



Report on the Anglophone Conference

Rome 2019



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

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Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2020

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Introduction

As described on its website,

The Anglophone Safeguarding Conference began as an initiative of several English-speaking Bishops' conferences. Its purpose was to assist English-speaking Episcopal Conferences in the Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults. Not only is there a need to establish a safeguarding culture, but also to respond to the crisis caused by the abuse of children and other vulnerable people by representatives of the Church.¹

The Conference brings together representatives of the English-speaking Bishops' Conferences, representatives of Conferences of Religious, and associated professionals.

In July 2019, the 16th consecutive Anglophone Safeguarding Conference was held at the Pontifical Irish College in Rome, jointly organized by the Episcopal Conferences of Ireland and New Zealand. The Conference also used the excellent facilities available close to the Irish College in the University of Notre Dame Global Gateway Centre. The Centre for Child Protection (CCP) in the Pontifical Gregorian University Rome was unable to be involved in the organisation of the 2019 Anglophone Conference, due to the additional workload generated for it by the Special Synod in Rome on the Protection of Minors held in Rome from February 21st to 24th of this year.

The Anglophone Conference 2019 was held over the week of July 1st to 5th; and the full Conference Programme is attached. The Conference was attended by 81 delegates from 13 countries – Ireland, New Zealand, Scotland, England, Malta, Chile, Papua New Guinea, Australia, Canada, the United States, Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Malawi.

The theme of the Conference was *Formation*; and the purpose was to explain and explore the concept of integrating child safeguarding and Catholic Christian formation at all levels of the Church. The Conference Speakers shared their experience of forming parishes and communities that are attractive to and safe for children; in providing and facilitating safeguarding formation training for clerics, religious and church leaders; in working to form children, young people and their parents and carers in faith development within safe environments; and ministering to survivors of abuse who wish to re-engage with their faith in an initiative of re-formation. As the week unfolded, it became clear that there is a growing ministry of Child Safeguarding within the Church.

On May 7th, 2019, Pope Francis promulgated by Motu Proprio his Apostolic Letter *Vos estis lux mundi*, and the Anglophone Conference was mindful of and informed by this important communication, while also having an opportunity to share ideas about its content and implementation.

A new element of this year's Anglophone Conference was the invitation to influential people from key Church offices to receive and respond to the Conference feedback at the end of each of the three core working days, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, in that day's Listening Session. On Tuesday, July 2nd, Ms Teresa Kettlekamp, a member of The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors was the appointed listener; on Wednesday, July 3rd, Cardinal Oswald Gracias, Archbishop of Bombay and a member of the eight-person Council of Cardinal Advisers to Pope Francis filled this

¹ <https://anglophone.org/who-we-are>

role; and on Thursday, July 4th, Monsignor John Kennedy, Head of Discipline Section, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in the Vatican undertook this responsibility. The undertaking given by each of these three listeners was that they would harvest and report back to their particular office on the fruits of that day's work.

The majority of the conference delegates were accommodated in the Pontifical Irish College, and all delegates shared in a daily liturgy and a daily meal there, and these added immeasurably to their overall positive experience of the conference and of the gradual formation of a community.

The chief celebrants of the five daily Masses at the conference were Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly, Cardinal Oswald Gracias, Bishop Stephen Lowe, Bishop Anton Bal, Bishop of Kundiawa, Papua New Guinea, and Archbishop Mark Coleridge, Archdiocese of Brisbane.

The President of the Irish Episcopal Conference, Archbishop Eamon Martin had written a letter of welcome, in English and Irish, to all of the conference delegates, which was placed in their conference packs; and a copy is appended. Bishop Stephen Lowe of the Diocese of Hamilton, New Zealand also provided a letter of welcome to delegates - written in Maori - on behalf of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference; and this presaged the use of the Maori language to illustrate concepts in all of the contributions made to the conference by the three-person New Zealand delegation.

Programme

Opening address – July 1st

Following the first concelebrated Mass at which he was the chief celebrant, and just before the first of many fine meals provided by the generous and hard-working staff and volunteers at the Irish College, Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly of the Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly opened the conference with an address to the assembled delegates. His presentation is appended for ease of reference.

Among the important points made by Archbishop Kieran was that this was probably to be the final Anglophone Conference in its current format; and that the implementation team formed following the Special Synod in Rome in February on the Protection of Minors has been tasked with designing a more inclusive, Church-wide approach to information sharing and safeguarding practice development.

