



THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR  
**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN**  
IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN IRELAND

# Briefing Paper

**Summary of the Report Independent Commission on  
Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church in France (CIASE)**

**December 2021**





THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR  
**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN**  
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## **Abbreviations Used**

CEF – Episcopal Conference of France

CORREF- Congregation of Religious men and women of France

CIASE – The Independent Commission on Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church

NCCM – National Case Management Committee

## Introduction

The Independent Commission on Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church (CIASE) was set up the Catholic Bishops (CEF) and the Conference of Religious (CORREF) in France.

The Commission comprised of twenty-one voluntary members, set up by Mr Jean-Marc Sauvé at the request of the CEF and the CORREF, operating with complete independence.

Data collection was organized by three research teams and hearings and interviews were conducted by the members of the Commission themselves.

CEF and CORREF, allocated the financial resources without any right of review as to the validity of their use, only as to their lawfulness and accuracy. Most of the expenditure went on research and on the appeal for testimonials, which added up to an estimated cost - by late 2021 - of 2.6 million euros. Staff expenses have been kept to a strict minimum since the President, the members – including researchers in their roles as directors of studies – the associated members, some of the rapporteurs and the general secretary were all volunteers. Their commitment is estimated at 26 000 hours' work in total, representing the equivalent of 1.2 million euros. The total cost of the CIASE's work, adding together the financial cost to paid by the Church and the volunteers who have worked for the Commission, was valued at 3.8 million euros.

The Commission had 4 objectives:

1. To shed light on the sexual violence committed in the Catholic Church since 1950;
2. To examine the extent to which these cases were, or were not, dealt with;
3. To assess the measures taken by the Church to “treat this scourge”;
4. To make recommendations

### Report Structure

The report is divided into three sections corresponding to the three themes of the mission statement:

1. “Casting light” on the painful quantitative and qualitative observations drawn from the collected data.
2. “Revealing the shadows” and establishing a severe diagnosis based on the observations and placed within the context of the eras concerned.
3. “Dispelling the darkness” and finding appropriate ways of dealing with the issue of sexual violence in the Catholic Church, with regard to the past, since 1950, the present and the future.

Periods of significant abuse:

- 1950-1970 can be described as the height of the abuse;
- 1970-1990 was a period in which the abuse appeared to decline
- Early 1990s which marked an apparent resurgence, based on information available, without it being possible to conclude with any certainty that there was a definite increase during this period.

## Issues to Note

- More cases of abuse occurred in areas of low religious practice; probably a consequence of lower levels of supervision and support of priests in these areas.
- Most of the victims were pre-adolescent boys, from all social backgrounds
- The typology of abuse falls into six categories: “parochial abuse” committed by the local priest or vicar - the sort of person regarded as a village dignitary; “school abuse” committed by a priest, religious teacher or house master; “family abuse” committed by a family member or close family friend; “educational abuse” committed within the context of a patronage or scouts movement; “therapeutic abuse” committed by a priest acting, or claiming to act, as a psychotherapist; and “prophetic abuse” committed within the context of so-called new communities which were particularly popular in the 1970s.
- Three control mechanisms which aligned themselves along three powerful tenants of the Catholic Church: the sacraments, a sense of vocation and charity or helping others.
- Victims felt silenced for years
- Abuse of Nuns and seminarians highlight an overall sense of authority morphing into power and control becoming all-important, particularly in situations of vulnerability which are reinforced by the ecclesiastical context.
- Abusers often minimized their own behaviour, were often in denial, and rarely with complete recognition and acknowledgement.
- The Inquiry estimated that 216, 000 child victims suffered sexual assault at the hands of priests, deacons, monks or nuns over the period from 1950 to 2020.
- The estimated number of child victims rises to 330 000 for the period when other persons connected to the Church (staff of Catholic schools, laypersons providing catechism or chaplaincy services, organizers of scouts or other Catholic youth movements) are included.
- The study shows that more than a third of sexual assaults within the Catholic Church were committed by lay people.
- There were between 2900 and 3200 perpetrators - a ratio of 2.5% and 2.8% of clergy and monks from 1950 to today (approximately 115 000 clergy and monks).
- 3 % of ecclesiastical perpetrators of sexual violence constitute a minimum estimate.
- The report highlights factors which allowed abuse to “flourish” - “clericalism; the excessive sanctification of the person of the priest; the overvaluation of the state of celibacy and charism of the priest; a misguided adherence to obedience when exercised at the cost of conscience; and a false interpretation of the Scriptures.
- Response needed must include: Justice; truth and reparation; accepting responsibility for abuse and cover-up; a robust plan of action which includes governance, sanctions, training and prevention.

## Recommendations and Applicability to the Irish Church

CIASE made 45 recommendations – many of which are specific to French life and legal situation. They are detailed below with reference to applicability for Ireland:

Number	Recommendation	Applicability to Ireland
1	<p>Systematically check the criminal record of any person (clergy, monk, nun or layperson) mandated or assigned by the Church to be in regular contact with children or vulnerable persons.</p> <p>Ensure that persons convicted of sexual violence or sexual abuse against a child or vulnerable person be offered long-term care by health professionals.</p> <p>Ensure that any person who has been implicated in a case of sexual assault or sexual violence against a child or vulnerable person has no access to children, adolescents or vulnerable persons within the context of a Church assignment.</p> <p>These last two points shall apply without prejudice to any measures which may be imposed by a judicial authority.</p>	<p>Vetting already in place in Ireland</p> <p>Safety plans are put in place, but that rarely includes long term care by health professionals</p> <p>Depends on credibility of allegation; status of any criminal conviction. In Ireland, the safety plan would include no unsupervised contact with children</p> <p>Correct. Criminal application of law takes priority</p>

<p>2</p>	<p>In order to be able to measure more accurately the prevalence of sexual violence within the Catholic Church of France, create a joint CEF and CORREF department responsible for collecting, processing and analyzing data and ensure that the said department is equipped with a solid, lasting, statistical tool, used by all dioceses and congregations.</p> <p>Ensure that the said department is in contact the other services responsible for monitoring sexual violence in public and private institutions.</p> <p>Monitor and assess cases of violence in the Church; produce an annual report; ensure contact between victims, their organisations and religious authorities.</p>	<p>The National Board is unable to hold a central register due to data protection legislation. Anonymised annual data is deleted, following production of Annual Report</p> <p>There is regular liaison between National Board, An Garda Siochana, PSNI, Tusla and HSCT – however personal sensitive data is never shared.</p> <p>We present anonymised data on allegations notified in our annual report. Given Data protection laws, this is a challenge in Ireland. Each Victim should be offered pastoral care.</p>
<p>2</p>	<p>Ensure that the said department has the help of an independent committee of experts.</p> <p>Investigate the possibility of setting up a hotline in the Church (or in conjunction with other institutions) for victims of sexual violence. (cf. Recommendation N°15).</p>	<p>Dioceses and Religious Orders have access either to the National Case Management Committee (NCMC) or their own Advisory Panel, who offer advice on case management.</p> <p>All Dioceses and Religious have a point of contact for complainants through the DLP. In additions complainants can contact Towards Healing or the National Board</p>



