole and within the Church.

We must now do something together to continue the work of protecting children and young people in a consistent and committed way and improve on it. This requires perseverance and persistence. Although prevention is being carried out more intensively than ever in many places, there

² Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration Baden-Württemberg: Abschlussbericht der Kommission Kinderschutz. Band I: Bericht und Empfehlungen [Final Report of the Child Protection Commission. Volume I: Report and recommendations] (December 2019). At: <https://sozialministerium.baden-wuerttemberg.de/fileadmin/redaktion/m-sm/intern/downloads/Publikationen/Abschlussbericht_Kommission-Kinderschutz_Band-I.pdf>.

are still a large number of tasks left to be done, especially as, on the whole, there has been no systematic examination of the different dimensions of prevention or an evaluation of prevention work. Consequently, this reinforces the impression that prevention regulations and efforts tend to be defensive or token in nature. The aim of this article is therefore to provide an impetus so that everything humanly possible is done to prevent sexualised violence and create safe living spaces. Especially in view of the fact that in other countries and parts of the world the issue of sexual abuse is still hardly addressed at all or, as in parts of Eastern Europe, Africa or Asia, it is sometimes still referred to as a “problem of the West”, against one’s better judgement.³ With more than 1.3 billion members in 190 countries, the Catholic Church is probably the largest, oldest and most complex institution in the world and a fundamental change in mentality can only be tackled from different angles. It is primarily a question of transparency, accountability and understanding of norms and law. This change must not only take place in different places and at different levels but also, and above all, in the behaviour and awareness of those in a leading position.

3 Cf. Hans Zollner: Kinderschutzmaßnahmen und -konzepte auf Ebene der katholischen Ortskirche: Was passierte in der Weltkirche? In: Konrad Hilpert, Stephan Leimgruber, Jochen Sautermeister und Gunda Werner (eds.): Sexueller Missbrauch von Kindern und Jugendlichen im Raum von Kirche: Analysen – Bilanzierungen – Perspektiven (Quaestiones Disputatae 309). Freiburg 2020, 223–242.

Prevention cannot succeed without responsible leadership

Facing up to the unvarnished truth, knowing which crimes have been committed, how much harm has been done and identifying the necessary countermeasures are the basic conditions for being able to carry out well-founded, effective prevention work. In other words, good prevention requires participatory reappraisal in a broad sense.⁴

It is just as important to understand the past and possibly present conditions, both systemic and personal, that make abuse possible, as it is to carry out a current risk analysis and review in light of the Church’s self-image. This is not only about legal issues or prevention regulations but also about the Church’s moral claim and self-image in general.

If we want to create healthy, safe living spaces and behaviour for children and young people today and prevent possible sexual offences before they even happen, we have to consider different levels of prevention and different target groups and addressees. In Germany, and in many other countries, Church institutions have already taken important steps in this direction. For example, according to the relevant guidelines, candidates for the priesthood, priests, members of religious congregations and all full-time Church employees should receive the necessary guidance in their training and further education to ensure they mature emotionally and develop a healthy self-image, as well as cultivate friendships with peers of both sexes.

4 Cf. Klaus Mertes: Den Kreislauf des Scheiterns durchbrechen. Düsseldorf 2021.

Knowing what behaviour towards minors is inappropriate helps to prevent possible transgressions. Realising that what is often unfortunately still called “child pornography” is actually recorded sexualised acts of violence against children can deter those inclined to commit a crime from surfing the internet merely out of curiosity and the allure of the extreme. Although it will not be possible to reach core paedophile perpetrators by means of deterrence, occasional users and people who, for whatever reason, share such material can certainly be deterred by means of more severe punishment and by the German parliament classifying such acts as a crime. To do so, however, we need to know more about the opportunities to commit a crime and the profile of potential perpetrators, and not indiscriminately lump everything together under general rules. The appropriateness of physical proximity depends on the situation and especially on the needs of children and young people. For instance, during a German TV news report on the evaluation of protection concepts at German day care centres by the German Youth Institute for the UBSKM (the Independent Commissioner for Child Sexual Abuse Issues in Germany), we were shocked to hear a kindergarten director proudly state that the teachers no longer put children who had fallen down, etc. on their laps and they no longer made physical contact to comfort them. In this case, such rules regarding distance, created out of a fear of inappropriate closeness, lead us straight back to the coldness of educational institutions in the 1950s. Adequate distance cannot be defined in centimetres nor can it be defined categorically

for every age group. However, we are sure that every person who does not respect distance, every person who breaks the rules of personal space for egoistic (e.g. sexual) reasons is well-aware of their transgression. Time and time again one hears the question (in practice left unanswered) that is asked, for instance, by kindergarten professionals: “What are we allowed to do in our dealings with children today?” This apparent lack of clarity takes the pressure off those who have transgressed and implies it is no longer possible to have proper physical contact. General rules and rigid regulations regarding distance do not help in this case; it is rather a question of regulating the appropriate closeness-distance for the particular development and situation in question, based on attitude. This means that, whenever someone is in a special position of safeguarding children, the issue at stake are the child’s needs in relation to their age, as well as the personal suitability of adults in contact with children in general. Of course, in this context, it is vital to clarify the rules and ensure they are consistently applied. It is therefore important for personnel managers and leaders in the Church to know and apply the rules, and to ensure that any inappropriate acts that occur are not covered up and such behaviour trivialised.

In the expert opinion published on 18 March 2021 by the law firm Gercke Wollschläger on breaches of duty by diocesan officials from the Archdiocese of Cologne in dealing with cases of sexual abuse of minors and children warded by clergy or other pastoral employees, both secular and ecclesiastical legislation are addressed with regard to

accountability. For example, criminal liability for active participation in the principal offence, but above all criminal liability for neglect when in a position of protector or custodian, as well as the supervisor-custodian position of those holding responsibility in the Church. A church that does not make it clear that it takes its responsibility as custodian seriously undermines the fundamental principles of prevention. In its analysis of the files submitted, the law firm described the areas it considers to be the essential duty of those in a position of responsibility in this context:

- Duty to clarify: a matter must be investigated, formal (preliminary) investigations must be initiated;
- Duty to report and inform: secular criminal complaint and report to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome;
- Duty to penalise;
- Duty of prevention: this is direct crime prevention because it concerns appropriate actions to prevent the risk of a crime being committed;
- Duty to care for victims, i.e. secondary or tertiary prevention, whose aim is to reduce the damage caused by such acts, as far as possible.

The fact that the responsible persons confronted by the Cologne law firm all stated they had received no information or training on the subject suggests that the Church regarded reappraising its past, meeting victims and prevention as something that only concerns others. It was evident that those responsible did not acknowledge, or did not want to

acknowledge, that exemplary and correct administrative action forms part of a coherent prevention strategy. This destabilises the already ambivalent position of prevention officers within the ecclesiastical power structure. Hopefully we have moved beyond the time when the then Archbishop of Freiburg, Zollitsch, demanded that a police certificate of good conduct be obtained only for new employees and not for existing staff in his environment, but the function of decision-makers at the top as role models, especially regarding credible prevention work, has obviously yet to take hold everywhere. One positive note in this regard is the fact that, during the preliminary implementation of the prevention regulations⁵, the management level of the Diocese of Rottenburg-Stuttgart, first and foremost the Bishop, the Vicar General, the Judicial Vicar, etc., went on a two-day retreat to learn about the prevention and protection concept from a scientific point of view.

Standards that are to be applied generally in the Church must also be implemented by way of example at the very top of the hierarchy. Leaders need an understanding of the issues dealt with by prevention and intervention officers “on their behalf”. If those in charge do not face up to this, the mission itself becomes ambivalent and untrustworthy.

Some things have been done and some things are still being done. Systemic changes, i.e. changes that affect the

5 Diocese of Rottenburg-Stuttgart and Marchtal Boarding Schools: Institutionelles Konzept zum Schutz von Kindern und Jugendlichen an den Marchtaler Internaten der Diözese Rottenburg-Stuttgart (16.3.2020). At: <<https://www.internat-maria-hilf.de/images/schutzkonzept-marchtaler-internat.pdf>>.

whole system, are being sought. Most people are unaware of the fact that the Catholic Church in Germany, and in a number of countries around the world, has created a nationwide network of prevention and intervention centres. Furthermore, not only Church employees of all kinds but also volunteers (e.g. for children's camps, communion or confirmation classes) are trained in prevention and intervention issues and have to make a declaration of commitment regarding the protection of minors. In some countries the Church is the only effective social entity that has introduced guidelines for dealing with victims and perpetrators as well as prevention measures across the board. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that cases of abuse and their cover-up have changed the image of the Church from within and without and have led to a double crises (sic): both due to the horror of the crimes committed and the failure of its leadership to deal with them appropriately. Prevention work within the Church has therefore come under particular scrutiny.

The fight against sexual abuse will take a long time and we must rid ourselves of the misconception that a solution will be found merely by introducing rules or guidelines. Combating sexual abuse in the worldwide Church is a Herculean task in which very many different people, in the Church and in society, have to work together. It is about changing attitudes. This requires a critical public and the courage to change but it also needs a professional, scientifically supported examination of the subject of prevention in this context through prevention research.