Archbishop Kieran then asked the delegates to take three questions to address over the course of their participation in the conference:

- Is the Church that I minister in a safe place for children?
- Are those who have been given the gift of ministry aware of their obligations to prevent abuse of children and to respond to those who may disclose abuse?
- What can I do to improve the practice in my ministry, and those that I minister with?

Archbishop Kieran stated that the Church needs to be more humble before victims and attentive to them; that the safeguarding ministry is a core ministry of all ordained clerics and professed religious, as well as of the Lay Faithful; and that delegates should commit at the outset of the conference to bring their learning back home and to use it to bring about necessary change.

The PowerPoint presentations that were used on Days 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the conference can be accessed at <https://anglophone.org/> - click on the Presentation tab at the top of the Home page. The summaries that follow merely indicate the main focuses of each presentation.

Day 2 – The Formation of Parish, Religious Communities and Young People

Formation with Young people

The first presentation to the conference was by Colette O'Doherty, Safeguarding Coordinator of the Diocese of Ferns, on the formation of young people, to which she gave the title, ***Let Go and Let God***. Colette encouraged the introduction of Joy into child safeguarding, in order to make it less burdensome and off-putting. She suggested that the Church may have lost perspective in relation to safeguarding; and she invited the delegates to consider the metaphor of child safeguarding as a seat-

belt, initially unfamiliar, but quickly becoming something that provides both comfort and safety for the journey to be taken.

She then developed this idea by reminding the conference that being belted up without knowing where to go is of no use. She demonstrated that there is a life-affirming journey that the Church can make with young people, through speaking about her experiences in planning and overseeing the delivery of the *Spirit* programme in her own diocese. Colette enthusiastically and convincingly showed how *Spirit* has been an integral and essential element of the recovery of the Ferns Diocese from the damage done by clerical child sexual abuse and its aftermath, including the publication of the Ferns Report in 2005.

Having described the 'why' and the 'what' of the Spirit programme, Colette then provided the attendees with a very clear outline of the practicalities of planning and delivering such an approach to attracting and bringing young people safely into the life of their local Church. The challenge to Faith involved in embracing such an approach, she reminded the conference, is letting go of fear and letting God through to guide and support the initiative.

Formation of Parish Communities (New Zealand)

This was a joint presentation by Bishop Steve Lowe and Virginia Noonan, Director, National Office of Professional Standards of the Catholic Church in New Zealand. The title they chose for their piece was ***A journey of conversion***.

Bishop Steve spoke of the priorities of the Maori world view, using an expression - *He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata*; translated as 'What is the most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people'. He suggested that the questions and steps to be addressed in this approach to formation are:

- Who we are journeying with?
- The 'how' and 'why' of parish formation
- The road to conversion
- The importance of leadership

He introduced the metaphor of the potter and the clay, borrowed from Jeremiah (18: 1-6) to provide an understanding of formation – that is, *the action of shaping*. He went on to say that Safeguarding Formation should lead to the conversion of the whole person... and of every person in the parish.

Bishop Steve and Virginia then spoke of Safeguarding Formation having a human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral dimension, and they expanded on these. They suggested that to measure progress and development, the formation team can begin by asking the questions, 'How do people see safeguarding now?', and, 'How do we want people to see safeguarding?' They discussed initial formation and on-going formation as both being necessary. They suggested that everyone has a role and a responsibility for this formation – Parishioners; Diocesan teams; Parish leaders; Religious and Clergy; and Bishop and Superiors.

They then introduced the Gospel description of the disciples on the road to Emmaus as a narrative on which to base the formation of parish communities; and this was very powerful. The road to Emmaus was described as a journey of conversion that starts with failure, disillusionment and a

sense of being betrayed; and they counselled that parishioners would be asked, 'How do you see the Church's failure?'; 'How are you disillusioned?'; and 'What sense of betrayal do you feel?'

Continuing to use the story of the road to Emmaus, they suggested that the formation task is one of listening, of getting alongside, of accompaniment, which is what Jesus did; and they talked of how to do this, and of what has to be negotiated along the way. They encouraged the delegates to think of creating a culture of safeguarding with parishioners, as opposed to just achieving compliance. They proceeded to describe in detail what such a culture looks like.

The end of the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus is that they had a moment of recognition and enlightenment, an 'I get it!' moment, after which they pushed through their fear and became missionaries. Bishop Steve and Virginia invited the delegates and those they represented to become missionary disciples of safeguarding.