<p>3</p>	<p>With the use of a tool similar to risk-mapping, identify all forms of abuse of power, or of placing the priest in a position above the baptized. In this context, distinguish between practices the Church believes to be legitimate from others.</p> <p>Closely examine practices in the episcopal and priestly ministries and study the discourse on which they are based to see if this has encouraged a distorted interpretation.</p> <p>Publish a guide of ethics and good practices in spiritual accompaniment, highlighting the distinction between the responsibility of governance and spiritual accompaniment to avoid any divergence from the said ethics and good practices.</p> <p>In all types of training and catechism, underline the fact that the Gospels should be a source of inspiration for spiritual accompaniment where the challenge is to help the subject reach his own understanding in a face-to-face relationship, not to dominate him through manipulation.</p>	<p>Unclear what this relates to:</p> <p>If this recommendation relates to risk assessing potential candidates for priesthood and Religious life, there is already psychological testing in place.</p> <p>If it relates to respondents there is a process for risk assessment Outside National Board role.</p> <p>This should be considered as part of the revision of the Ratio Nationalis.</p> <p>This should be considered as part of the revision of the Ratio Nationalis.</p> <p>Gospel values form basis of Church’s safeguarding policy and are integral to our national training programme and the Head to Heart – safeguarding training in formation.</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Identify the ethical requirements of consecrated celibacy, in particular with regard to the representation of the priest and the risk incurred of bestowing on him the status of hero, or of placing him in a position of dominance.</p> <p>Assess, for the Church in France, perspectives opened by the propositions of the Amazon Synod, in particular the suggestion that “ad experimentum, [...] married men could be ordained as priests if they fulfil the conditions for pastors, as laid down by Saint Paul in the First Epistle to Timothy”.</p>	<p>Outside National Board remit.</p> <p>Outside National Board remit</p>

5	<p>Expand the doctrinal work already commenced by the Church so as to “better understand how good fruit may have come forth from bad trees” and ensure that all founding charism is, effectively, subordinated to charity.</p> <p>Identify all forms of distorted charism and over-involvement in pastoral practices (using risk-mapping) and all possible cross-over between seduction and charism.</p> <p>Investigate the means of remedying the above.</p> <p>Ensure that there exist effective procedures for controlling the Catholic hierarchy in all religious communities, including the more recent ones which do not fall into the traditional scope of institutes of consecrated life or societies of apostolic life.</p> <p>Ensure that the distinction between the internal and the external forum is clearly made everywhere, in particular in the so-called new communities.</p>	<p>Outside National Board remit</p> <p>Outside National Board remit</p> <p>Outside National Board remit</p> <p>Outside National Board remit</p> <p>We have guidance in place relating to this.</p>
6	<p>Ensure that university theology departments, seminaries and diocesan training sessions teach the importance of listening to one’s conscience with discernment in consecrated life. Seek, in these teachings, to highlight ways of applying critical intelligence to issues of conscience.</p>	<p>Outside National Board Remit</p>
6	<p>Closely examine how the rules of different religious orders and the rules of so-called new communities are taught to see if there is anything in these teachings which could lead to a warped interpretation of the obligations of obedience and silence.</p> <p>During all types of catechism, teach the faithful, particularly children and teenagers, the importance of listening to one’s conscience with critical intelligence under all circumstances.</p>	<p>Outside National Board Remit.</p> <p>Outside National Board Remit.</p>

7	<p>Teach, in all types of training and catechism, that the Gospels show us words being used in a dynamic, not as a means of exerting power over another but with the desire to help the other grow and learn, and point out that, just as in any healthy human relationship, words are only given in order to be received.</p> <p>Highlight biblical expressions which have been distorted and used manipulatively while encouraging both a critical and a spiritual reading of the Bible at all levels of training.</p>	<p>Outside National Board Remit.</p> <p>Outside National Board Remit.</p>
8	<p>Closely examine: The canonical provision known as the absolution of an accomplice in sin which is fundamentally inappropriate in cases of sexual assault.</p> <p>The language of certain magisterial documents which refer to sin and forgiveness in instances of crime and punishment; it is necessary to clearly distinguish a moral situation from a legal one. A crime always implies a sin but not all sins constitute crimes.</p> <p>During all types of training and catechism and in pastoral care, teach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Of the prior need for sanctions and retribution for crimes and misdemeanours committed against civil law and against Church law.</li> <li>• Of the risk of distorting forgiveness by granting easy absolution to torturers and, worse still, of requiring victims to forgive their persecutors.</li> </ul>	<p>Outside National Board Remit; however we have guidance on the management of disclosures received during the sacrament of reconciliation.</p> <p>Outside National Board Remit.</p> <p>Outside National Board Remit.</p> <p>Outside National Board Remit.</p>

8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That sex abuse prevention practices must be put in place during the ritual of the Sacrament of Penance. That “I forgive you” must not be confused with a priest’s personal power over a penitent.</li> <li>• That the seal of confession only applies during the period of the Sacrament of Penance.</li> <li>• Communicate a clear message, issued directly by the Church authorities, telling those confessing and the faithful that the seal of confession cannot derogate from the obligation laid down by law and the [French] Criminal Code - which is, in the Commission’s opinion, compatible with the obligation of divine natural law to protect the life and dignity of the person - to report to the judicial and administrative authorities all cases of sexual violence inflicted on a child or a vulnerable person (cf. Recommendation N°43).</li> </ul>	<p>Outside National Board Remit.</p> <p>Outside National Board Remit.</p> <p>Recent Changes to Church policy in Ireland.</p>
9	<p>Teach that the profanation of a sacrament recalls the most fundamental profanation: that of people.</p> <p>Closely examine anything in the declaration of the Sacrament of Grace which may be painful or unacceptable to victims, who remain churchgoers, when faced with an abuser priest continuing to officiate.</p>	<p>Outside National Board Remit.</p> <p>Outside National Board Remit.</p>
10	<p>Teach in all types of training and catechism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That attention should not be focused on the “subject” of the moral act but rather on assessing the responsibility of every individual towards another.</li> <li>• That harm starts with an attack on a person, including a lack of respect of the person’s integrity.</li> <li>• Closely examine the Catholic Church’s catechism and make sure, before anything else, that the victim and his inalienable dignity have their rightful place.</li> <li>• Embark upon a re-writing of teachings based on the sixth commandment in documents designed for children, adolescents and catechumens which are used for training purposes or in pastoral accompaniment.</li> </ul>	<p>Outside National Board Remit.</p> <p>Outside National Board Remit.</p> <p>Outside National Board Remit, however the Church’s policy reflects this.</p> <p>Outside National Board Remit.</p>

