



Diocesan Commission for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable People

Safeguarding rules

for priests, deacons, religious brothers and sisters, staff, volunteers, helpers and other persons entrusted with tasks in pastoral activities of the Catholic Church in Iceland.

Introduction

“Let the children come to me”, said Our Lord Jesus to his disciples, and he added: “... for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” (Mt 19:14)

From the very beginning the Holy Church felt compelled by these words to pay special attention to the little ones within its communities and bring them according to their own ways and skills to a close relationship with the Lord in the midst of the assembly of the faithful and of the saints. Through the centuries innumerable initiatives were taken by pastors and their collaborators to reach in an appropriate way the young people and help parents and educators in their task of transmitting to them the treasure of faith received from the apostles. One prominent figure in this regard is Saint John Bosco, who dedicated his priestly ministry in Torino, Italy, in the 19th century, to the care of the young people and inspired generations of pastors and educators to follow his example.

However, where the Spirit of God is at work and brings joy and holiness, the spirit of this world, the devil himself, is also there, who tries with all his lies and false promises to destroy the work of salvation. The members of the Church feel the call of God to a holy life but they feel also the attraction to sin. Leaders of the Church are no exception in that. Pastors as well as other persons involved in pastoral activities are partaking in the battle between good and evil. While the great majority of the servants of the Church accomplish their task with dedication, competence and selfdenial, some do not stand up to their vocation and misuse their position, allowing themselves to behave in an inappropriate way for the great harm of their victims and the scandal of the Church and the civil society.

In recent years people got more aware of sexual abuses within the Church as well as outside of it. Numerous priests and workers of the Church have been convicted of acts of violence or sexual abuse towards minors or vulnerable people entrusted to them. People came forward, sometimes after years or even decades, and told their stories. Lives have been destroyed, people have been harmed and many lost

their confidence in the Church. This situation brought the authorities of the Church to be more aware of the problem and take appropriate measures. The popes expressed their shame and apologized on behalf of the Church. They issued different documents in order to tackle the issue and urged bishops and other Church authorities to listen to the victims, to help them, to conduct investigations in collaboration with the civil authorities, to punish the perpetrators of criminal acts and to take the right measures so that children, teenagers and vulnerable people but also any person may experience in the Church security, protection, respect and love.

Crimes of sexual abuse perpetrated by members of the clergy have been recently the occasion of a new regulation implemented by Pope Francis through his letter '*Vos estis lux mundi*' (*You are the Light of the World*) dated 7th of May 2019 and followed by the *Vademecum* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith dated 16th of July 2020.

In the Diocese of Reykjavík Bishop Dávid B. Tencer OFMCap. issued in 2019 safeguarding rules for any person involved in pastoral activities with minors and/or vulnerable people. These rules are available in Icelandic on the website of the Catholic Church in Iceland (www.catholica.is). The present document is an updated version of these rules and will be available in Icelandic, English and Polish languages. In 2020 Bishop Dávid nominated the first Diocesan Commission for the Protection of Minors and/or Vulnerable People. The decree with the names and data of the three members of the commission is on display in every church and parish facility in the diocese of Reykjavík. The information about the new commission in its present composition will be made available in the same way. Along with the decree were issued guidelines for dealing with cases of sexual abuse, that every person involved in pastoral activities with youth or vulnerable people had first to read and approve before being admitted to his tasks. All these documents are now issued in an updated version.

Important is that any person involved in pastoral activities of the Church understands himself as a missionary of Christ, proclaiming the Gospel by word and example both during these activities as through his private life, having always in mind to encounter others and especially the younger ones and the vulnerables with respect, dignity, discretion, honour and love.

For these reasons the following rules are mandatory in the Diocese of Reykjavík and apply to priests, religious people, staff, volunteers, instructors and any other person, local or foreigner, entrusted with tasks in pastoral activities where minors and/or vulnerable people are involved.