Formation of Parish Communities (Ireland)

Fr. Kevin Fay, Administrator of the cathedral parish of Urney and Annagelliff in Cavan, Ireland presented on his practical experience of the formation of parish community in his parish, and in the Diocese of Kilmore in which it is located. He began by giving some information on the demography of his parish and his diocese, and a description of the child safeguarding architecture in Ireland, including policy, role descriptions for various safeguarding positions, and how the whole initiative is coordinated.

With this foundation laid, Fr. Kevin then spoke enthusiastically about the *You shall be my Witness* Confirmation preparation programme that involves close to 200 children along with their parents each year. He described how this programme is provided safely to the 12 and 13 year-old students who participate in it. As well as there being an overall adult Coordinator (the parish Pastoral Worker), the programme is provided by a team of 24 Leaders who are over 18 years of age, assisted by 12 additional Leaders who are 16 years of age. The leaders work in teams of two over 18s and a 16 year-old. All of these young Leaders have been active in the life of their parish since the age of 10, and they have been developed through taking part in training, the John Paul II award scheme and other formation opportunities. All leaders are police checked.

The parents of the children on the *You shall be my Witness* programme receive the Safeguarding Policy, the Safeguarding Code of Behaviour, Guidelines for young people taking part in the parish programme, dates, time and topics to be addressed in the programme, and a Consent Form with emergency contact numbers, medical and media consent. The parents also attend parent-only sessions on the same night and in the same building – the Diocesan Pastoral Centre - as their children are attending the Confirmation preparation sessions.

The programme is run over four weeks, one night each week, for an hour and a quarter each night. At the end of the session children and parents join each other for communal prayer.

Fr. Kevin described the practical but unobtrusive child safeguarding measures that are built into this programme. He illustrated with humour and charm how safeguarding is approached, by sharing stories of the learning through which everyone involved has come.

He finished by referencing the second Review of the Kilmore Diocese by the NBSCCCI and what that Review Report says about the programme, and in particular about the very skilled and committed Pastoral Worker whose ‘...dedication in providing the children and young people in her care with friendship and faith direction shone through and resulted in the children remaining engaged into adulthood in faith formation in the diocese’.

Safeguarding Formation of religious communities

Saoirse Fox, who is the Child Safeguarding Manager and DLP for the Irish Jesuit Province, presented a very thoughtful and thought-provoking paper. She informed the attendees that she is a psychology graduate who also practices as a systemic psychotherapist.

At the outset, Saoirse set out her aims and hopes for her presentation as:

- Describing a systemic approach to forming religious communities in safeguarding;
- Offering ideas around resistance and ambivalence in this work; and
- Enhancing understanding of the complexity of the area.

Saoirse stated that Justice is a key motivation in her child safeguarding work; and she spoke about the role and potential of employing a Restorative Justice approach to this work.

A Systemic approach to understanding people is founded on the belief that individuals cannot be understood in isolation, but rather within the various systems in which they interact with others; which includes the family system, as well as the work system, and the systems in which social life is conducted. If some of the goals of religious life are formation and on-going formation, Safeguarding formation, and the formation of Community, Saoirse argued that this is best achieved by using a systemic approach. Formation is about individual change; but is most successful, she argued, within the context of a supportive environment.

One particular graphic Saoirse used clearly showed the differences between

- 1st Order and 2nd Order change;
- Change efforts that are targeted at the head only, and those that intentionally involve both the head and the heart; and
- Individual change, and more elaborate Systemic change,

and she explained these in the context of the planned change which formation entails.

She proceeded from here to define the purpose of safeguarding formation for religious communities, as wanting those we are forming to:

- Understand how to keep children safe and why;
- Be able to respond with integrity to people who were hurt; and
- Prevent abusive practices in the Church today.

The challenge that Saoirse then posed was in the form of a question, ‘Can safeguarding training not achieve all of this?’ She explained why the answer to this question has to be ‘No’, as safeguarding

formation is a much deeper change process than can be achieved through the provision of information-based training sessions.

In the course of a presentation to which this summary cannot do justice, Saoirse unpacked what safeguarding formation that results in real change looks like, and what the contributions as well as the support needs are for all of the 'players' involved – the Provincial, the local Leader, the Delegate and the individual Community member.

Saoirse explained how each had a complementary but distinctly different role and responsibility for and within the work of formation:

- The outside expert is called in to provide specific inputs
- The internal delegate provides training, advice and guidance
- Provincial and Local Leaders are involved in:
 - Creating spaces in which positive movement can take place - Restorative Practices
 - Modelling through their own lived Faith and Pastoral Care - Theology of Relationship
 - Identifying issues and communicating these into the system - Systemic practice

She then generated ideas about the formation of Leaders and what the methods and goals of such formation would be, including increasing their capacity to be vulnerable and to hold the vulnerability of others. The demands are to attend to self while attending to community; and also *in order to be able to attend to community*.