11	<p>Closely examine in what ways the paradoxical obsession of Catholic morality on issues of sexuality could be counterproductive in the fight against sex abuse. The choice of lumping together the whole of human sexuality in just the sixth commandment of the Decalogue.</p> <p>Encourage doctrinal thought about not separating doctrine on sexuality from the Church's social doctrine and the equal dignity of all human beings.</p>	<p>Outside National Board Remit.</p> <p>Outside National Board Remit.</p>
12	<p>Consolidate what has already been done</p> <p>1/ Maintain existing awareness and information programmes within the Church, without excluding any of its members, by privileging - even indirectly - approaches to awareness inspired by human rights campaigns, children's rights in particular. Even if it is difficult to assess their impact, such measures can only help develop a different mindset and preventative attitudes within the Church. It would, moreover, send a clear message that the ecclesiastical institution is taking a definite stand against sexual abuse and that it is open to listening to victims. The idea is to instigate a climate of confidence propitious to discussion, rather than one of general defiance.</p> <p>2/ Publish, on a regular basis, better documented reports with a programme-based approach; envisage an annual publication. Publication by the CEF of a report every two years is a powerful measure which was adopted in 2016. However, the content of these reports could be more comprehensive, less factual and retrospective and it would be preferable to adopt an approach more geared towards objectives. The CEF, and possibly the CORREF, will announce ongoing and upcoming projects as well as the current state of advancement of the said work. They will specify their objectives and advise of any commitments made to third parties, in particular to victims and organizations representing them. They will gather information in a more systematic way regarding good practices noted at a grass roots level, thanks to feedback from national bodies, who are, when appropriate, in contact with the victim support groups.</p>	<p>Children's rights are included in Church policy in Ireland, within our basic awareness training and as part of the Head to Heart in formation programme.</p> <p>Annual reports produced by National Board.</p>

12	3/ Initiate debate about the support centre provisions set up for victims which must be maintained but the modalities of which require revision.	Role of Towards Healing
13	Provide training in internal and external control procedures for the main leaders in the organisation of the Church in France, for instance each newly appointed bishop or newly elected major superior, and develop risk management strategies specific to the Church and adapted to its way of functioning.	The National Board offers induction on policy, procedures and governance for all new CAs.
14	<p>Ensure that the adoption of measures taken to combat sexual abuse are based on a qualitative approach. Current and future provisions should be more based around the desired outcome and should be subject to an assessment of their effectiveness and results.</p> <p>Encourage a process of appropriation of shared references within the dioceses with priests and laypersons instead of issuing orders which may lead to misunderstandings and exclusion.</p>	<p>Revision of Church policy has been initiated.</p> <p>We have one common policy (not sure that's what the recommendation refers to).</p>
15	<p>Reform the modalities of the support centres set up by the Church by moving towards a combined internal/external, local/national system.</p> <p>The new system should include unique, highly visible, contact details (telephone, email and postal address) and be facilitated by professionals working in partnership with the Church. The professional listeners would be able to direct calls towards internal support systems (CEF services and centres managed at a diocesan, religious institution or new community level) or towards external services facilitated by victim support organisations.</p> <p>At a national level, the system should be supervised by an inter-disciplinary team comprised of Church representatives, victim representatives and health professionals. Dioceses should keep local support services for people who address them directly, either through the centres set up along the existing model or directly via a bishop.</p>	<p>System of support in Ireland is different – but there is a standardised approach.</p> <p>In place in Ireland - Dioceses and Religious have information about access to support in all their literature and communication information.</p> <p>If this refers to support the system in Ireland is two-fold: Each Diocese and Religious have developed their own support structures and personnel; Nationally Towards Healing and Towards peace and are in place. Both National Bodies are overseen by Boards.</p>

16	<p>Encourage, when appropriate, merged centres at an inter-diocesan level or partnerships between diocesan centres in order to pool resources, create relevant areas of intervention and develop a network of members. It is important to maintain a dense local network in to be able to offer support solutions close by.</p>	<p>Good idea- will consider this as part of Review of Safeguarding in the Church in Ireland.</p>
17	<p>Insist upon the fact the support centres offer reception and listening services only and that their mission ends where care and legal advice begins. However, it is therefore essential that the centres build up directories of local professionals to be able to direct victims towards the appropriate structure (social services, medical professionals, legal counsel).</p> <p>Emphasize the centres' prioritization of victims. Their role is not to take care of the perpetrators of crimes - this should be subject to separate protocols at a diocesan level to ensure adequate care is provided, in particular with help of external partners (e.g. the CRIAVS: Resource centres for those helping perpetrators of sexual violence).</p> <p>Formalize, in conjunction with the diocesan referents responsible for the fight against child abuse, the centres' mission in terms of prevention. The centres are automatically involved in prevention in various ways (presentations to seminarians and priests; drafting protocols; the organization of seminars/ conferences).</p> <p>Clarification is needed with regard to the centres' role in advising bishops: the centres do not always have the means to advise episcopal leaders, in particular on legal issues. In any case, its advisory role seems to be ill-defined and a source of ambiguity.</p>	<p>Different system and structure in Ireland.</p>
18	<p>It would be preferable for centres to be composed entirely of laypersons in order to limit the risk of confusion for victims. This would also limit the risk of ethical tensions among the centres' volunteers.</p>	<p>Our system has both lay and clerics and religious. sometimes all are appropriate.</p>