The Church's framing of prevention work in Germany

Prevention – this seemed to be the magic word that was supposed to banish the threat of sexualised violence in Germany's Catholic Church, at the same time making it clear that the Church, in all areas such as education, youth work, care and support, leisure, family, counselling and pastoral work, was making an effort to learn from the so-called abuse scandal. Especially at the beginning of the discussion of the cases at Canisius College in Berlin, brought to light in 2010 by the courageous victims, and the corresponding reaction of the then headmaster Klaus Mertes, the Catholic Church was at the centre of the debate about abuse in institutions. Much has happened since then. After the failure of an initial study project, the MHG study has provided scientific insights into the extent of the number of reported cases of sexualised violence in the context of the Catholic Church. Studies with population-representative samples, carried out by Jörg M. Fegert with his colleagues in the Ulm working group at the Competence Centre for child protection, point significantly to an even larger number of unreported cases.⁶

While a comprehensive, victim-oriented reappraisal is still a long way off, the efforts made to prevent sexualised violence in the Catholic Church in Germany can be seen as positive.

6 Andreas Witt, Elmar Brähler, Paul L. Plener and Jörg M. Fegert: Different Contexts of Sexual Abuse With a Special Focus on the Context of Christian Institutions: Results From the General Population in Germany. In: *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* (2019), 1–22.

Numerous sets of rules, guidelines and standards have been adopted and protection concepts have been disseminated across the board. At the beginning of 2020, a new “Code of Conduct for Dealing with the Sexual Abuse of Minors and Vulnerable Adults by Clergy and Other Employees in the Service of the Church” and, in particular, the “Framework Regulation – Prevention of Sexualised Violence against Minors and Vulnerable Adults within the Domain of the German Bishops’ Conference” came into force in all (arch)dioceses. Both documents were adopted by the Permanent Council of the German Bishops’ Conference on 18 November 2019.

This framework regulation contains the following definition: “Prevention in the sense of this regulation means all measures taken preventively (primary), supportingly (secondary) and subsequently (tertiary) against sexualised violence against children, juveniles and vulnerable adults. It is addressed to those affected, to the institutions with their responsible persons in which work is carried out with children, juveniles and vulnerable adults, and also to accused persons/offenders”. The concept of sexualised violence is also defined in the framework regulation. In this context, it includes not only punishable acts according to the 13th section of the Penal Code as well as other sex-related offences, but also acts according to Church law (Can. 1395 § 2 CIC in conjunction with Art. 6 § 1 SST; Can. 1387 CIC in conjunction with Art. 4 § 1 no. 4 SST, as well as Art. 4 § 1 no. 1 SST in conjunction with Can. 1378 § 1 CIC), insofar as they are committed against minors or against persons whose use of reason is habitually impaired (sic).

Individual acts that fail to meet the threshold of criminal liability in the sense of the boundaries of sex-related violations and assaults are also to be taken into account. First of all, it should be noted that secular definitions of criminal offences define sexual violence as a violation of the sexual self-determination and dignity of those affected, whereas Church law has so far defined these acts as violations of the Sixth Commandment.⁷

The “maximum penalty” is dismissal from the clergy. It is therefore not surprising that the above-mentioned definition of prevention is oriented towards categories common in crime prevention or medical prevention. On the other hand, one finds few interpretations or provisions regarding individual procedures and their effectiveness, or even a systematic, tiered prevention strategy. Prevention regulations and protection concepts set down in writing, centrally established complaint procedures, the establishment of prevention officers etc. give the impression of a high degree of bureaucratic institutionalisation with numerous rules and an almost nationwide top-down dissemination. However, it is not clear whether and which prevention measures are actually behind this and what these theoretically refer to.

⁷ In the meantime (before this article was completed), the Code of Canon Law was reformed. The authors welcome the change in Title VI “Offences against human life, dignity and liberty”. Although §1 para. 1 CAN.1398 still refers to sexual abuse as an offence against the 6th commandment of the Decalogue, for the first time forms of sexualised violence against minors are directly addressed and the acquisition, storage and distribution of pornographic images of minors are also explicitly criminalised.

There is a lot of talk and writing about prevention with little clarification regarding what it is, what it is composed of and how it works.

A scientific definition of prevention

Clearly the German Bishops' Conference has based its definition on the classic division from the healthcare sector into primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. Gerald Caplan has compared this concept in medicine with the area of treatment of the sick.⁸

Primary prevention starts with the healthy individual and is intended to prevent a problem from the outset. In the field of German health insurance, for instance, setting-related approaches, school-related prevention, etc. are specifically promoted. Caplan, who saw this type of prevention as a temporal sequence related to a point in time in the course of the disease, even spoke of primordial prevention before primary prevention, which aims to prevent risk factors from ever occurring. This area of primordial prevention could, for example, be applied to protection concepts in institutions.

Secondary prevention refers to early detection and timely containment. In the debate concerning the prevention of sexual abuse, very often metaphors were initially used such as “look closer”, “don't look away”.

⁸ Gerald Caplan: *Principles of Preventive Psychiatry*. New York (NY) 1964.

In medicine, tertiary prevention after a problem has occurred is intended to reduce its sequelae and prevent relapse. It was often observed and described how parishes seemed to become paralysed and were very much burdened down with work after a revelation of abuse in pastoral care. Tertiary prevention is applicable when it can be assumed that, with the disclosure of the acts and the “removal” of the offender from the area, the problem is not solved but rather many important questions can and must be asked first. Tertiary prevention in this sense would also necessarily refer to the actions taken by those in charge who, as superiors, have a duty to avert danger with regard to the future development of offenders.

Another term that has become widespread in medicine to some extent, but which does not appear in the definition of the German Bishops' Conference, is quaternary prevention, in the sense of avoiding unnecessary measures and associated damage, e.g. due to overmedication. This question is often asked behind closed doors; namely whether, with all our prevention regulations and with the institutionalisation of sets, we are actually throwing the baby out with the bathwater, preventing normal age-appropriate behaviour in dealings with children a priori and tending towards heartless, overly correct care and custody due to a one-sided proximity-distance definition that is not supported by developmental psychology or attachment theory.

In kindergartens, for example, (male) educators are generally not allowed to hug children, supposedly to prevent any ambiguous situation. Such rigidly distant pedagogy,

especially with very young children, denies them the closeness and comfort they need, for example, after a fall. Mechanistic prevention that does not address the attitudes of all those involved but attempts to enforce such external rules can also lead to harm. The historical reappraisal of cruelty in how children were brought up in their homes in the 1950s underlines the emotional coldness, harshness and distance as emphatic damaging factors, in addition to the numerous corporal punishments. Regarding quaternary prevention in the area of Church prevention, avoiding such harm would necessarily involve the professionally adequate handling of children and young people and families in accordance with their age. In this respect, especially in Church prevention, the potential risks and side effects of (possibly misunderstood) prevention measures must also be considered.

Following the suggestion of the Institute of Medicine (IOM)⁹, many fields have moved away from a definition based on the medical chain of action, preferring statistical risk and target group definitions. Universal prevention addresses the entire population or universe in question, such as “all children looked after at a day care centre”, “all community members”, etc. Universal prevention is often based on campaigns, leaflets etc. and its aim is to make it clear that an institution or the state wishes to educate and appeal to the population. Actual behavioural change as a result of media campaigns is rarely demonstrated. Sometimes, as

9 Ricardo F. Muñoz, Patricia J. Mrazek and Robert J. Haggerty: Institute of Medicine report on prevention of mental disorders: Summary and commentary. In: *American Psychologist* 51 (11/1996), 1116–1122.

in road safety, attempts are made to influence behaviour by means of emotional deterrents, for example what happens in traffic accidents. In general, a distinction can be made between behavioural prevention, which aims to change the behaviour of individuals, and proportional prevention, which has a preventive effect by changing the framework conditions. For instance, in the field of preventing addiction, raising the price of tobacco was a very successful means of proportional prevention, especially among young people. Precisely because this target group is particularly important in terms of long-term addiction, reducing the proportion of young people who are heavy smokers was a measure that also had a positive effect in the long term.

The next level in the IOM definition is selective prevention, which addresses specific target groups identified by means of statistical risk. If it is known that children in care are also much more at risk of being abused in the institution by other young people in care or by the caregivers or during parental visits to the family of origin, then it is justified to create special sex education and trauma education settings for this group, taking this significantly higher risk into account. In this context, it becomes clear that a framework regulation or protection concept, irrespective of the base rate of abuse events, results in the wrong approach and weighting. Base rate means the frequency with which boundaries are overstepped and acts of abuse occur in a given group or population. For example, statistically the base rate is significantly higher for children in care who are placed in an institution for their protection than for children from families.

Ultimately, this means that prevention concepts and also pedagogical concepts must be designed differently for such institutions than for general child care. Learning about the frequency of exposure, the so-called “epidemiology”, and research into such base rates therefore make an essential contribution to risk-adjusted or risk-adequate prevention. For this reason, the “Round Table on Child Sexual Abuse” stressed that a risk analysis for the specific situation must always precede the creation of a protection concept. There is no “one size fits all” as specific risk factors and set-ups must be taken into account. These should also be examined, considered and addressed much more strongly in the Church’s prevention work.