While Colette had started the day's proceedings by speaking about pushing through Fear, Saoirse now addressed the need to encounter, embrace and work creatively through Shame; and she introduced the model of the *Compass of Shame* to illustrate the complexities involved.

Having identified the levels of intervention required, and the affective dimension of community life to be acknowledged and fostered, Saoirse then spoke of the outcomes that can be obtained:

1. Enhanced emotional maturity and relational capacity that creates religious that want to defend and care for children and other vulnerable people;
2. A system that supports its members and cares for them; and
3. The strengthening of communities.

Finally, Saoirse gave the delegated her 'take-away' messages:

- Effective safeguarding formation creates transformational change at the heart-level.
- Interventions need to pay as much attention to the system as the individuals in it.
- Those forming religious communities in safeguarding need a strong awareness of the complexity of the domain, and a good capacity for discomfort!



These four quality presentations provided a great deal of material for discussion and exploration at the final session of Day 2, the Listening Session at which Teresa Kettlekamp, a member of The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, was the interlocutor.

Day 3 – The Formation of Religious, Clerics, and Children

Safeguarding Formation of Religious

Fr. Joe McGee MSC is the Formation Director of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Ireland. He had been the Provincial of the Society when the first Review was conducted of it by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI). That experience was very challenging to Fr. Joe and to his confreres, and he spoke of this as an important formative event in his life as a religious. The Review led him as Provincial into meeting with and having to take responsibility for a number of fellow priests, some of who he knew well and had admired. In his presentation, Fr. Joe spoke of the need to move from the head to the heart, and from policy to practice, echoing what Saoirse Fox had said about second order change on the previous afternoon.

He also spoke about the shame that results from being associated with men in his Society who have abused children, and being the target of the anger of abused persons who he met. He said that the key for him in dealing with the strong emotions involved is to “turn this experience around and call forth from deep within myself empathy for the real victim – the adult man or woman who had been abused as a child”.

Fr. Joe spoke very positively of the Religious Formation Ministry Programme that is run under the auspices of AMRI in Ireland. His starting point was to clearly state that:

Safeguarding must be given its proper and indispensable place in the formation of those whose intention it is to join Religious Life/Priesthood.

He suggested to the delegates that Formation is about influencing minds and hearts; and that formators need to understand that safeguarding is global – what they do locally can have a significant impact on the wider Church. Because of the global, cross-national boundaries need for safeguarding formation, the challenge for the Church is to find ways of working cross-culturally.

In describing the work as that of changing hearts, Fr. Joe said that:

My goal in working with *formandi* and those preparing to be formators is to bring about a conversion of heart because it is this, and only this, that will ensure they do not see safeguarding as a **threat**, just a **hurdle to be jumped over**, a **box to be ticked**, or something that is only necessary **somewhere else in the world**.

Fr. Joe spoke passionately and very honestly about his own journey to the realisation of the importance of formation in the life of the Church, incorporating safeguarding at its core. The house of formation, he said, is a spiritual place within which the person can become ‘...a living image of Jesus Christ the servant and shepherd’. [Mass each day of the conference was celebrated in the Chapel at the Pontifical Irish College, behind the altar of which is a mosaic of Christ the Good Shepherd].

He went on to speak strongly about the *Ministry of Formation* and what it gives to the life of the Church, as well as what it demands of the formator. He told the conference that developing sound relationships with couples and parents has been important for him in avoiding a narrowly clerical

perspective on the world; while not having children of their own challenges priests in relation to cultivating empathy towards children and parents.

Fr. Joe quoted from Pope Francis' closing address at the end of the Special Synod in February 2019:

Consequently, a change of mentality is needed to combat a defensive and reactive approach to protecting the institution, and to pursue, wholeheartedly and decisively, the good of the community by giving priority to the victims of abuse in every sense.

He continued his rich presentation by speaking of how he integrates Child Safeguarding into the formation of priests and religious, in a direct, specific and unapologetic way, at every stage of that process - pre-novitiate, post-novitiate, Temporary Profession, preparation for Final Profession, preparation for Orders and preparation for public ministry of any kind; and on-going formation throughout their life of ministry. He demonstrated how he does this as part of the candidates' spiritual formation; personal, psychological and human formation; academic formation; and pastoral formation. Fr. Joe also spoke about how safeguarding can also be addressed when other topics are dealt with, such as boundaries, self-care, power in relationships, forming and maintaining healthy relationships, maintaining a healthy life-work balance, spiritual life, and sexuality and sexual orientation.