18	<p>However, it is important for the centres to be in contact with the diocese's bishop, vicar general or priests or with any monks or nuns present in the bishopric, for a number of reasons: to be able to put questions to them, to put them in contact with any victim who may wish to talk to a member of clergy, to ask advice or even request the participation of a member of clergy during interviews, if this is wanted by the person being heard.</p> <p>Map the external resources useful for the proper functioning of the centres (organisational advice, advice on carrying out their mission).</p>	<p>Agree</p> <p>Service information is made available on website</p>
19	<p>Make the support centres more visible, through regular communication in the local press and existing Church channels (posters, broadcasts, websites).</p> <p>Make the means of contacting the support centres better known and give centre members full control over all tools used when in contact with the victims (e.g. an electronic mailbox which can only be accessed by members of the centre).</p>	<p>Dioceses and Religious have their own method of communicating supports, but information on Towards Healing is generally always available.</p>
20	<p>Strengthen support for centres from the CPPLP (Catholic Church advisory board in the fight against child abuse) or from any department which may later take over this role. It seems to the Commission that stronger action in terms of guidance (sharing guidelines), leadership (sharing information, networking) and support (creation of an operational kit, training sessions, communication material etc.) would be mutually beneficial.</p> <p>Make the centres an expert resource for the CPPLP, or any department which may later take over this role: the centres and their members have a wealth of skills and expertise which could be useful to the CPPLP on an ad-hoc basis (for instance, for an in-depth audit of the centres' functioning and development) or on a more permanent basis (for instance through thematic work groups periodically reporting their findings).</p>	<p>This could be equated to our role in the National Board.</p> <p>As above</p>



21	<p>Provide the support centres with organizational documentation to help clarify their missions, their position in the diocese, their material means (budget, premises, communication tools). To this end, propose, at CEF level, a model document incorporating the essential elements, while still leaving room for individual dioceses to adapt to local situations.</p> <p>To the above should be added operating protocols and simple internal regulations such as the manner of responding to requests (deadlines, formats etc.); rules about discretion and confidentiality; legal procedures (GDPR, referral to the appropriate judicial authority, basic knowledge of canon law); and training sessions, particularly psychological training, for the listeners.</p>	<p>This would equate to our guidance documents.</p> <p>As above.</p>
22	<p>Undertake an in-depth audit of the functioning of the centres and the routes open to them to ensure consistency with the resolutions taken by the Plenary Assembly of Bishops on 26 March 2021.</p> <p>The work carried out by the CIASE has shown that, while the current system has many positive attributes, there is also much untapped potential and there are ongoing questions which need to be addressed before the system can be reformed.</p>	Reviews currently in process.
23	Recognise, for the entire period analysed by the Commission, the civil and social responsibility of the Church, irrespective of individual fault and the criminal and civil liability of the perpetrators of sexual violence and, as the case may be, Church officials.	Not sure this can be applied in Ireland – The Church has moral responsibilities; must also follow civil and canon law.
24	Recognise the systemic responsibility of the Church and, as such, examine the factors which contributed to its institutional failure. Acknowledge that the Church’s social and spiritual role confers on it a particular responsibility in the society in which it plays a part.	Research needed here
25	Recognise the Church’s civil responsibility and, on this basis, deepen a horizontal exchange with the whole of society.	Outside National Board Remit.

26	Implement, in consultation with victims and their support groups, concrete measures of recognition such as public ceremonies, liturgical celebrations in remembrance of the suffering inflicted; memorials to the victims and their suffering; measures which demonstrate the Church's capacity to apprehend perpetrators and keep victims informed.	In place in Ireland – however a victims advisory group would assist this.
27	Implement measures of restorative justice during criminal proceedings for sexual violence, in particular for acts committed within the Church. These need to be kept separate from mediation procedures for reparation of the consequences of such violence.	Restorative justice is applied in some Diocese/orders.
28	Introduce provisions for systematic police inquiries, followed by an interview with a judge for victims of historical sexual violence when the limitation period has expired.	In place in Ireland.
29	Generalise protocols between the prosecutor's office and the diocese: these must include commitments from the diocese to transfer all reported incidents to the prosecutor and from the prosecutor's office to conduct inquiries rapidly. (cf. Recommendation N°42).	In place in Ireland.
30	Set up within the Church a process for clarifying accusations of sexual violence made when the perpetrator is dead, or the legal proceedings instigated by the prosecutor terminated.	In place
31	<p>Calculate the compensation of each victim on a case-by-case basis, not that this is intended to constitute integral reparation in the legal sense.</p> <p>To this end, establish a method of calculation designed to compensate each victim for the specific suffering endured. The compensation shall be paid either directly to the victim or, in the event of the death of the latter, to the indirect victim.</p> <p>Favor a method of calculation which consists in considering the suffering endured rather than referring to categories of crimes committed.</p>	<p>This is a matter for each Church Body.</p> <p>As above.</p> <p>As above.</p>

32	<p>With regard to financial reparation, entrust to an independent body exterior to the Church, the triple mission of receiving the victims; offering the possibility of mediation between them, the perpetrators (if the latter are still alive and if they accept to participate) and the institutions which harboured the victims at the time of the assault(s); and arbitration in the event of no amicable resolution being reached.</p> <p>If this measure - which seems to the Commission to be the simplest and the clearest - fails, the independent, exterior body could be different for each diocese and institution, so long as the same rules and principles were applied.</p>	<p>Some Dioceses/Orders follow this approach.</p> <p>As above.</p>
33	<p>Finance compensation for the victims through funds recouped from the perpetrators and from the Church of France via the endowment fund which the CEF announced it was creating and to which the UADF and the CORREF will be contributing.</p> <p>Alternatively, set up two funds, applying, as indicated above, the same rules and principles to issues of compensation.</p> <p>Avoid going down the route of appealing to the faithful for donations and of socializing the financing.</p>	<p>This is a matter for each Church body.</p> <p>As above.</p> <p>As above.</p>
34	<p>The Commission believes that it is necessary to closely examine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The hierarchical constitution of the Catholic Church in view of internal disagreement concerning its own understanding of itself: between communion and hierarchy; between apostolic succession and synodality; and, essentially, between affirmation of the authority of preachers and the reality of grass roots practices which are increasingly influenced by democratic practices.</li> <li>• Concentration of the powers of order and of governance in the hands of the same person which leads to an insistence on the rigorous exercise of power and, in particular, on respect for the distinction between internal and external forum.</li> <li>• Identification of the power of the sacrament with power more generally.</li> </ul>	<p>This is a matter for the Church to decide.</p>