The third level in this classification is indicated prevention. In this case, statistical groups are no longer identifiable as at risk. For instance, and continuing with the same example, this would not address the group of all children in care but individual children who have already experienced sexualised violence in their family of origin and/or in an institution or who have themselves attracted attention due to abusive behaviour. These persons can be identified as individuals at risk on the basis of certain criteria and can therefore be the target of specific prevention measures tailored to them. It is known from intervention research in the health-care professions that these forms of indicated prevention, which often merge into early intervention or are difficult to distinguish from it, show the strongest effects in evaluation studies, since the extent of the effect can be measured in this case, as in the case of therapeutic intervention in the con-

text of evaluation. In this respect, the appropriate type of evaluation also depends on the subgroup in question and, of course, on the prevention goal.

Target groups and addressees for prevention

The framework regulation of the German Bishops’ Conference also borrows from crime prevention, distinguishing between victim-related, offender-related, situation-related and institution-related measures.

In the debate on the prevention of sexual abuse, especially in schools, the importance of victim prevention through self-defence courses, which are supposed to teach children that their bodies belong to them and they can defend them, or through books and plays, whose aim is to make children brave and strong, has certainly been overrated. In the few evaluations of such approaches in Germany, negative effects were even observed in some cases, such as increased fear after potential victims had been targeted by such actions. More promising in this area is prevention via “bystander intervention”, i.e. raising awareness among peers and adults so that affected children, if they come forward, also receive support. Bystander information programmes, staff training, parents’ evenings, etc. are therefore important victim- and situation-related prevention measures.

Regarding offender-related prevention, the threat of punishment for possessing sexually violent images is to be drastically increased by upgrading such acts from a

misdeemeanour to a felony. When reflecting on the preventive effect of this decision by the legislature¹⁰, we must look again at the addressees. From a criminological point of view, core paedophile offenders with a corresponding personality component will not be deterred by more severe punishment. However, the major scandals in recent years, uncovering networks of thousands of “child pornography” users on the Darknet, make it clear that there are also many situational, opportunistic offenders who could indeed be deterred by the threat of punishment. This has also been shown by various criminological analyses of the recidivism rate of such offenders caught and convicted for the possession of so-called “child pornography”. In this case, adequate offender-related preventive measures that will reduce risk can only be defined after a criminological-psychiatric analysis of the offender’s personality regarding the actual presence of paraphilia, according to the new criteria of the ICD-11 which will limit the overly general use of the term “paedophilia”.

Conclusions

Summarising certain further developments that can be prioritised, taking into account the risk-based prevention

¹⁰ Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection: Gesetzespaket zur Bekämpfung sexualisierter Gewalt gegen Kinder beschlossen [Legislative package to combat sexualised violence against children adopted] (25.3.2021), at: <https://www.bmjv.de/SharedDocs/Artikel/DE/2021/032521_GE_sexualisierte_Gewalt.html>.

levels and with a view to the potential addressees, there should be greater risks for potential offenders when committing an offence, above all by increasing the likelihood of detection and more negative consequences. The references in the Gercke report¹¹ from Cologne are helpful here, because they also mention simple, ultimately easily organised administrative procedures such as correct record keeping and quality management. Prevention of repeated abuse by stopping offenders from being transferred to other potentially dangerous areas and the creation of adequate treatment options and controlled employment opportunities are another area that involves indicated prevention for offenders who have already become suspicious or individuals who are likely to commit an offence. Indicated prevention and early intervention often come together in this case.

If, in general, a significantly greater awareness and consistency must be demanded of Church leaders, the principle of doubt and presumed innocence must also be applied to individual criminal law disputes in order to avoid unjustified conviction or prejudgement. However, this cannot mean that a custodian only exercises their function when an

¹¹ Kanzlei Gercke/Wollschläger (Hg.): Gutachten. Pflichtverletzungen von Diözesanverantwortlichen des Erzbistums Köln im Umgang mit Fällen sexuellen Missbrauchs von Minderjährigen und Schutzbefohlenen durch Kleriker oder sonstige pastorale Mitarbeitende des Erzbistums Köln im Zeitraum 1975–2018. Verantwortlichkeiten, Ursachen und Handlungsempfehlungen (18.3.2021). At: <<https://mam.erzbistum-koeln.de/m/2fce82a0f87ee070/original/Gutachten-Pflichtverletzungen-von-Diozesanverantwortlichen-im-Erzbistum-Koeln-im-Umgang-mit-Fallen-sexuellen-Missbrauchs-zwischen-1975-und-2018.pdf>>.

accused has been clearly and legally proven to have committed an offence. With regard to crime prevention, the Church system must become more sensitive while, at the same time and with regard to penalties, the highest degree of specificity must be demanded of evidence for the crime. If we look at the potential targets for prevention activities, it is shocking to see what has been expected of children under the maxim of “making children strong”.

According to the Constitution, everyone is responsible for protecting children

In general, these principles are correct but they relate to the whole education and bonding behaviour of children: we cannot “make children strong” by means of a single play about prevention. Numerous empirical studies on attempts to empower children, and especially children with disabilities, have shown that it is difficult to transfer what is learned from role plays or the corresponding training to actual occurrences in everyday life.

Largely neglected but promising with regard to potentially affected people is the selective prevention of children and adolescents who have already been placed in an institution due to problems or experiences of sexualised violence. Risk research shows there is a particularly high risk of abuse by peers, by the family of origin during weekend contact time and also by facility staff, teachers and the clergy. Special prevention measures and a reflective sexual education

and sophisticated complaints management system are particularly necessary in such facilities as their aim is to protect children who have already had negative experiences.

To some extent, this is already an instance of indicated prevention as the aim is to prevent children and young people who have already been affected in another context from becoming victims again. Universal, selective and indicated prevention in the Church must always clearly address questions of responsibility and guilt, in addition to shame and self-stigmatisation. So far, bystander education has largely been undervalued.¹² Article 6 of the German Constitution describes the educational privilege of parents based on natural law. At the same time, however, the responsibility of everyone is addressed with regard to the risk to children’s well-being with the phrase “... the state shall watch over them”. According to the Constitution, child protection is everyone’s responsibility, especially when there are strong indications that a child’s well-being is at risk. Who do affected children turn to? Often to their classmates or their parents, to teachers, sports coaches or clergy. Such persons in their immediate environment, bystanders, must be trained to react more competently when a child confides in them.

From many reports of those affected, it is clear how many parents did not believe them, especially when claiming they had been abused by Church dignitaries. Belief in authority and the authoritarian attitude of parents in the Catholic

¹² Hans Zollner, Katharina A. Fuchs and Jörg M. Fegert: Prevention of sexual abuse: improved information is crucial. In: *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health* 8 (5/2014), 1–9.

milieu may play its part here, so that selective prevention is particularly important, also via information about children's rights and the importance of a non-violent upbringing.¹³ In contrast to these areas, a great deal has already been done in many Church or charitable institutions in recent years on prevention through training and further education on protection concepts. However, in some cases the contact people assigned are too distant and inaccessible for children and young people. There is also a need for low-threshold anonymous whistle-blower systems, for example via telephone hotlines, as well as ombudspersons and complaint and suggestion management procedures that are not limited to sexual abuse, so that more children actually dare to ask for help when it is needed. One ombudsperson for a whole diocese is too far removed from the institution in question. There is also a need to practice locally how to complain and pass on suggestions to the institution.

Consequently, if we systematically examine what has already been carried out in terms of prevention work by the Catholic Church from the point of view of prevention research, then on the one hand we can see that much has been done and achieved. At the same time, however, an enormous amount still remains to be done, especially in promoting an attitude that sees child protection as an integral and integrating part of the Church's own identity and acts accordingly. It would be terrible if the understandable frus-

tration and paralysis due to the many difficulties in addressing such problems did not lead to the necessary prevention of corresponding behaviour today being taken all the more seriously. Strong encouragement is needed so that the Church's prevention work can be continued and expanded competently and effectively.

13 cf. Jörg M. Fegert and Vera Clemens: Autoritarismus, katholische Milieus und die trügerische Sehnsucht nach der früher angeblich heilen Welt. In: *Stimmen der Zeit* 146 (1/2021), 25–36.

Promoting a Consistent Culture of Protection Project

A global Jesuit Response to Abuse oriented to Social Impact

John K. Guiney SJ,
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sandra Racionero-Plaza

1 Promotion of a consistent culture of protection: the history on breaking the silence and preventing abuse in the Society of Jesus

Awakening: breaking the silence

The 36th General Congregation (GC) of the Society of Jesus took place in 2016. General Congregations focus on the election of a General and/or discussion on the life and works of the Society in the world of today. GC 36 did both. Needless to say, the abuse crisis became a moment of fo-

cused conversation. In previous years journalists, the print, and social media highlighted violence against children and vulnerable adults in different institutions run by State and Church agencies. However, much of this media attention was focused on cases in the global North. Conversations between delegates from the four corners of the world helped attendees to wake up to the fact that the abuse of children and vulnerable adults has no national, cultural, religious, caste or ethnic boundaries (Oates et al., 2000). It is neither exclusive to the Church nor to the Society of Jesus (Plante, 2020). Sexual abuse is a global social problem that reaches into all sectors of humanity (Barth et al., 2013; Finkelhor, 1986); it is present in political parties, schools, sports clubs, extracurricular activities, nightlife settings, families, etc. Therefore, it requires a response and not a denial from the Society of Jesus, the Church, and the society at large. In GC 36, the silence was broken in the universal body of the Society of Jesus, and the important harm done to victims of sexual abuse perpetrated by Jesuit priests was acknowledged. The damage of sexual abuse by clergy includes the negative physical and mental outcomes which are now well studied in the scientific literature on child sexual abuse and sexual harassment of adults (Kathryn, 2019; Molnar et al., 2001) as well as devastating consequences for the victims' spiritual dimension and faith (Guido, 2008).