Fr. Joe discussed the need for candidates to engage in supervision and pastoral and theological reflection, as well as to receive feedback when they are undertaking their pastoral insertion training in the community. He ended by stating that no one person can properly address all of these tasks with candidates in formation and that therefore a Formation Team is needed. His final reference was to Pope Francis who has stated that the work of the formator is 'the work of an Artisan', which mirrored the metaphor used the previous day by Bishop Stephen and Virginia of the potter and the clay.

Safeguarding Formation of Clerics

Teresa Devlin and Niall Moore of the NBSCCCI, along with Fr. John Coughlan, Director of Formation at the Pontifical Irish College in Rome together presented this session. They began by putting up a number of statements that they have received when providing safeguarding training in seminaries:

- Clericalism is not an issue in managing child abuse in the Church;
- The easiest way to manage child safeguarding is to have no ministry with children;
- Children are the future;
- Child safeguarding isn't the mission of the Catholic Church: Evangelisation is our main mission.

In speaking to each of these defensive and deflecting statements, they reminded the delegates that *children are the present* and deserve to be treated as an essential and respected part of the Lay Faithful.

They then presented and explained the child safeguarding Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, the 2016 document *Safeguarding Children*. Focusing in on Standard 5, on Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe, the presenters told the conference that the National Board in Ireland has been delivering Child Safeguarding Formation with clerics and Religious since 2009, including those in the Pontifical Irish College in Rome. As the training was developed and evaluated, more seminarians across all stages of formation were involved and more practical and reflective elements were developed within the training modules.

Having ten years' experience, the whole Safeguarding Formation Training was reviewed in 2018, and the presenters underlined that the key message from this review was the 'need to complement the information based method by promoting a more reflective approach whereby the elements of good child safeguarding move from the page to practice, and from the head to the heart'.

The speakers gave an historical overview of the context within which child safeguarding has been developed in the Catholic Church in Ireland – as a response to pain, injury, denial, anger, shame, cover-up, exposure, investigation and criticism – and 'motivated to ensure that it provides a safe haven for children to grow and develop in God's love through promoting and supporting best practice'.

In addition, they identified four motivating influences for providing Safeguarding Training in Priestly Formation in Irish seminaries - the *Pastores Dabo Vobis* of Pope John Paul II (1992); the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* of the Congregation of the Clergy (2016); the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Concluding observations on the second periodic report of the Holy See (2014); and the Apostolic Visitation to Ireland arranged by Pope Benedict XVI (2011), resulting from the Pastoral Letter of the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI to the Catholics of Ireland of the preceding year: And they explained the import of each of these.

Having described the 2018 review process, the presenters shared the outcome of that exercise as a plan, approved by the seminary Trustees, for a modular based training. Complete with its own logo, this was described as:

'...an education that integrates and harmonizes intellect (the head), affections (the heart) and activity (the hands)...will offer students a growth that is harmonious not only at the personal level but also at the level of society. We urgently need to create spaces where fragmentation is not the guiding principle, even for thinking. To do this, it is necessary to teach how to reflect on what we are feeling and doing; to feel what we are thinking and doing; to do what we are thinking and feeling: An interplay of capacities at the service of the person and society.'

The ten modules that make up this integrated seminary Safeguarding Training Programme were listed and each one was expanded on and explained by the speakers:

- Child safeguarding policy and procedures
- Historical and legal context
- Children's rights
- Theology of child safeguarding
- Impacts of abuse
- Good safeguarding practice and boundaries when working with children
- Personal challenges when dealing with child abuse
- Communication and digital media
- Spiritual healing
- Leadership and governance

They emphasised that at all stages of this training programme, the focus is on the development of a reflective capacity in each participating seminarian; and they demonstrated how this is approached. To protect against this training being seen as an add-on or in any way optional or tangential, how it is integrated into overall formation was discussed. There are three aspects to integration:

- That every seminarian in any Irish seminary receives the same formation in safeguarding – so, the modular format means that it can be easily established what aspects of the safeguarding programme have been completed by an individual seminarian;
- That safeguarding is integrated into the four dimensions of seminary formation: human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral – that it becomes integrated into the 'ordinary everyday' of seminary formation; and
- That the seminarian integrates formation in safeguarding at the personal level – not just mechanically connecting it to the four dimensions.