35	<p>The Commission believes that it would be useful for the Church to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement and develop procedures of assessment and internal control with ad hoc commissions which can function light-handedly.</li> <li>• Develop risk-mapping in this context.</li> <li>• Set up training and organisations for this purpose.</li> <li>• Consolidate the dynamics of the annual review with the bishop, vicar general, or major superior which lies at the heart of the measure of accompaniment of every priest, monk and nun.</li> </ul>	This is a matter for the Church to decide.
36	<p>The Commission believes that, with regard to the principle of equal dignity, a far greater presence of laypersons in general, and women in particular, is required amongst the deciders of the Catholic Church.</p> <p>This work would necessarily involve knowing the current situation and determining objectives with implementation dates.</p>	For the Universal Church.
37	<p>Substitute, in the description of sexual violence committed against children and vulnerable persons in criminal canon law, a reference to the sixth commandment (“Thou shalt not commit adultery”) with a reference to the fifth commandment (“Thou shalt not kill”) thereby harmonizing interpretation of Canon 1398 §1 of the Code of Canon Law and avoiding all distortion of this norm.</p>	Australian Commission asked for the same. It is our understanding the Vatican has declined.
38	<p>Define in the Code of Canon Law, all sexual offences committed against a child or a vulnerable person, by highlighting the constituent elements of each offence and their corresponding sanctions, to make the law easier to read; emphasize the level of seriousness of failings and harmonise the interpretation of reference norms.</p>	Agree
39	<p>Create and distribute a collection of anonymous decisions handed down by jurisdictions applying canon law, at least within the scope of offences analysed by the Commission.</p>	This is a decision for the CDF.

40	Set up, without delay, the inter-diocesan criminal canon law court announced in March 2021. Ensure its efficacy and take care that it be seen to be competent and impartial, in particular, by having a collegiate bench of judges composed not only of expert priests but also of specially trained lay judges.	For France only.
41	Align canon criminal procedure with international fair trial standards, guaranteeing, in particular for the injured party, the right to legal remedy, notably by ensuring access to a court and the free choice of legal counsel.	Agree.
42	Emphasise to all bishops, the advantages of having protocols in place, for instance the protocol of 5 September 2019 agreed between the archbishop and the public prosecutor of Paris or that agreed in 2020 in the jurisdiction of Grenoble Court of Appeal with regard to the reporting of any sexual offence of which the archbishop is made aware and the transmission of information concerning legal actions filed further to the said reporting of the offence (cf. Recommendation N°29).	Agree.
43	Send a clear message from the Church authorities to penitents taking confession and to the faithful that the seal of confession may not derogate from the obligation provided for by the [French] Criminal Code, - which is, in the Commission's opinion, compatible with the obligation of divine natural law to protect the life and the dignity of the person - to report to the judicial and administrative authorities all cases of sexual violence inflicted on a child or a vulnerable person (cf. Recommendation N°8).	For the Church.
44	<p>Accompaniment</p> <p>In the relationship between the candidate for priesthood and his spiritual director, clarify which confidences are covered by the seal of secrecy.</p> <p>Take advantage of the possibilities offered by the RFIS and the Ratio nationalis to improve the training of trainers in matters of accompaniment (making a distinction between vocational construction and preparation for a function).</p>	For seminarian training



<p>44</p>	<p><b>Assessment and Recruitment</b> Formalise the assessment process by means of precise questionnaires addressed to the assessors.</p> <p>Explain clearly and systematically to candidates the reasons they have not been accepted on a course of discernment or training, or the different steps required in becoming a priest.</p> <p>Establish formal intermediary assessments which are shared with seminarians (put a name on difficulties when they are noted).</p> <p>Ensure a written follow-up of candidates' progress, and communication between dioceses, seminaries and Congregations to make sure all parties are aware of the negative responses received by the unsuccessful candidates.</p> <p><b>Continuing Education</b> Include, in the framework of clergy's continuing education, training on the fight against child sex abuse (law, response tools, prevention plans) as well as on control, power and the hold one person can have over another.</p> <p>Pay particular attention to the training of the trainers and seminar supervisors, ensuring that they have the necessary tools for providing good spiritual or professional accompaniment.</p> <p>Adapt the welcome session of fidei donum priests, to integrate training in the fight against child sex abuse with specific modules on the exercise of authority and appropriate positioning in interpersonal relationships.</p>	<p>If this relates to seminarians this is outside our remit.</p> <p>As above.</p> <p>As above however where appropriate the National Board provides feedback on Head to Heart modules.</p> <p>Outside National Board remit.</p> <p>National Board offers a range of training programmes post ordination. We would like to develop this further with the Pontifical Irish College.</p> <p>We offer support to trainers.</p> <p>Outside the remit of the National Board.</p>
<p>44</p>	<p>Encourage discussion groups between priests about their work with children and vulnerable adults so that collective, peer-led intelligence may contribute towards the regulation of practices and adjustment of positioning in relationships and groups.</p> <p>Include contributions from the faithful and from victims in initial and continuing education, following in the lead of the 2019 health law and 2017 decree defining social work.</p>	<p>Interesting – Is this within our role?</p> <p>We do provide victim input in relevant training.</p>

<p>45</p>	<p>Strengthen prevention policies by formalizing them and making them known to as many people as possible.</p> <p>Involve the various stakeholders in the Church (clergy, committed laypersons, parishioners) in an adapted manner whether this is through training, awareness-raising or information.</p> <p>Encourage parish initiatives and activities which teach children that they have rights and that they detain knowledge (and not only as receivers of doctrine), based on the model for thought and action organized by the City of Paris (with the Parisian Charter for the Rights of the Child drawn up in 2020 by the children themselves).</p> <p>Ensure that priests' and monks' living and working space is organized with regard to the need for vigilance, taking particular care to: Keep bedrooms separate from any visitor/third party reception space</p> <p>Keep a physical space between the priest and the penitent during confession</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>This is part of our training programme delivered locally at parish level.</p> <p>Part of our guidance on code of behaviour.</p>
<p>45</p>	<p>Implement measures throughout the country enabling all priests or monks in regular contact with children and young people to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware of the obligation to report incidents to the justice system (and not simply the obligation of raising an internal alert).</li> <li>• Have a referent with whom to be able to discuss ambiguous or risky situations.</li> <li>• Have a space for reflection and in which to be able to stand back from regular practices to maintain a perpetually vigilant attitude towards sensitive issues (physical contact, time and place for meeting with young people, procedures for making appointments etc.).</li> </ul>	<p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>Code of behaviour – in place</p>