In GC 36, discussion continued in small groups on upholding the United Nations Convention on Child Rights. Inspired by Catholic Social Teaching, we must diligently promote the rights of children and vulnerable adults. The

dignity of all, and especially the dignity of the weakest in society, must lead to providing a coherent response to the universal protection of children and the vulnerable.

It was clear that delivering a comprehensive response to safeguarding includes developing living policies, training for all, and protocols for handling complaints and allegations. However, building safe places for children goes beyond mere compliance to basic standards. Fundamentally, it must lead to a transformation of culture (Guiney & Racionero-Plaza, 2023a). The Promotion of a Consistent Culture of Protection Project that we present in this chapter invites different cultures to a self-examination of how it relates to children and vulnerable adults in their communities. It is a call to examine how people with power relate to the powerless and those on the margins. Fundamentally, this means a change in the quality of relationships among people – how they live and interact with one another. In the language of Pope Francis, promoting a consistent culture of protection is a gospel journey needing a gospel response.

Awareness

In October 2018, a response to the conversations in GC 36 was launched by the Society of Jesus when it initiated a project called the *Promotion of a Consistent Culture of Protection* (PCCP) (Guiney & Racionero-Plaza, 2023b). It located this project under the auspices of the Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat (SJES), in the General Curia. In doing this,

the Society noted that preventing abuse and accompanying victims is a justice issue. It is unequivocally part and parcel of the mission of justice and reconciliation of the Society of Jesus as evidenced through the Universal Apostolic Preference 2 (UAP2) *Walking with the Excluded* (Sosa, 2019):

“We commit ourselves to help eliminate abuses inside and outside the Church, seeking to ensure that victims are heard and properly helped, that justice is done, and that harm is healed. This commitment includes the adoption of clear policies for the prevention of abuse, the ongoing formation of those who are committed to mission, and serious efforts to identify the social origins of abuse. In this way, we effectively promote a culture that safeguards all vulnerable persons, especially minors”.

Safeguarding now is understood in the Society of Jesus as central to its mission of doing justice and reconciliation. It is neither marginal, nor a mere addendum to its work. It is not just a question of ticking boxes and merely being compliant with external rules. Protecting children and vulnerable adults is indeed a prophetic call in our age – a preferential option to stand for the voiceless in our society. However, it calls for personal and institutional conversion. As Pope Francis (2019) puts it, it requires ‘a continuous and profound conversion, in which personal holiness and moral commitment come together to promote the credibility of the Gospel proclamation and to renew the educational mission of the Church’.

However, it is not sufficient to be awake and aware of

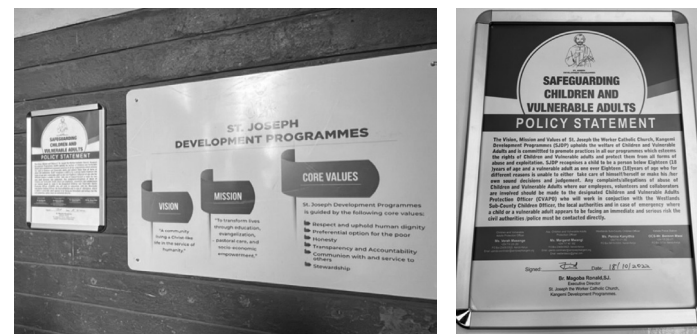
what needs to be done. Concrete decisions and actions are needed to fulfil the desire to help those who have been hurt, place victims first, and meet their desire that such abuse will never happen again in any Church institution. To create safe places for all requires the implementation of basic standards and the implementation of actions and programs that support the transformation of our human relationships, something which is a long-term project and mission.

2 Action: toward safeguarding grounded in scientific evidence of social impact

After awakening and awareness, action is needed. It is action what makes a difference. Part of that action includes developing policies and protocols for child protection and for the protection of all adults in our Jesuit works, among which schools are prominent. The first stages of PCCP (2019–2022) involved encouraging and supporting all Jesuit Provinces and Regions in the world in developing and implementing protocols and policies on safeguarding. These protocols and policies dealt with diverse indicators of protection, involving, among others, having a safeguarding statement of commitment, customised documentation, safe recruitment procedures, designated safeguarding personnel, regular risk assessments, protocols for reporting and responding, accessible complaints mechanisms, case management support structures, accompaniment of victims/survivors, and guidance of alleged/perpetrators, among others.

Policies and protocols in educational institutions are relevant to set a framework of protection of children and vulnerable adults, a framework that informs others of the stand of the institution in relation to abuse and the expected behaviours of its members. All policies need to communicate clearly that the care of children and the vulnerable has primacy. Their safety and their protection when in our care are our priorities. This must be communicated through all media platforms and displayed on all school notice boards.

A number of key elements must be in each policy, e.g. when advertising and recruiting new team members, the child protection policy must be clearly communicated. This is central, as protection begins with safe recruitment and follow up formation. In addition, regular risk assessments are crucial to prevention. Regular risk assessments of people, places and events need to take place in all Jesuit works dealing with children and adults; and they are essential in schools and universities. Research is very clear in this regard: where there is violence in human relationships, that being in the form of child sexual abuse, sexual harassment, bullying, abuse of power, etc, academic excellence is not possible. The review of the scientific literature has shown that when a child is victim of abuse, it diminishes her or his academic achievement, as well as it affects his or her mental and physical health (Flecha, Puigvert & Racionero-Plaza, 2023). The same happens with adults (Kathryn, 2019; Molnar et al., 2001). Best learning can only take place and excellence can only be achieved in safe schools.



Pictures of two walls in Saint Joseph School, Kangemi, Nairobi. This statement can be found a number of times all over the school, always in very visible places. Pictures were taken by the authors in April 2023.

Thanks to this, Jesuit schools all over the world have in place safeguarding policies and protocols to protect children and to respond to any case of child sexual abuse. We have seen this in schools located in very different contexts, from the slums in Nairobi (Masenge & Osabwa, 2023) to schools in wealthy areas in Dublin.

Apart from developing and implementing policies and protocols, action has also meant the putting in place basic training and formation for Jesuits and collaborators, so that Jesuit human capital gets the knowledge of what is required in safeguarding, and most importantly, the knowledge of *why* it is required. Effective implementation of actions addressed to contribute to eliminate abuse requires such training for everyone involved in this global mission of the Ignatian family. The Society of Jesus instructs that all Provinces and Regions develop induction of all personnel, implement training specific to certain roles and responsibilities in Jesuit works, training in leadership and in management of

conduct and cases, safeguarding integrated at all stages of Jesuit formation, and allocation of human and financial resources to safeguarding training. PCCP supports all Provinces and Regions in these tasks.

A 2022 Audit conducted in all Provinces and Regions of the global Society of Jesus indicated the many advancements done in relation to protocols, policies, and training in just 3 years. In the light of the findings from this audit, we can say that the universal Society has now moved from awakening and awareness to action, and it is the norm almost everywhere now that Jesuit schools have become safer places in comparison to the past. Despite differences among Provinces and Regions, all Jesuit schools are now obliged to have procedures in place to protect a child from abuse and whenever this may happen to accompany victims.

Our commitment, guided by UAP2, is to contribute to eliminate abuse, and that requires being engaged in safeguarding work that makes a difference. It is necessary and essential to have policies and protocols in place, and to have trained key personnel. The wider community also needs to be sensitized on the core elements of safeguarding. However, it is not a question of doing safeguarding training but a question of doing the right safeguarding right. Therefore, our commitment in the Society of Jesus is not doing safeguarding, but doing safeguarding that proves to be most effective in both mitigating the negative consequences of abuse and in fostering relational contexts that are preventive of violent relationships. That is what victims deserve, what most of them request, and what every child and adult

in any Jesuit school or other Jesuit work is entitled to. That is the best expression of *Cura Personalis*, and it is also making real that child's right to benefit from scientific progress to improve his life, as it is stated in article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1948).

Fortunately, this service in our Jesuit schools is possible. Scientific research in the field of sexual abuse prevention and response has provided knowledge on principles and actions that are key to support victims and to promote preventive relationships, contexts, and institutions. It is a question of using this knowledge to base safeguarding actions in them. However, we should make a clarification here. The knowledge that will make a difference in preventing abuse is not all kinds of scientific knowledge but *scientific evidence of social impact*. These are two different types of evidence, and they have different implications for safeguarding in schools.

Horizon Europe, the European Commission's Framework Program for Scientific Research, and other international scientific research programs have clarified the difference between scientific evidence and the subset of it that has demonstrated societal impact (EC et al., 2018). All scientific evidence is relevant, but the one that is indispensable for safeguarding in the Church and in society at large is scientific evidence of social impact (Pulido et al., 2018; Racionero-Plaza, 2023). There is, for example, scientific knowledge derived from research that describes well how and why abuse occurs, but which has not provided information on how to contribute to reducing sexual abuse. Perhaps that

early evidence will become the basis for further research that will produce evidence of social impact.