To ensure that the training is real, in that each seminarian can relate to it at a personal level, the training elicits from them what their fears and anxieties are about children: In acknowledging these, being provided with knowledge and information, being given a theological context in which to explore them and a supportive and reflective space in which to process them, integration is facilitated – the opposite of splitting off or compartmentalising. The message given through this really informative presentation was that transcending personal fears or anxieties will impact ministry positively, while NOT transcending the same fears will negatively impact ministry.

Both of these morning presentations emphasised the importance of creating a safe environment in which exploration and reflection can take place.

Forming Children as Healthy Sexual Beings

Paul Flanagan of the University of Waikato gave the afternoon presentation on Day 3. He works in the university's School of Education and has worked as a counsellor / therapist in adult male sex offender programmes and in sexual abuse counselling with boys. His research interests have been in childhood and sexuality, and he had just completed his doctoral research in this area. Paul invited the delegates to participate through discussing some questions he posed with the person beside them.

Starting with a Maori proverb, Paul showed the importance of children and childhood; and he then set out the key matters he would explore in his presentation:

- How do we understand 'the child' and childhood?
- What is 'childhood innocence'?
- Safeguarding children through formation of children as sexual beings

He then identified the scriptural (Old Testament) and theological view of God as parent and His people as His children, and developed these ideas. He brought out the New Testament words of Jesus about children, and spoke about their meanings. He encouraged the participants to remember being a child as a way into understanding childhood.

Paul then took the delegates through an exposition of different historical concepts of childhood, some of which are contradictory, and some of which are fragmentary, not yet being brought together in a coherent theoretical model – childhood as a developmental stage; childhood as being determinative of later life; childhood having universal cross-cultural aspects; childhood being socially and culturally defined; childhood being constructed by the language used to describe it; and childhood being expressed through the values and practices of the particular culture being examined. He was not offering a 'set-in-stone' definition of childhood, but was rather challenging the delegates to understand what they individually mean when they think of and plan for children.

Moving on to consider the formation of children, Paul reminded the participants that children are formed in and by family, in whatever form; in and by community, including parish, school etc., which may also be faith communities; and in and by the wider society, including national policies about children and their welfare, and extending to global influences, including international children's

policies.

Paul's presentation was marbled through with Maori sayings and the concepts and meanings behind them; and he now introduced a Maori metaphor of *Te whare tapa wha* – the four walls of the house. Simply put, the house needs all four walls, each being weight bearing, in order to stay standing and to function as it should. These four walls are *Whānau* - Family and social wellbeing; *Tinana* - Physical wellbeing; *Hinengaro* - Mental/emotional wellbeing; and *Wairua* - Spiritual wellbeing. He then placed this metaphor in a Scriptural context in which something very similar is described, in the Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians:

Brothers and sisters:
You are no longer strangers and sojourners,
but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones
and members of the household of God,
built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets,
with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone.
Through him the whole structure is held together
and grows into a temple sacred in the Lord;
in him you also are being built together
into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit

Family, community and society are together necessary to ensure the wellbeing of children – to keep the four walls strong and upright.

Paul then moved into a discussion of safeguarding children, based on the metaphor of the four walls, beginning with a number of questions for delegates to discuss with the person beside them:

How do the safeguarding principles and practices in your country respond to

- Children's social wellbeing
- Children's physical wellbeing
- Children's mental wellbeing
- Children's spiritual wellbeing

The next section of this presentation addressed children's sexuality, posing a range of challenging questions to the adults present on which a great deal of reflection is required of them. He brought his treatment of children's sexuality to a statement of five myths and contradictions of sexuality education and childhood that have developed:

1. Children are asexual and sexuality is irrelevant to young children's lives
2. Talking with children about sexuality is developmentally inappropriate
3. Sexuality education encourages children to be sexually active earlier
4. Children who transgress normative gendered behaviours in childhood will turn out to be gay
5. 'Once I've done "the talk" I've done my bit as a parent

Paul spoke about the risks inherent in adults presuming childhood innocence about sex and sexuality, which presumption can often be based on the adults' ambivalence toward our own sexuality. The outcomes or effects then can be

- Adult disbelief and indifference to children's sexual interest or possible experience
- Children's curiosity into their own and others' bodies may be ignored or repressed
- Children do explore and curiously examine pathways to knowledge
- Adults can assume children's sexual interest as indicative of abuse
- Ignorance results in increasing vulnerability and that is the risk.