Minors / Vulnerable people

Minors are people, who have not yet reached the age of 18. Vulnerable people are people, who suffer physical or mental disability, permanent or temporary, people who are limited in their capacity to join regular activities. The same rules apply for dealing with them as for dealing with minors.

Communication with minors has always to go through the parents or legally responsible persons. These persons have always to be well informed about the

activities their children are involved in.

Criminal record

For a person to be involved in pastoral activities in the Diocese of Reykjavík, he/she has to present to the specific ecclesiastical authority a document of clean criminal record. This document may not be older than one year. This disposition regards both clergy and lay persons. In doubtful cases the matter has to be referred to the bishop for his personal decision. All documents as well as the written decision of the bishop will be filed in the archives of the Diocese.

Catholics with good reputation

For a person to be involved in pastoral activities, he/she has to enjoy a good reputation and conduct a christian life. If necessary, testimonies can be requested. The person has to be a Catholic, confess openly the Catholic faith and conform his life to the teaching of the Church. If the person is not Catholic or does not fulfil the conditions required of a Catholic, the competent Church authority has to be approached in order to approve or reject the involvement of this person in pastoral activities of the Church and define its limits.

Guidelines

Before partaking in pastoral activities the person to be entrusted with tasks has to be well informed about the present rules of the Diocese, read them thoroughly, sign a declaration that he/she has read and approved them. This declaration will be kept in the archives of the diocese. The person keeps a copy of the document.

Task of persons involved in Church activities

The well-being of children, teenagers and everyone else must be promoted at all times, having in focus what is best for them. Persons involved in pastoral activities must be diligent and conscientious and act with care, honesty and respect towards all those they work with or for. They are to keep in mind that words and actions have to be compatible with the work they are entrusted with, with the environment, the place and the time. As role models for the participants in the activities of the Church, they must show good behaviour and set a good example both in the activities and outside of them. Their role is to promote healthy, constructive and good quality work within the Church.

Persons entrusted with tasks in Church activities shall not discriminate or favour in words or behaviour anyone on the basis of nationality, origin, race, colour, sex, age, opinions, disability, economic status, ancestry or status in any other respect. They shall observe the outmost confidentiality and discretion about any matter they learn about during activities of the Church and which must be treated as confidential.

However knowledge of any criminal act or behaviour, especially regarding sexual abuse or harassment or any kind of violence, must be reported to the competent authorities. When the health or development of minors or vulnerable people is in danger, people involved in Church activities are to follow the rules of the

Church and of the State.

Pastoral activities

Purpose. Activities in the Catholic Church have the purpose to promote the well-being and harmonious development of all the participants in a spirit of love and mutual respect. They help them grow in their personality as children of God, created male or female in his image and called to be intimately united with Christ, our Redeemer. The activities give them opportunities to deepen their understanding of the Catholic faith and become more active members of the parish community. Everything contrary to these purposes has to be rejected.

Respect. Participants have to mind their behaviour and talking in order to avoid any occasion of danger or scandal. Mutual respect among all the participants shall always be the main rule and adults take care, that the minors entrusted to them follow also this rule.

Clothing. In Church activities people wear decent and appropriate cloths corresponding to the situation at each time. Members of the clergy (bishops, priests and deacons) follow the general and particular rules of the Church about clothing. So do also members of religious institutes.

Limits. Activities including hazardous or dangerous situations have to be avoided by any means. Activities being more likely to create misunderstandings or give way to improper behaviour have to be strictly regulated or avoided. This regards especially sports and games. Activities including disrespectful talking or behaviour towards holy things are forbidden. The utmost care and caution must always be shown in order to prevent children from getting into situations, they cannot handle. This applies both to children and helping staff, who have not reached the age of 18.

Phone. The use of phones, smartphones, social media and electronic devices during pastoral activities has to be strictly regulated in order to focus on the main purposes of the activities and avoid any misuse of these devices. Communication by phone or on social network between adults involved in pastoral activities and minors entrusted to them is allowed only for purpose of participation in the activities or for security reasons. However, within reasonable limits, children are not to be prevented from having communication with their parents.