<p>45</p>	<p>Read the CIASE report closely and discuss the lessons which can be learnt from it during periods of reflection with external parties.</p> <p>Set up obligatory, annual meetings in each diocese or religious community thus ensuring that all priests and monks are made aware of the CPPLP (French Catholic Church advisory board in the fight against child sexual abuse) activity report, or that of the national department which may take over its role; make this annual meeting an occasion for collectively building measures of reparation and prevention.</p>	<p>We meet annually through ecclesiastical provincial area meetings.</p>
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## Summary

### 1. Casting the light

*“A massive phenomenon, long covered by a shroud of silence and difficult to ascertain the size of. The Catholic Church is much more concerned than any other place where children are socialized, with the exception of family and friends. Lives ravaged by the assaults”.*

In the first section of the report, the Commission presents an overview of the phenomenon of sexual violence committed against children and vulnerable persons in the Catholic Church in France from 1950 to the present day. CIASE sought to acknowledge the trauma and the stories of victims, many of whom they suggested were speaking for the first time; were being listened to and recognised as victims for the first time. CIASE suggested that there were long-term consequences of sexual abuse, in particular when suffered in childhood or adolescence.

The Commission put the phenomenon in perspective by placing it in an historical, geographical and sociological context. Setting within the context of the evolution of French society – and of the Catholic Church at its heart, there was a period of secularization, individualization, the evolution of the place of women and children and the transformation of social ideas of sexuality and sexual violence.

The Commission suggests that against this backdrop, the phenomenon of sexual violence in the Catholic Church falls broadly into three periods:

- 1950-1970 can be described as the height of the abuse;
- 1970-1990 was a period in which the abuse appeared to decline
- Early 1990s which marked an apparent resurgence, based on information available, without it being possible to conclude with any certainty that there was a definite increase during this period.

Geographical analysis of the cases identified throughout the entire period would seem to indicate that, even if at first glance it would seem that more cases of abuse were committed in areas of high religious practice; looking at the relative value, i.e. the number of cases per number of clergy in the area, it transpires that, in actual fact, more cases of abuse occurred in areas of low religious practice. This is probably a consequence of lower levels of supervision and support of priests in these areas as well as a lower tolerance of misconduct leading to a more systematic reporting of it over the past 70 years.

Sociological analysis shows that most of the victims were pre-adolescent boys from all social backgrounds. The typology of abuse falls into six categories: “parochial abuse” committed by the local priest or vicar - the sort of person regarded as a village dignitary; “school abuse” committed by a priest, religious teacher or house master; “family abuse” committed by a family member or close family friend; “educational abuse” committed within the context of a patronage or scouts movement; “therapeutic abuse” committed by a priest acting, or claiming to act, as a psychotherapist; and “prophetic abuse” committed within the context of so-called new communities which were particularly popular in the 1970s. The report suggests that there were three control mechanisms which aligned themselves along three powerful tenants of the Catholic Church: the sacraments, a sense of vocation and charity or helping others.

**Abuse of Adults** - The testimonies of Nuns and Seminarians who were sexually abused, highlight an overall sense of authority morphing into power and control becoming all-important, particularly in situations of vulnerability which were reinforced by the ecclesiastical context.

**Disclosure** - The Report highlights that the way in which victims spoke out or broke their silence, shows just how long and “obstacle – strewn” this process is and how it is all too rarely properly taken into account or followed up by Church.

**Perpetrators** – The Inquiry undertook a study of the perpetrators of sexual abuse based on the examination of two thousand cases found in the archives of dioceses or institutions and on interviews carried out in the spring of 2021 with eleven of the perpetrators who were born between 1933 and 1954. The authors suggest it interesting how abusers view their own behaviour, often minimizing its importance, often in denial, and rarely with complete recognition and acknowledgement. Equally, these interviews shed light on the perpetrators’ reaction to decisions which directly concern them, whether church sanctions, state justice, the creation of the CIASE or the changes which should, in its opinion, be brought about in priests’ training, in particular about questions of sexuality.

**Quantitative analysis** - The Commission arrived at an estimate of the number of child victims to have suffered sexual assault at the hands of priests, deacons, monks or nuns to be 216,000 over the period from 1950 to 2020, based on the general population survey of 28,010 persons aged 18 and over and representative of the French population in accordance with the quota method. By broadening the analysis to include persons connected to the Church (staff of Catholic schools, laypersons providing catechism or chaplaincy services, organizers of scouts or other Catholic youth movements) the estimated number of child victims rises to 330,000 for the whole of the period. This study shows that more than a third of sexual assaults within the Catholic Church were committed, not by clergy or monks, but by lay people. Due to a lack of scientific certitude, the Commission renounced trying to estimate the number of adult victims of sexual assault in the Church.

### **Conclusions:**

- Sexual violence, according to the report is on an equally massive scale occurred across French society: 14.5 % of women and 6.4% of men, i.e. approximately 5 500 00 people suffered sexual assault in their childhood. Acts of sexual violence committed by clerics, monks or nuns represents just under 4% of this total. Those committed by persons connected to the Catholic Church (including laypersons) represents 6% of the total.
- Whilst the vast majority of sexual violence against children was perpetrated by family or friends (3.7% of persons aged 18 or over in mainland France suffered sexual abuse as children by a member of the family, 2% by a family friend and 1.8% by a friend or acquaintance) significantly more such acts were committed within the Catholic Church (1.16% by persons connected to the Catholic Church of whom 0.82% by clergy, monks or nuns) than any other sphere of socialization (0.36% in youth holiday camps, 0.34% in state school, 0.28% in sports clubs and 0.17% in the context of cultural and artistic activities). The Report concludes that Catholic Church is, with the exception of family and friendship circles, the environment in which the prevalence of sexual violence is by far the highest.
- Church archives, the justice system and the press, as well as data gathered from the appeal for testimonials, led to an estimation of between 2900 and 3200 aggressors.
- A ratio of 2.5% and 2.8% of clergy and monks from 1950 to today (approximately 115 000 clergy and monks).
- The picture drawn by the Inquiry, suggests that the phenomenon of sexual violence in the Catholic Church from 1950 to the present day is massive; that is has decreased over time but is still present; that it is based on numerous clearly identified traits of a systemic nature.
- The trauma suffered by the victims is compounded by the perpetrator’s standing.
- The Commission came to the conclusion that a rate of approximately 3% of ecclesiastical perpetrators of sexual violence constitutes a minimum estimate and a pertinent basis of comparison with other countries

## **2. Revealing the shadows: The Catholic Church's attitude has evolved over time, but it has remained too focused on the protection of the Institution, for a long time with no regard for the victims.**

“A Church institution which has not come to the defence of the victims. Canon law with serious failings. Legal obligations which are still not widely enough known or respected.”