What safeguarding delegates as well as all professionals working with children and adults in Jesuit and Church works urgently need is scientific evidence of social impact, which tells them which practices prevent abuse, eliminate it, and contribute to creating a consistent culture of protection, care, and quality relationships.

3 Successful actions in safeguarding

Fortunately, the knowledge on what works best in safeguarding in schools is available and most of it is open access. The best example in this regard is the European Commission's Report *Achieving student well-being for all: educational contexts free of violence* (Flecha, Puigvert & Racionero-Plaza, 2023), which examines worldwide programs and actions that have proven to overcome violence against children from schools. This open access report clarifies that, according to the available evidence of social impact, there are 13 programs and actions in safeguarding that prove to address abuse, mitigate its consequences, and create preventive environments. The report also lists programs, some of which are quite popular in schools -and very expensive-, and for which the data published does not show positive impact. Those programs are often part of what has become the 'safeguarding industry'.

Importantly, the report analyzes common elements among the examined programs and actions that yield evi-

dence of generating improvements. One shared element is the *whole school approach*, meaning that those schools that achieve to be protective of children and prevent abuse are those that involve parents, other family members, community members, teachers, students, community services, etc, in their actions for a zero tolerance to violence culture. A lesson derives from this evidence: the prevention and elimination of child sexual abuse must be a community concern in our Jesuit schools. Abuse is not the issue that the safeguarding person in the schools deals with, but a social problem that affects the whole community and requires the whole community to act united both to cultivate quality human relationships that prevent abuse and to respond as upstanders in front of any aggression.

Among the list of actions and programs that have proven to yield positive change and create and sustain a culture of protection, care, and respect, some have shown to achieve so in a wide variety of geographical and socio-cultural contexts. Those programs are called "successful actions" (Flecha, 2015). The successful actions in safeguarding are the following: the Zero Violence Brave Club, the Dialogic Model of Prevention and Resolution of Conflicts, the Elimination of Isolating Violence, and the Scientific/Feminist Dialogic Gatherings. More than 10,000 schools around the world that are already applying some of these actions achieve transformative results, including the reduction of abusive relationships, the development of a new culture of care and respect in the classrooms and school, training students to be upstanders in the school and beyond,

supporting friendships, reducing conflicts, and training students to effectively address abuse in their life (Burn, 2009; Duque et al, 2021; Melgar et al., 2021; Moschella & Banyar, 2020; Racionero-Plaza et al., 2020; Roca-Campos et al, 2021; Salceda et al., 2020; Ugalde et al., 2022).

As an example, the San José School in Valencia (Spain) applies the Zero Violence Brave Club since many years (Claramunt, 2023). This successful action has been included in the European Toolkit for Schools¹ of the European Commission, as an effective intervention to boost school climate. With this successful action, in the San José School:

Every day 800 boys and girls learn to take a stand, and position themselves on the side of the victim and confront the aggressor in a peaceful way. In this way, problems are made visible, and victims are empowered with a shield of friends, which gives them security in front of the aggressor. The attractiveness is given to children who are kind, who are supportive and, in short, who treat others well. (...) The results have been monitored and they show that the school climate is getting better and better. The evaluation surveys sent to families have also shown very positive results (Partal Montesinos, Educate Magis, November 1, 2019).

¹ The European Commission's toolkit for improving school climate and culture can be found here: <https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/resources/toolkitsforschools/detail.cfm?n=5886>

In recognition of these relevant transformations in the fields of protection and coexistence, this Jesuit school was awarded a “coexistence prize” in 2019 (Partal Montesinos, 2019).

Those achievements are now enjoyed by thousands of children and adolescents all over the world who attend schools that have opted to implement what works best. Importantly, the successful actions in safeguarding yield these positive results at all educational levels (pre-primary, primary and secondary education), and with all students, including students victims of sexual abuse, students that belong to vulnerable groups (refugee, migrant, LGTBIQ+, students with disabilities, etc), and students from all socio-economic backgrounds (Flecha, Puigvert & Racionero-Plaza, 2023).

4 Training/formation oriented to social impact

One important finding of the 2022 global audit was the need for quality training. Provinces and Regions acknowledged that they had received the basic knowledge on child protection, on abuse definitions, on how to develop basic policies and protocols, yet they needed to move to the next stage in practice. Provinces and Regions expressed their need for being trained in specific tools to create safe environments, a new culture of protection, and to solve problems of abuse in the most effective way. Since January 2023, PCCP has started to respond to this international request with a scientific and social impact perspective, to help Jesuits and lay partners in mission to intervene in

Jesuit works in ways that best reduce abuse and create safe environments.

A number of actions have taken place across Jesuit Conferences in this regard. As illustrations, in February 2023 formation on myths and evidence regarding sexual abuse and the Church was given to about 70 Scholastics (Jesuits in formation) in the Ateneo de Manila (Phillippines), in April 2023, a 7-hour workshop on successful actions in safeguarding took place in Nairobi (Kenya), this workshop was attended by 25 professionals and collaborators working in the Kakuma Refugee Camp, served by the Jesuit Refugee Service. In between, in March 2023, another training on successful actions in overcoming abuse was provided to the directors of all the organizations that make up the Xavier Network, which unites 14 members, mission offices and non-governmental development organizations of the Jesuit Provinces of Europe, North America and Australia that work to promote justice. The Network intervenes in more than 87 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The training was framed within the rigorous work of the Xavier Network in the field of safeguarding. Other training and formation activities have taken place throughout 2023, always oriented to achieving social impact. In all these activities, participants have gained knowledge of successful actions in safeguarding and of the original sources where evidence of the impact of those actions can be checked.

5 Conclusion: a bright horizon ahead

The global Society of Jesus has broken the silence regarding child sexual abuse and the abuse of vulnerable adults. The acknowledgement of this social problem in Jesuit works was the first step of a diligent journey in all Jesuit conferences across the world. This journey has already implied that up to date, most Jesuit works in the 70+ Jesuit Provinces and Regions have policies, protocols and training in place. Those Jesuit works in the five continents are today safer for the people they serve.

Since 2019 PCCP has assisted all of them in getting it and getting it right. We have collaborated with Jesuits and lay partners to make real the dream of a world free from abuse in very diverse settings. This has been a best expression of safeguarding being a community mission of the global Ignatian family, a mission which starts with each of us opening our eyes, breaking the silence, and taking a stand supporting the most vulnerable. Jesuit schools, as central contexts of child development, are certainly at the core of this mission.

Now, we move forward to the next chapters of this dream on the shoulders of scientific evidence of social impact. This approach is going to shape the training and formation of the works of the Society of Jesus in the coming years. In so doing, we meet Fr. Pedro Arrupe's desire of giving the most updated answers to the most pressing current social problems. The horizon is bright: United in this social impact approach, Jesuit schools can, once again, inspire society at large across the globe on a cause that is just, noble and most urgent.

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Why, What for and How to Build a System of Safe Environment, Good Treatment and Care in our Institutions

Susana Pradera Salazar

When we discover errors, problems or areas for improvement in our society, mechanisms are put in place to analyse what to do to solve or correct them and how to do it. This has been the case in recent years with issues such as gender violence, climate change, child abuse, etc. Faced with these situations, we can have different attitudes that will influence the change that needs to be made: you can express refusal to recognize the situation as real and worrying, “I do not believe it, or I do not see it as serious” (brake/restrained); show disinterest in the situation, “I don’t think about it” (passive); conviction and motivation to face and overcome the situation, “something must be done now, this cannot happen, it cannot go on” (involved); simple acceptance of the situation and of what “must be done”, “something must be done, they tell us from above, it is the politically correct thing to do” (compliant).

Changing the gaze towards something that hurts us, stings us and we do not like, is costly. It is a change of references, of culture. It requires a review of the path taken and a deep analysis of what is at the base, of what really underlies the situation that has occurred, in order to find ways of modifying and reversing these situations. And all this takes years until progress is made, until the first steps are taken, the first answers are given, from which it is necessary to learn because there are no valid previous references. In the end, what we are talking about is a long process of cultural and social change.

In the case of abuse within the Church, of which we are a part, which we love and for which we work, it is clear how difficult it is to face this painful and hard situation. When we learned the first cases, it has been denied on some occasions that this really happened, it has not been wanted to be seen because it could shake what was part of our security, what seemed absolutely incongruous and without place in our world. There has been fear, bewilderment, uncertainty, it has been minimised, it has been relativised by saying that there are more cases outside the Church, we have victimised ourselves by saying that we are persecuted... And it has been difficult to begin to take responsibility, to recognize sin, to listen to pain, to accept crimes...

All this has influenced the attitude we have adopted in these situations. And we should ask ourselves, what attitude would Jesus ask us to have?

Only by asking ourselves questions can we begin to assess what needs to be done to ensure that this does not happen

again within the Church, and even in society; or at least, that we know how to respond in the most evangelical way possible when these painful situations occur.

That is why, after thinking about what our attitude should be, the first thing we have to do is look for and rely in our institutions on those who are convinced and involved that this cannot go on like this. These people will be the ones who can “pull” the institution and who can influence the change of attitude of the rest, from their motivation and firm decision.