Internet. The Church does not provide access to Internet to minors.

Photos. Use and storage of photos of minors are regulated by Icelandic laws, especially the law 90/2018 on Protection of persons. For use and storage of pictures the written authorization of the parents is requested.

Smoking / alcohol. In the frame of Church activities involving minors, smoking or use of alcoholic beverage are not allowed.

Distance. Persons participating in pastoral activities involving minors or vulnerable people must not abuse their position in any way, such as physically, mentally or sexually. They must treat participants with care but keep a professional distance outside of events and avoid any close contact. They must never take the initiative to communicate personally with participants, unless this appears to be necessary for the security or well-being of the minors concerned. They should never establish inappropriate relationship.

Promiscuity. Any promiscuity or sexual wrong behaviour is prohibited within Church activities. Any use of pornographic items is prohibited. Adults take care that minors entrusted to them respect this rule.

Surveillance

Minors should never be left alone without supervision. When possible at least two adults keep an eye on minors at all times.

One adult is never to be found alone together with one child. The planning of the activities is meant to exclude such situations. However this rule doesn't apply for the sacrament of penance, but also in this case utmost caution has to be observed.

Private communication of one minor with one adult has to be allowed only within the strict limits of necessity and in such a way that any danger of misconduct or scandal is avoided.

Pastoral activities are to evolve in safe open places easy to survey. For example the private room of a priest is never a place for pastoral activity or any activity involving minors. Public rooms in his home, if any, have to be strictly defined and not overlap with the private area.

Outdoors

The rules of the State about allowed times for minors to be outdoors have to be followed. They are to be found in the law about the protection of minors nr. 80/2002 on art. 92.

The main rule is that children 12 years old and younger may not be outside after 8 PM without adult attendance. Minors 16 years old and younger may not be outside after 10 PM without adult attendance. Between the 1st of May and the 1st of September these time limits are two hours later.

Sexual abuses and harrasment

Like mentioned in the introduction, misbehaviour and sexual abuses can occur and have occurred in the Catholic Church for the great harm of the victims and also for the shame and the harm of the Church. People both inside of the Catholic Church and outside are scandalized and can lose their trust in it. It is absolutely necessary to handle cases of sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable people in a rigorous and professional way.

If a person thinks he/she has been victim of sexual assault or is witness of a case of sexual harassment or sexual abuse or comes to the knowledge of it or of any wrong doing, this person has to report it without delay to the competent authority. Sexual abuse of minors is under the competence of Barnaverndarnefnd (Office for the protection of minors) but the report can be made at any Police station in the country. The easiest way to reach the police is to phone the **emergency number 112**.

Sexual assault against minors perpetrated in the frame of pastoral activities of the Church have also to be reported without delay to the Church authority. The bishop has to be informed either directly (Tel. 897 8563) or through a priest or an other person.

Diocesan Commission

The Diocesan Commission for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable People can receive accusations of sexual abuse. It would forward them to the right authorities and assist the victims in handling the case. The list of members of the Commission with all the names and phone numbers is displayed on a visible place in all the churches and public facilities of the Catholic Church in Iceland. The Diocesan Commission is at the present day composed of six members:

Msgr. Jakob Rolland, chairman.

Hávallagata 16, 101 Reykjavík. Tel. 552 5388 / 888 8269. catholica@catholica.is

Sister Pentecostés Hemmingsen

Jófríðarstaðavegur 14, 220 Hafnafjörður. Tel. 822 5888. m.pentecostes@servidoras.org

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Valgarður Bragason

Reynimelur 84, 107 Reykjavík. Tel. 784 0509. bragasonvalgardur@gmail.com

Sexual abuses and clergy

Report. Sexual abuses of minors perpetrated by members of the clergy (bishops, priests and deacons) are considered by the Church as extremely grave crimes. Such crimes have to be reported without delay not only to the civil authorities but also to the ecclesiastical authorities. The matter is handled in Rome by the competent dicastery of the Roman Curia.