History - The report states that from 1950 to 1970, the desire of the Catholic Church to protect itself from scandal and to “save” the aggressors dominated its policy, while it concealed the fate of the victims who were exhorted to remain silent.

From 1970 to 1990, the question of sexual violence took a back seat to the priesthood crisis, which monopolized the internal support structures for “problem” clergy and this goes too for the clinical field which was a way of treating reported cases, abandoned by the end of this period.

The Catholic Church's attitude gradually began to change from the 1990s as it started to take on board the existence of victims - even if this could not yet be considered recognition.

It was only from 2010 that the Church began to recognize victims when it started reporting cases to the judicial system, imposing canonical sanctions and accepted that dealing with aggressors should no longer be an internal affair.

CIASE, suggested that the Church's attitude could be summarized as one of concealment, relativization or even denial, with only a very recent recognition, dating from 2015, and even then, unequally accepted by dioceses and religious institutions.

If this analysis is combined with what has been said in the first section regarding the prevalence of sexual violence against children and vulnerable persons, the concept of a systemic phenomenon emerges. It is not that the violence was organized or accepted by the institution (although this did happen in a very small number of communities or institutions), rather that the Church did not have any clear idea how to prevent such violence or indeed even see it, let alone deal with it in a fair and determined manner. The Commission looked into the specificities of canon law, and suggested that the inadequacy of the Church's response lies in the shortcomings of this law. “Canon law was conceived, above all, to protect the sacraments and reform the sinner. The victim has no place in this law. Canon law, even its criminal aspect, is totally ill-adapted to the repression of sexual violence, which, incidentally, it never refers to by name”. The Commission reached the conclusion that canon law is entirely inadequate with regard to fair trial standards and human rights in a matter as sensitive as the sexual abuse of children.

The Commission studied the “deviations, the distortions and the perversions” which the doctrine and teachings of the Catholic Church have allowed to flourish, and which are likely to have encouraged the occurrence of sexual violence: the “clericalism”, so criticized by Pope Francis in his August 2018 Letter to the People of God, including the excessive sanctification of the person of the priest; the overvaluation of the state of celibacy and charism of the priest; a misguided adherence to obedience when exercised at the cost of conscience; and a false interpretation of the Scriptures. Based on the testimonials it received, the Commission also tried to identify what in the writings of the sacred tradition of the Catholic Church, such as the Catechism, could have maintained this fertile terrain: a lack of attention to the assaults, hiding behind “offences to chastity” or an excessively taboo view of sexuality.

At the request of CEF and CORREF – the Commission reviewed measures taken by these bodies, or under their leadership, since the turning point of 2000s. The Report suggests that the measures have been substantial on both a national and local level. But – with huge differences between one diocese or religious institution to another - the response from the Church has been globally insufficient, has often come too late and only in reaction to events, or has been poorly applied.

The Report criticised the absence of reporting to the justice system any behaviour from clergy or monks which could constitute a crime or misdemeanour. This measure was decided by the CEF as early as 2000, so no later than other public or private institutions for minors, but was applied slowly and unevenly over different dioceses.

The Church also failed to take on board criticism from in particular, victim support groups which wanted it to go much further. The Church's flagship measure of setting up, across dioceses, support centres for the victims of sexual violence, came in for much criticism. The round tables organized by the CIASE with many of the laypersons responsible for these centres from all over France, made it clear that they had been set up without any solid foundations and in a highly dispersed manner. The plan, according to announcements made by the CEF and the CORREF in spring 2021, was to make them much more visible at a national level; however, it had failed to take the time to clarify the centres' missions, competences or even their place in relation to the Church. The Commission, therefore, has made precise recommendations to structure and consolidate the existing network of support centres by both combining local (preferably inter-diocesan) and national levels and by clearly positioning what is internal and what external to the Church. It is recommended that the centres should be staffed only by specially trained laypersons, but who are not "disconnected" from the Church, and who are in contact with professionals trained to deal with victims of sexual violence.

### **3. Dispelling the Darkness: Towards a process of Truth and Reparation for the past; towards a fool proof system of prevention for the future.**

*"The Church must recognize the facts and take steps towards reparation, inspired by the work of the CORREF and the approach of Bishop of Luçon. It must take responsibility both individually and systemically. Restorative justice initiatives must complement the criminal procedure. The statute of limitations must not be extended. The Church must establish a procedure for the recognition of abuse, even in time-barred cases, and provide compensation for the harm suffered. The governance of the Church must be reorganized to be more pluralist and to regulate the risks of abuse of power. Training is a key preventive tool that should be widely implemented."*

**Response needed** – Justice; before proclaiming "it must never happen again", the "it" has to be recognized, acknowledged, and described, those responsible for "it" need to be designated and, reparation for consequences needs to be found. It is not enough for the Church to claim awareness, albeit too late in the day. Or to claim that the past is the past and that for today's and tomorrow's children and vulnerable persons, the same mistakes will not be repeated. Victims of historical abuse, more often than not are time-barred by the [French] Criminal Code, and this perpetuates an attitude of non-recognition or denial of what really happened; this characterises the Church action, during the period analyzed, and is used as an escape from genuinely dealing with the phenomenon.

**A process of truth and reparation** - The Commission proposed a level of responsibility which would encompass firstly the legal level – in a criminal sense – but also civil and social levels; suggesting it must apply to individuals who have committed acts of abuse as well as to those who have not but whom, through the legal relationship existing between the perpetrator and the bishop of the perpetrator's diocese, are linked. CIASE also suggests the responsibility is also of a systemic and civic nature because

the Church's social and spiritual role bestows on it a particular responsibility towards French society within which it is a major player. CIASE recommends that the Church engage in an ambitious process of responsibility, recognition and compensation:

- Taking responsibility for the systemic nature of abuse and its cover-up
- Recognising the scale of abuse within the Church in France, recognising the seriousness of the harm caused by clerical abuse. This should be done through public ceremonies or memorials, undertaken with humility and sincerity.
- In response to the need for justice expressed by victims, who are frequently confronted with the limitations of criminal proceedings or the statute of limitations, despite the evolution of criminal law during the period studied, the Commission suggests that two main avenues should be explored: restorative justice, and that of the enabling a system to establish the truth, irrespective of how long ago acts were committed. The principle of restorative justice is to attempt to repair the harm done to the very being of victims, over and above the physical harm. This necessitates carrying out investigations regardless of the length of time since the violence has been perpetrated, in order both to respond to the need for justice and recognition, as well as the need to prevent future violence.
- At the end of the process described above, a system of compensation should be put in place, with some chance of it achieving what it set out to do. The Commission heard from many victims that money could not make up for the irreparable damage incurred, and worse, if badly executed, could feel like the price of silence. But many also insisted on the symbolic dimension of such a scheme, or on the desire to use compensation money other than for purely personal purposes. The Commission also looked at systems put in place in other countries: Germany, Belgium, Ireland, the Netherlands, the United States and Australia.