He progressed to linking sexuality education to safeguarding, stating that safeguarding includes forming children as sexual beings

- Supporting children in knowledge about their sexual selves - physically, socially, mentally and spiritually
- Supporting parents and teachers in their care of children to speak about sexuality as physical, social, mental and spiritual relationship

Paul rounded off his paper by referencing another Maori proverb, which in translation roughly means – in this context – that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility; or, much more poetically:

Haul forth the canoe of education.
Who should haul it?
I should, you should.
All within calling distance should haul the canoe.

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Archbishop Oswald Gracias of Bombay was the appointed Listener to receive the feedback from the Group Work that followed the three presentations; and he undertook to bring this back to the Council of Cardinal Advisers to Pope Francis

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On the evening of Day 3, the delegates attended a Reception at the Residence of the Irish Ambassador to the Holy See, Ambassador Derek Hannon, at which both the Ambassador and Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly spoke.

Day 4 – Formation for Complainants and Respondents

[A note on terminology: In the 2016 *Safeguarding Children Standards* of the Catholic Church in Ireland, those who have been abused are generally referred to as *complainants*, rather than as victims or survivors, while the priest or religious who is accused of having abused is called the *respondent*, rather than the perpetrator or the abuser. In the Irish agency, *Towards Peace* however, the term used for the person who experienced abuse is *survivor*]

Re-formation of Complainants

Una Allen gave a very uplifting presentation on assisting those who have been abused within the Church who want to explore reconnecting with their Faith, and possibly with their Church. She began with a question that many victims ask – *God, where are You?* Answering this question is the journey that may lead back to Faith; and Una's agency, *Towards Peace*, Ireland provides accompaniment to those who want to take this path.

Una challenged the delegates by posing a number of questions:

- Why are you here today?
- Why are you attending this conference?
- What brought you here?
- What comes to mind when you think of abuse?
- What comes to mind when you think of the concept of spiritual trauma?

In relation to the last of these questions, she reminded the conference of the metaphor used by Pope Francis of the Church being a field-hospital charged with 'healing the wounds'. Una spoke persuasively of the reality of spiritual trauma, quoting the anguished cry,

"To lose you is to lose everything, to be separated from everyone and everything I have ever loved and cherished."

She emphasised that for those suffering spiritual trauma, God is not present, God does not care, there is no sense of Trust, and there is no feeling of Hope. Spiritual trauma can trigger mental, emotional and physical stress inside the individual, and for some it can break them completely, she said. Across the whole range of life events, the spiritually traumatised complainant can only see God through the lens of trauma, if at all, and they need a compassionate response. Una then introduced the Irish Church's *Towards Peace* as one form of such a response. Una described the ministry of *Towards Peace* - it offers a pathway 'towards peace', while respecting that the journey of healing from spiritual injuries is painful, complex and unique for each person who takes that journey.

Like her two New Zealand colleagues on Day 2, Una also employed the scriptural description of the disciples on the road to Emmaus and the change in them that resulted by being accompanied by Jesus.

On one of her PowerPoint slides, Una had reproduced a statement from the First Letter of John, where he says that "We can love because God first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Una then shared with the

conference the Theology of the ministry of *Towards Peace*. It is based on a profound vision of who God is; it gives witness to the value of the human person as created in the image and likeness of God; and it believes that God's love is expressed in the relationship between God and the human person. It is essentially a Faith based ministry.

What the survivors who have accessed *Towards Peace* have said is that they have felt betrayed by the Church; and they have described the highly negative impact of their abuse on their faith, their family, and their relationship with God. They have struggled to make sense of being abused by people acting in the name of the Church, people acting in the name of Jesus Christ. In their efforts to find the meaning that they need, Una spoke about the Theological questions that they ask:

- How did God allow this to happen to me?
- Who am I in the sight of God?
- Can God live in me after the abuse?
- How can I ever trust or relate to God again?
- Will I ever be able to pray again or experience the sacraments at meaningful moments in my life?
- Where can I find community?
- Where is my spiritual home now?

The model on which to base the ministry of reaching out to these survivors, Una affirmed, is Jesus Christ; and the effective and compassionate minister needs to engage in their own Theological Reflection: There is no integrity in attempting to take another on a journey one has not herself taken.

Theological reflection, Una explained, happens following an experience which becomes the object of consideration. From this attentive study learning comes and awareness develops; and the learning should in turn inform the decision to act, as well as the action; and the process repeats in an on-going way.