These are the people who will ask themselves the following questions: why and for what purpose do we create a system? Finding the reasons and the meaning to what we are going to start building is fundamental to guide not only what we do, but how we do it. We don't want to make a system because “we are obliged/forced to do so”, but “because we are convinced of it”. That difference is going to be fundamental so that we are not mere compliers and we have the necessary protocols and the required tools, we can pass an audit because we have made a proper “check list”. That doesn't change the culture. Complying with a list of “commandments” is necessary, but it is not enough. It takes a personal conversion, an institutional transformation, a conviction that the pain of just one person needs our compassion and commitment.

Having made these considerations, which I think are necessary as a frame of reference for everything we will then address, I can begin to consider a model of a system adapted to my institution (school, Parish, center, network etc.). Choosing the name I want to give it also says a lot about what we want

to address. We can stay at the minimum requirements (which is a good starting point) or be more ambitious and go further. The issue of abuse has begun to become visible through past cases, which have occurred in different institutions, especially with minors and by clerics or or religious men or women. This has led us to react by focusing on the spotlight that had been put on us from the outside (mainly the victims and the media). But once we have become aware of these situations, we may want to go further, be proactive and take advantage of “the unfortunate opportunity” that the pain of these victims has offered us, to broaden the focus and commit ourselves to seek and eradicate other pains, other abuses that have been committed within our institutions. The Pope has asked us not only to focus on child sexual abuse, but also to look at abuses of power, authority and conscience, both to minors and of any adult who at any given moment finds themselves in a situation of vulnerability. It is true that we are in the process of clarifying all these concepts which are new and are not fully defined or delimited, but it is good that we have them on the horizon, because child sexual abuse is the tip of the iceberg and we have a lot to see and learn and we should not lag behind.

Once we have decided on the scope of action of our system and we have given it a name that frames it (protection and care, safeguarding of minors, good treatment and care, safe environments and good treatment ...), we can start to focus on the main blocks that we are going to deal with.

In order to guarantee safe spaces, activities and relationships in each institution or work of the Society of Jesus we can, we must act along three fundamental lines:

Awareness-Raising

Awareness is necessary to generate change. It is necessary to raise awareness initially in order to be able to prevent and also to be able to attend to victims adequately, based on what they need at each stage of their process. In order to generate a deep awareness, preparatory to the ground that has to be sown later, it is of great help to “listen” to the people who have suffered abuse, to know and understand their pain, the consequences on their lives of what they have lived through. In short, to put yourself in their shoes, to touch their wounds, as St. Thomas did with the wounds of Christ, in order to believe. Cardinal Farrell, of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, speaking on this issue to Church associations and movements, said that when he began to listen to and welcome victims of abuse, he was no longer himself, he underwent “a conversion”, the pain of the victims transformed him. This has been experienced by many of us who have dedicated ourselves for a long time to listening to and welcoming pain. What is more, in my case, I do not want the pain that I also feel when I welcome the pain of others to cease to make an impression on me. It is a driving force to keep the mission entrusted to me alive.

As part of awareness-raising, in addition to listening to real testimonies, actions can be carried out that help to make these realities visible: dissemination campaigns on specific dates; dissemination of the prevention and intervention system itself so that people are aware of how it works, as well as the reporting channel (email) or the preventive actions

that are being developed; informative posters, videos, talks, articles, etc. It is also important that all information related to the system and, above all, on the reporting channel, is visible and accessible on the corresponding web pages.

Prevention

Once we have prepared the environment, so that people are more receptive and show a real attitude of welcome and empathy towards these painful situations, we can really begin to undertake preventive measures. As those in our institutions or works are becoming aware of what this system entails, they need to do something to prevent things like this from happening again. That is why it is necessary and important to have prevention protocols, which must include different steps.

-First, appoint a **person in charge or coordinator of the system or programme**, who will be the reference person within the institution, both for monitoring prevention measures, and for receiving queries in the event of possible cases or complaints. This person must be known in the institution as responsible or coordinator and must be someone with the sensitivity to listen and welcome delicate and difficult situations such as the ones we are talking about; he/she must be someone who is decisive and proactive in activating the necessary prevention or intervention mechanisms; he/she must be someone who is accessible and should be seen and considered as a close and receptive reference for the

people in the institution, as this makes it easier to overcome the complexity of taking the step of dealing with this issue.

There may be a small team working together on this work, depending on the size of the institution. These teams should be very well trained and prepared to know how to detect, act, deal with, etc., everything related to abuse in the institution. In this sense, it is very advisable for the teams to be multidisciplinary, as each one brings a different and complementary perspective, from their own approach and experience.

Precisely, in this line, to ensure that we know how to prevent cases of abuse and properly define good treatment behaviours, training is needed. The organisation should have highly trained staff who are familiar with the institution's system or programme. These people can then, in coordination with the person in charge, organise training for the rest of the staff (workers, collaborators or volunteers and people benefiting from our services in the corresponding mission).

Of course, training has to be designed with the target population in mind. The number of hours and the degree of depth of the training will also be different in each case. The training programmes may come from the institution itself, if it has the means and resources to do so, or they may be requested from nearby entities, specialized in these issues. However, we will always have to provide the specificity or charisma of our institution, as well as the precise characteristics of the programme that we are developing in our case.

A significant population to receive this formation must be the novices, seminarians, and all the clergy and religious

men and women, who are part of our institutions. To be able to have a space, not only to learn and become aware, but to share, to dialogue, to reflect and to commit in relation to all these painful situations, is indispensable for our institutions to regenerate themselves from within, so that they remain focused on the evangelical message that we want to live and transmit.

This training can be organised in face-to-face groups, or take advantage of the means that technology offers us to reach more people, who, due to scheduling difficulties, remote locations, etc., would not be able to participate. When the training has to be in online format, it is important to ensure that the message and, above all, the awareness-raising, reach the receiver adequately, because it is not a question of making a “check list”, but of contributing, as we have been saying, to a deeper transformation.

Of this training, which must be continuous and permanently updated, it is recommended to keep records of participation, as this guarantees that all personnel involved are receiving it, and are trained to at least detect risk situations or, in the event of an incident, to know who to refer to.

It is important to support all this training with good materials: protocols, good practice guides with indications on the most appropriate ways of proceeding to prevent abuses and promote good treatment, complete and comprehensive manuals, action guides, etc., which include all the information necessary to keep up to date with everything needed to prevent or act in these situations. These materials must be “alive”, in the sense that they must be permanently updated

and assess the need to expand on new concepts, methodologies, responses to victims, etc., as we learn along the way. Of course, these materials, as well as all documentation relating to the relevant legislation to which we are subject, or other documents, such as the institution’s code of conduct or code of ethics, must be accessible on our web pages.

After receiving the relevant training, it is a good idea to be able to ask the people who have received it to sign a commitment to join the programme or system. In the case of companies providing services, the company itself may have a programme equivalent to ours in the relationship with its workers, but if this is not the case, we should consider whether they can join the training programmes that our organisation offers its staff.

Training should not be experienced as a mere formality to be carried out, but should be aimed at generating a real interest in joining a programme that wants to bring out change. To get involved in something like this is to be an active part of that change. Getting involved in it goes beyond documents, protocols, manuals, etc., it is to give life and make God’s dream come true for the human beings, to live in and from love, guaranteeing the well-being, rights and happiness of all. It is only through personal responsibility and involvement that we can advance in this evangelical mission, to which we are all called, and even more so in our institutions.

Formation must be aimed at becoming aware of how we act, how we bring to life the message that Jesus shared with us, how we relate to one another and what “footprint”/mark

we leave around us. These systems are not focused on penalisation, on punishment, but on opportunities to act better, to overcome our human miseries and transform them into service. In fact, they are a call to take better care of ourselves and treat each other better.

-However, in order to achieve this goal, we need to be aware of the risks that can keep us away from achieving it. For this reason, each place should draw up its **risk maps** for the centre and its activities, identifying the possible risks that could lead to an abusive situation. Only by being aware of what these risks may be, can we do something to mitigate them or make them disappear. Therefore, these risk maps must also reflect the possible measures that can be put in place to minimize or eliminate these risks. This tool will also make it possible to monitor the validity of the actions taken. These maps (with risks and measures) must be known by all the people who are part of the institution. In other words, it is not just another piece of paper to fill in and keep in the drawer to justify that we are doing something, but by sharing it, as well as making us all more aware of these risks and preventive measures, it is involving each one of us personally, to be responsible for taking care of our environments, our relationships and our activities. In this sense, it is very important that these maps are not carried out by one person as the person responsible for the system or programme, but that all the people who are part of the activity or the centre in which it is carried out participate (including those whom the institution serves – such as pupils in schools). In some cases, it can be of great help if, as a result of a previous event,

someone who has suffered abuse can collaborate by showing what other people do not see. In addition, we can use questionnaires that can help to make them more participatory.

-Coordination between all the agents involved in our works is also very important for prevention. Coordination **meetings** with people from different teams help us to put on the table difficulties that appear, doubts that arise, new concerns that come to light. And between all of us, we can assess how to respond, how to make progress, in short, how to improve.