CIASE concluded that financial compensation is indispensable as it completes the recognition process; it must be individualized, without, however, it qualifying as "integral" in the legal sense. It cannot, therefore, be a set, lump-sum payment; a method of calculation is needed to compensate the specific harm suffered by each direct victim - rather than a scale for each category of offence - and, in the event of the victim's death, the compensation should go to the indirect victim. The compensation mechanism should be entrusted to an independent body, exterior to the Church, which should be given the threefold mission of receiving victims; mediating between them, the perpetrators and the institutions to which they belonged; and arbitrating disputes which cannot be resolved amicably.

CEF announced in March 2021 that it would create an endowment fund to provide the financing. According to the Commission, this fund should be supported by assets of perpetrators and institutions belonging to the Church in France. CIASE suggests the funding should exclude any appeal for donations from the faithful, as this would not be consistent with the recognition of the Church's responsibility as an institution. CIASE also advocates the creation of a single compensation system for Dioceses and Religious.

### **A robust plan of action in areas of governance, sanctions, training and prevention.**

The report suggests:

- The Church needs to reflect on the palpable tension which exists between its hierarchical constitution and its desire for synodality, and on the consequences of concentrating the powers of order and government in the hands of the bishop.
- The development of assessment and internal control processes with tools as simple as risk mapping or annual interviews. This would improve the Church's governance without undermining any of its foundations.
- Increasing the number of laypersons in general, and women in particular, in the decision-making spheres of the Catholic Church, would appear to be, not only useful, but totally necessary with regard to the principle of equal dignity.



- A wide-ranging overhaul of canon law in criminal matters, and in dealing with and sanctioning offences.
  - » This should begin with a clear definition of the offences in the Code of Canon Law and their implementing legislation, specifying applicable reference standards by establishing a scale of the gravity of offences and by distributing a collection of case law in the matter.
  - » Secondly, canonical criminal procedure needs to be reworked and aligned with basic fair trial rules, thereby giving victims a place in canonical procedure – which is not the case today.
  - » A better articulation with the State criminal justice system is also needed, namely the recognition of the State’s predominance in dealing with the criminal offences in question, which must include an absence of interference by the Church in its investigations and procedures.
  - » Finally, the Church must issue precise directives to confessors regarding the seal of confession. Confessors must not be allowed to derogate, on the grounds of the sanctity of the seal of confession, from the obligations provided for by the [French] Criminal Code, which are compliant with those of natural and divine law which provides for the protection of a person’s life and dignity, to report to the competent authorities cases of sexual violence inflicted against a child or a vulnerable person. This is not to question the seal of confession generally; but within the scope of sexual violence inflicted against children.
  
- A distinction should be made between spiritual accompaniment and professional guidance for seminarians and novices; that the incentive contained in the Church’s reference texts (the Ratio issued by the Holy See and implemented at national level) to carry out a psychological assessment of candidates for the priesthood or religious life be taken to heart, and that psychological follow-up be provided if desired.
- The content of the training itself should include more human sciences, be taught by specialists with more diverse profiles than is currently the case, and place greater emphasis on the development and affectivity of children and young people; law (canon law and state law - including the rights of the child); and the importance of critical thinking, particularly about issues of authority and obedience.
- The development of a more formalized recruitment procedure of seminaries and novitiates which would be helped by an improved communication of negative responses given to unsuccessful candidates between dioceses, seminaries and congregations.
- Continuing education should include modules about sex abuse, including specifically for trainers and supervisors in seminaries and novitiates, as well as for fidei donum priests in their induction session.
- Preventative measures in parishes, including initiatives and activities which teach children that they have rights.
- The Commission also advocates implementing measures, throughout France, to ensure that every priest or monk in regular contact with children or young people is aware of the obligation of reporting incidents to the justice system; is in a position to call on a relevant professional to be able to discuss ambiguous or risky situations; is able to reflect regularly and cool-headedly on the vigilance needed around sensitive issues (physical contact, time and place for meeting with young people, procedures for making appointments etc.); reads pertinent articles on the subject on a regular basis and has others with whom to exchange on the lessons which may be personally drawn from them.
- The Commission also suggests regular meetings, for example an annual meeting per diocese or institute, which would provide clergy and monks with the opportunity of discussing methods of prevention, based on information received from local support centres. This project should not only be conducted by the heads of dioceses or institutes, but rather be deployed concretely in parishes - places of worship, exchange and sharing – with equal involvement from priests and laypersons. These initiatives are intended to strengthen trust and should, under no circumstances, be interpreted as personal accusations.

## 5. Conclusions

In common with a growing number of countries, the Catholic Church in France commissioned detailed research and investigation to establish the scale of sexual abuse by clerics, religious and lay people ministering in the Church.

The scale of abuse uncovered, is sadly huge, shocking and on a par with other countries. The Bishops and Religious Leaders have taken the first step in repairing the damage - by exposing the scale of abuse.

The next steps may be more challenging.

In Ireland there have been serious efforts made since 2006 to understand the scale of abuse, put in place procedures to prevent further abuse and systems to respond to allegations.

### **The National Board has sought to draw out some lessons for Ireland:**

- The need to guard against complacency and “safeguarding fatigue”. This report is yet another reminder of how an unregulated Church lost sight of the protection of children, women and vulnerable people.
- Victims of abuse need the space, support and opportunity to tell their story and receive a compassionate response.
- There needs to be greater clarity in canon law on crimes against children – the recent revisions have not really addressed this.
- Strong Leadership and good governance is critical to a safe Church.
- Formation and post ordination training must have at its heart the care and protection of children and vulnerable people.





THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR  
**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN**  
IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN IRELAND