Bishops. Sexual abuses of minors or harassment perpetrated by bishops are reported to the civil authorities and to the Apostolic Nunciature (Embassy of the Pope in the Nordic countries), which is located in Sweden. The main languages for communication with the nunciature are English and Italian.

Apostolic Nunciature

Svalnäsavägen 10, SE – 182 63 Djursholm, Sweden

Tel. 00-46-8 446 51 10. nunciature@telia.com

Priests / deacons. Sexual abuses of minors, harassment or any other misconduct perpetrated by priests or deacons are reported to the civil authorities and to the bishop. The present bishop speaks fluently many languages such as Icelandic, English, Slavic languages, Italian and German. The diocesan commission can assist in the process. If it appears difficult or impossible to report to the bishop, the case has to be reported to the nunciature.

Bishop Dávid B. Tencer OFM Cap.

Hávallagata 14, 101 Reykjavík. Tel. 552 5388 / 897 8563. biskup@catholica.is

Accusations. One has to be aware, that accusations of sexual abuse of minors are severe accusations. Therefore it should always be handled with care and a great

sense of responsibility.

Professionality. Sexual abuses of minors are reported to the competent authority to be handled in a professional way. Public reporting by means of media or social network is not the normal way to handle cases and should be avoided as possible. However, a person remains free to choose this way of reporting.

Protection. One has to be also aware, that names and personal data are not supposed to be leaked to the public or to the press so long the investigation is going on and the perpetrator has not been convicted. The protection of the reputation and integrity of a person is a human right defended by civil law, ecclesiastical law and international conventions. One has also to keep in mind that a person is presumed innocent so long his guilt has not been proved, as expressed clearly in the European Convention on Human Rights.

Older cases

Cases of sexual abuse or harrasment may pop up many years after they were perpetrated. Nevertheless they have to be reported if the time of peremption has not run out.

Crimes of sexual abuse of minors perpetrated by clergy are perempted twenty years after the minor reached the age of eighteen. Before this deadline the Church conducts a criminal investigation, even if the civil authorities dismiss the case. After this time, that is after the age of 38, the Church does not conduct anymore a criminal investigation. For more details ask the Diocesan Commission.

However, even after the deadline, the Church continues to provide assistance and helps the victims in all the ways it disposes of. This consists in first place in spiritual assistance, helping the victims and other persons involved to confront their situation with the message of Christ and find in prayer and active sacramental life relief and comfort. The fellowship of a prayerful community in the local parish is an important mean of support. Furthermore the Church can pay special attention to the victims by listening to them, registering their accounts and filing these accounts in the diocesan archives. This might result in a significant relief for the victims and a crucial mean in order to prevent later cases of misconduct and sexual offenses in the Church. Important is that the victims feel always understanding and compassion within the Church as well as outside of it and are never left alone in their grief or anger. The bishop can decide together with the persons concerned about further means of support and assistance.

Further information.

On the civil sphere of the Icelandic authorities:

<https://www.barnaheill.is/is/forvarnir/verndarar-barna>

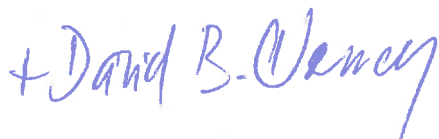
On the ecclesiastical sphere in Rome:

<https://iadc.unigre.it/resources/>

Implementation

The present rules have been worked out by the Diocesan Commission for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Persons and are mandatory in the Diocese of Reykjavík from the day of their publication on the website of the Catholic Church in Iceland. They may be subject to later updating, corrections or improvement when it appears to be necessary.

Given in Reykjavík on February 17, 2023.



H.E. Msgr. Dávid B. Tencer OFMCap.
Bishop of Reykjavík



Msgr. Jakob Rolland
Chairman