-Another field of action in the field of prevention concerns the recruitment of staff or the use of volunteers in our organisations. Certain indications should be taken into account **in these recruitment processes**. It is advisable to provide references, questionnaires or materials to be taken into account for the selection processes, beyond requesting the relevant sex offence certificate. Also to inform those applying for staff or volunteer positions about the stance and culture of prevention and intervention and that procedures are in places.

When contracting the services from other companies, as indicated above, we have to ask for certain requirements. Either provide the protocols that they may have, or give them the possibility of subscribing to ours.

Intervention

Another of the fundamental pillars of the protection and care systems must be related to the intervention with each

person who suffers, or may be suffering, some kind of abuse. In order to be able to intervene, we must know that there has been a situation of abuse and for this, we must have accessible and visible diverse channels to communicate what happened. An email account, which is treated confidentially and discreetly, is essential to be present on our websites, posters, videos, etc. The name of the person responsible or coordinator in each centre or work of our institution can also appear.

Discretion and confidentiality help the person to take that first difficult step. In this sense, it is very important that the response is warm, close, agile and facilitating the next step. Sometimes, the institution prefers to delegate or externalize this channel of communication, because some people may doubt the true intention of the institution. It should be remembered that trust may have been broken depending on the victim's experience. In any case, at some point the institution will have to receive a notification and this channel is still valid in that case.

Of course, when an allegation or suspicion of a possible "case of abuse" arises, it is necessary to know how to act, both in relation to past events and in relation to current situations.

In reality, to speak of *cases* is not entirely appropriate, since what is behind each situation are people who suffer. Therefore, the first condition for an adequate intervention is to have an empathetic, open, welcoming attitude, without judging or preconceiving, to have a look full of love, understanding and closeness.

This attitude will guide the rest of the steps we need to take in our interventions. Believing that what we are being told is possible, is real, without categorising or classifying it, but simply accepting it, welcoming it, will be a good starting point for the team in each centre or work, in a coordinated manner, to assess the best action according to the situation presented and take the appropriate decisions to begin the process.

The process will include attention to the different "actors" that are part of the scene: there is the victim or victims, the person or persons who have committed the abuse, the environments of both populations and the institution itself. All these fronts need to be considered when responding and reacting, although not all of them have to be addressed at the same time. Diligence in taking action with regard to the person accused and the person who is suffering harm is essential.

It is clear to all of us that, if there is a minor involved, we have the obligation to inform the competent authorities and it will be they who will decide on the measures to be taken. We must know and be up to date with regard to the protocols and legislation at both regional and national level. In fact, it is advisable to have established channels of communication with the corresponding public entities, at least at the local level (social services, children's ombudsman, educational inspectorate ...), so that the processes, if necessary, can be carried out more easily and quickly. We can, for example, present our protocols or systems to these entities if appropriate and thus prior relationship of communication and collaboration with these institutions is already established.

Of course, the situations in which a person comes to us sharing what they suffered in our institutions in the past, have a different trajectory of intervention and will depend on whether the case has a legal limitation period (statute of limitations), i. e. is time-barred, or the accused person has died and there is no legal route, whether a canonical process must be opened, the risk that may still exist, what may be found in the archives, etc. But, in any case, the response to the victim will depend on what he/she tells us he/she needs in order to advance in the difficult process he/she is facing. Taking the step of recognising oneself as a victim (and also speaking with others in the role of a victim) is something very difficult, which, as we already know, takes many years and there are even people who do not want to take it, who do not want to shake up a life that they have managed, in the best of cases, to centre and balance.

Welcoming a victim, present or past, means listening to what is going on inside, their pain, their suffering, what it has meant or means to live with it, facing it, recognising it, sharing it ... For this reason, the person who welcomes them must be prepared and trained for it. We can count on reception or listening spaces in our institutions that, without re-victimising anyone, can accompany the process, knowing all the possibilities of the path that opens when a person decides to inform our institution of these facts. Knowing the different options that may open up when crossing that door is essential in order to be able to accompany without creating false expectations.

In relation to victims of the past in particular, the needs that are detected are very varied: referral to expert teams for

psychological help, support during the legal or canonical process, restorative justice, reparation protocol, and if appropriate and wished for being asked for forgiveness, symbolic acts, etc. We can consider providing support for these requests, from our own institution or by outsourcing the support, to be sure that these services are considered “aseptic” and neutral. We are learning with them to respond to their needs at each moment and situation of their process. There are people who only want to be taken into account in our reports, that we know about it, that we work so that these events do not happen again, etc. But what is fundamental for any of them is to be listened to, to be believed, to sincerely regret what they have suffered, to value and recognise the step they have taken, for those responsible for the institution to take charge, to take in and accept the pain they carry.

But around these situations, there are people who may also be affected.

Attention to the environment of the person who has lived through a situation of abuse, is also important, because when they are aware of what has happened, they are logically affected and may have all kinds of needs, as well as being secondary victims in some way, they sometimes need tools to know how to accompany the person who has suffered the abuse.

We must not forget the close environment that may be aware of the situation, the people close to both the person who has been accused and the victim's companions. They are other minors, workers, families, etc. They need to know what has happened, as rumours can distort the real facts, contaminate the investigation and create concern.

Trying to calm, contain, listen, catalyse this environment, can help all the parties involved in the process and it will be easier to carry out the steps of that process in an appropriate manner. At these moments, having a good communication team is key, as they can guide when, how and with what information a communiqué should be communicated to the affected people. The impact on the institution should be addressed openly, but without generating unnecessary rumour. The procedures and steps taken should be communicated transparently and understanding is requested that details cannot be provided for the safety, wellbeing and privacy of those involved.

In relation to the accused person, we (safeguarding teams) also have obligations beyond the measures to be followed from the reference protocols. The first responsibility is to try to ensure that a situation of risk is not generated again, and this implies being able to carry out different actions with that person, within the process that begins after the accusation. And of course, attend to their environment if they require it, as they are also affected and suffer from what this situation has generated.

After all these interventions have been taken into account, the processes must be closed in some way. In order to do this closure, which in some cases is not definitive, although it may be wished for by some and not by others, it is necessary to collect and accredit each step taken. One of the difficulties encountered in the investigation processes of the past is the lack of documentation recording what was done at the time, both with regard to the victim and in relation to the abuser.

This **report** will be filed by the person responsible or coordinator of the system so that, in accordance with the data protection law, a record is kept of each situation found in any institution, centre or work of the institution and the actions and conclusions of all the steps carried out both with the abuser and with the victim and their environment. It is also desirable that a copy is kept within the centre where the events occurred. Only then will the case be considered to be properly “closed”.

Other steps to be taken for the creation and maintenance of the system or programme

What I am presenting is one of the many options, depending on the characteristics of the institution and its needs, for a model system or programme to address abuse and promote good treatment and care in a Church entity, in which, of course, our faith and mission, must frame all of the above.

On this path, in which we are constantly learning, as there were no previous references on how to do it, constant evaluation is extremely important. We need to evaluate each step we take against each other, being ready to rectify and broaden our horizons, improving day by day. But we also need an external evaluation, a professional and expert view, which helps us to see what we do not see ourselves. And even, over time, it is advisable to submit ourselves to an audit, which in addition to showing us whether we are complying with minimum criteria to guarantee that our environments are

safe, allows us to set ourselves more ambitious goals and challenges to achieve the dream of not only complying with requirements, but also transforming the culture.

In this sense, another great contribution to learn and advance, are the studies or research on the structural causes of abuse, and especially, in our case, we have focused on abuse in the Church, through the Jordan Project. We hope and trust that the fruits of this research will shed new light that will broaden not only our gaze, but also the work to be done.

Obviously, so much work in pursuit of a mission, requires teams of people both internal and external to the institution.

The reception and attention teams of the listening spaces contribute to being attentive listeners, open hearts, close hands, with those who are suffering. They put heart into their mission and have been specially trained to accompany the processes that a victim may be going through at the moment he approaches us. They refer to external professionals, psychology centers, law firms, etc., which are also necessary to adequately address this mission.

In addition, in our case, we have formed training support teams, people to whom we have offered extensive training given by experts and who have subsequently been responsible for designing and teaching the formative sessions that each center or work needs, according to its characteristics and the scope of its mission.

It is also important, as mentioned above, to have a good communication team, which supports the communications that must be issued, the relationship with the media, the dissemination of the system, which generates informative

campaigns, etc. experts in this field transmit confidence and give peace of mind when it is necessary to give agile answers. In addition, they can be a support when addressing the impact that the news that appears in the press, have on the communities and on the institution and collaborators in particular. Collecting that emotional impact and being able to share what is being experienced by channeling it towards appropriate and evangelical actions is also necessary.

The entire network of coordinators or those responsible for the system in each center, in our case Safe Environment Agents, is a great support and a way of working together, which is important to not have the feeling that you are alone before something that we have not yet “mastered”, and that we will probably never achieve at all because each situation we face is different from the previous one, both in intervention and prevention. The risks are new and changing, the suffering that appears includes new types of abuse... And we must be in constant learning and reflection. Doing that path accompanied, is more solid and becomes easier.

It has also been fundamental in our case, to have multi-disciplinary teams, to reflect on the progress and the steps we have to take at all times. These teams, both internal, and in particular, those in which we have external professionals, as in our case, the Safe Environment Council, is being decisive to broaden the look, understand the importance of each step, approaching other perspectives, in short, to continue advancing, correcting, clarifying, rectifying and learning after each meeting. Having professionals who are experts in the field of abuse from psychology, law, canon

law, restorative justice, theology, security forces, the world of communication and of course, a victims's association, has been a path of collaboration and learning, for which we are deeply grateful.

Of course, we have the support of the Compliance Committee, which supports everything that does not correspond to the Code of Conduct that the institution has.

And in short, the whole set of people who in our works, have wanted to commit and get involved in order to guarantee safe spaces, relationships and activities in our institution and in collaboration with the Church. Our thanks to each and every one of these people who discreetly and quietly, contribute to this change of culture.

And of course, the network that we form between all Church groups, all congregations, religious orders, dioceses, entities that watch over children and their rights, etc. Working together, coordinating and collaborating in the same direction, will be what really has an impact on the Church and on society to achieve the cultural change that we want and need.

Finally, within these steps to be taken, there would be accountability, the famous *Accountability*. Accountability to victims, members of the institution, the Church and society. One of the ways to do that is to be transparent and report what we have investigated and what we are doing so that these situations do not recur. It is not easy, we are also learning how to do it. The balance between transparency and confidentiality and respect for those who have already suffered a lot along the way, wanting to preserve the dignity of people,

the difficulty of not generating more pain ... Many of these issues are intermingled and complex to handle.

At this point, all I can say is that these processes have been a constant learning experience for me, they have confronted me as a person and as a believer, they have made me review my attitudes and behaviors, they have helped me to focus on personal care and others. This experience is a path of humility, of learning, of challenge to approach all these situations with an evangelical attitude, without fear and with confidence. To make this journey from fear to trust, from risk to safety, from abuse to care and good treatment, is to begin to walk on sacred ground, that of the victims, devoid of a net and anything to keep the balance. It is a path to which we are called, called to take up the cross out of love and with love. May the pain and suffering of the people who have experienced it in their flesh, transform us and may we allow ourselves to be transformed to make fragrant wine from the fallen grapes, instead of vinegar. My wish is that we all take away our fears, concerns, insecurities and worries and with confidence, we walk on the waters, but all together, so that we can truly change these realities through love, building the world, the safe environment, that God dreams of for everyone.

Authors

Baran, Agnieszka – serves as a Director of the Jesuit European Committee for Primary and Secondary Education (JECSE) and a Delegate of the President of the Jesuit Conference of European Provincials (JCEP) for Education since 2022. Psychologist, pedagogue, memory trainer. Originally from Krakow (Poland), where she worked in a Jesuit secondary school. Having worked for many years in the non-profit sector in the field of adult education, she has extensive experience in the implementation of international projects and global cooperation. Together with members of the JECSE Safeguarding Task Force, she supports Jesuit schools in building and developing a culture of protection.

Fegert, Prof. Dr. Jörg – is Medical Director of the Department for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy at Ulm University Medical Center. He is Past President and Congress President (Ulm 2017) of the German Society for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Psychosomatics and Psychotherapy (DGKJP) as well as President (2023–2027) of the European Society for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (ESCAP). From 2017 until 2022 he was Chairman of the Academic Advisory Board on Family Affairs of the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth of which he is still a member as well as of the National Council against Sexual Violence against Children and Adolescents. He is also board member of the Aktion Psychisch Kranke e.V. (APK), spokesman of the

Trauma Research Centre at Ulm University and member of the German Committee for UNICEF e.V. He is director of the Competence Center Child Abuse and Neglect (Com. Can) of the federal state of Baden-Württemberg and the Competence Area Mental Health Prevention in the Competence Network Preventive Medicine of the federal state of Baden-Württemberg.

Gentner, Ulrike – an active pedagogue and theologian with a particular interest in religious pedagogy, alongside publishing books and articles regularly, Ulrike Gentner is the Director of the Center for Ignatian Pedagogy (ZIP) and Deputy Director of Education for Heinrich Pesch Haus located in Ludwigshafen, Germany. She is responsible for child protection and the delivery of holistic education in the Christian-humanistic tradition across the German-speaking world to schools, parents, policy-makers and young people, which enables responsible judgment and action.

Guiney SJ, John – since 2018 has been the Global Coordinator of Protection (PCCP)” project, after being appointed by Father General Arturo Sosa SJ. He is also the Director of Irish Jesuits International (mission office) based in Dublin, Ireland. He joined the Irish Province in 1971 and worked for 25 years in the Jesuit Province of Eastern Africa being engaged in formation, administration, pastoral and education work. He was the Regional Director of JRS Eastern Africa for six years.

Janin SJ, Franck – originally from Versailles (France), joined the Society of Jesus in Belgium where he was successively university chaplain, novice master, director of a spirituality centre and Provincial of the Province of South Belgium and Luxembourg (now EOF – Europe Occidentale Franco-phone). From 2017 to 2023, he was President of the Jesuit Conference of European Provincials (JCEP) and of the European Jesuit Committee for Primary and Secondary Education (JECSE). He has supported numerous efforts to build a culture of protection in various sectors and works of the Society of Jesus in Europe and the Middle East.

Mertes SJ, Klaus – born 1954 in Bonn, joined the Jesuit order in 1977. After studying philosophy, theology and classical philology, he entered the teaching profession: Hamburg – Sankt Ansgar School, Berlin – Canisius College (Rector since 2000); St. Blasien – Director at the International Jesuit College. Since 2021 he has been Superior of the Jesuit Community in Berlin-Charlottenburg and a member of the STIMMEN DER ZEIT editorial team.

Mesa SJ, José A. – since 2010 Secretary for Secondary and Pre-Secondary Education of the Society of Jesus, as such he is responsible for the coordination of the Jesuit Global Network of Schools (JGNS). Professor at the School of Education, Loyola University Chicago, Chicago, IL, U.S.A. He is a distinguished scholar, teacher, college administrator and leader. He holds a PhD in Philosophy and Education from Columbia University, New York City. Author of many

significant publications on education, specializing especially in such topics as: Moral Education, Ignatian Pedagogy, Citizenship Education

Pradera Salazar, Susana – psychologist, psychotherapist, specialist in clinical psychology and violence prevention. She has extensive experience in running therapy groups, trainings and prevention workshops. She has been an internship tutor at the Jesuit University Pontificia de Comillas since 2004 and an associate professor at the university since 2012. Since 2019, she has been responsible for safeguarding in the Society of Jesus for the Spanish Province, where she has developed and managed the safeguarding system for all Jesuits works. In this way, she is trying to help the Church not only to prevent abuses but also to foster a profound change of culture, living the Gospel values that lead us towards good treatment and care.

Racionero-Plaza, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sandra – since 2023 has been Assistant Project Coordinator for the “Promotion of a Consistent Culture of Protection” (PCCP) project in the global Society of Jesus. She holds a double PhD from the University of Wisconsin-Madison (USA), is associate professor at the University of Barcelona, and the 4th most cited scientist internationally in the field of safeguarding (Google scholar). Racionero-Plaza’s scientific research on sexual abuse has achieved important social impact internationally, demonstrating her scientific contribution to eliminate abuse.”

Spitzcok von Brisinski, Marek – is a coach and consultant for social organisations, also in implementing safeguarding programmes. He worked in counselling centres on sexualized violence, assisting those directly affected, their families and professionals and was one of the contact persons on sexualized violence in the German Region of Jesuits.

Zollner SJ, Prof. Dr. Hans – is Director and Professor of the IADC – Institute of Anthropology. Interdisciplinary Studies on Human Dignity and Care (formerly Centre for Child Protection) at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. He is consultant on Safeguarding to the Diocese of Rome and to the Dicastery for the Clergy. In Rome, he was the chief organizer of the Symposium “Towards Healing and Renewal” (Feb. 2012), of the World Congress “Child Dignity in the Digital World” (Oct. 2017) as well as of the Vatican Child Protection Summit (Feb. 2019). Since its inception in March 2014, he had been a member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Children and Adolescents until March 2023. Prof. Zollner’s main areas of work include prevention of sexual abuse and other kinds of abuse of children, adolescents and vulnerable persons, the relationship between religion/spirituality and child and adolescent safeguarding, and research into the institutional and systemic factors of preventions of abuse and of safeguarding.

With this book, we are focusing on the creation of a culture of protection of minors in Jesuit and Ignatian schools in Europe and the Near East. It is a collection of contributions prepared by the keynote speakers of our Safeguarding Conference in Ludwigshafen (2022). The articles presented here start with outlining the context of the problem and move on describing specific safeguarding issues in detail. Proposed responses to the current challenges in this area cover model solutions and practical suggestions for their implementation.

We hope that this book will be an impulse for further reflection on safeguarding, an inspiration for improving existing policies and protocols and designing new prevention schemes. It is our objective to sustainably strengthen a culture of protection in our Jesuit and companion schools.

Gentner, Ulrike – an active pedagogue and theologian with a particular interest in Ignatian pedagogy, is the Director of the Center for Ignatian Pedagogy (ZIP), Germany.

Baran, Agnieszka – serves as a Director of the Jesuit European Committee for Primary and Secondary Education (JECSE), psychologist, pedagogue, memory trainer.