Starting with the self rather than with the other, Una posed a number of questions for delegates to answer in their own reflective space and time:

- How am I responding on a personal level to the on-going issue of the fall out of abuse?
- What spiritual impact has the trauma had on me?
- How does that affect my response in dealing with people who have been abused?
- Have I got compassion fatigue?
- Looking at this through the prism of Christianity, and my faith, where do I stand?
- Where am I personally being invited by God in all of this?

Pastoral Theology, Una explained, is Theology put into practice in service of the individual and of the Church. She invited delegates to consider the healing of Bartimaeus as an example of Theological reflection:

They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Many scolded him and ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Courage; get up, he is calling you." So, throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus.

Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again." Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well."

Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way. (Mark 10:46-52)

Listening, with Compassion...

Una used a quotation from Ram Dass to remind the participants that there is no 'one way' to go:

The Spiritual Journey is individual, highly personal. It can't be organised or regulated. It isn't true that everyone should follow one path. Listen to your own truth.

She finished her presentation by stating that there is no promise of success given to the individual who approaches *Towards Peace* – but they do receive the promise of accompaniment, assistance and support 'as they explore their deeper desires'.

Compassion for Respondents

Fr. Joe McDonald gave his presentation the title, *Desperately Seeking a More Compassionate Church*, along with the subtitle, *Hints, nudges and maybe even the odd shove of the Holy Spirit*. This was a very personal contribution from the heart and the gut, and it was impossible not to be affected in the heart and the gut. Fr. Joe's delivery was extremely powerful, at times dramatic. But this was no performance; rather it was an example of painful testament from one who had suffered - and at times still suffers - and who has a particular perspective, rooted in Faith and moulded by experience.

It is not easy to summarise what Fr. Joe covered in his presentation, and in attempting to do so, the impact of his message would be diluted. What he wishes to see in the Church he loves is the development of a Radical and Prophetic Gospel Compassion, without which he believes that the Church will, and perhaps deserves to, die.

Fr. Joe spoke searingly about being abused by a priest when he was a boy growing up in Belfast forty years ago. The experience remains raw if he allows himself to focus on it, and he knows that it has caused him lasting damage; he described it as a toxic bomb that was detonated in the middle of his childhood. He wonders whether he could have been protected from what happened in that time and

place – he is in no doubt though that he and all abused children should have been and should be protected.

He warned against complacency, against believing that the abuse of children is a thing of the past. He warned against the belief being allowed to grow among those who work in safeguarding that they know everything that they need to know about the subject, as this leads to a closing off of the victims, each of who has a unique story and a particular set of needs to be met for healing and recovery. He warned against the use of labels, and against the application of adult terminology to describe the experiences of abused children; adult words such as ‘horrific’, ‘disgusting’, ‘terrifying’, when he remembers experiencing his abuse being ‘embarrassing’, ‘bewildering’ and ‘awkward’.

Fr. Joe counselled the participants to accept the messy reality of child sexual abuse, in the family, in society and in the Church; it is a human problem. However, he stated clearly that for the Church to be able to respond with the compassion of Jesus, it has to understand the ‘why’ of abuse. The honest answer to that question why will be exceedingly painful, but the Truth of it will make the Church free; it will lead to a genuine renewal. Some of the answer to the question ‘why’ is that the Church failed victims; the Church has been rife with clericalism and misogyny; the Church failed to hear the cry of Yahweh’s poor; the Church became powerful and power has corrupted it; the Church made a very poor job of helping its members celebrate the beauty of their sexuality. The Radical Prophetic Gospel Compassion that Fr. Joe believes the Church needs so much can only come from a Christ-like refusal to accept untruth, injustice, faint-heartedness and cruelty.

Some of the Truth that the Church needs to embrace, according to Fr. Joe, is that there is no monopoly on victimhood when it comes to clerical child sexual abuse; there are many victims: There is a legacy left by abuse which lasts for years: And, priests and religious who have abused, while requiring to be fully dealt with by the criminal legal system, also need compassion and support.

Fr. Joe spoke very movingly about meeting the priest who had abused him. By the time the meeting happened, Fr. Joe had been a Christian Brother for many years and had then studied for the priesthood and been ordained for the Archdiocese of Dublin. He forgave his abuser and he prayed with him while holding his hands in his own. In that forgiveness, he found peace. In talking about his own experience of forgiving, Fr. Joe was not prescribing forgiveness for other victims; but he does believe that forgiveness should courageously be put on the table in a comprehensive response to the challenge of child sexual abuse. He tasked the Church to ‘listen carefully to the voices in the shadows’ – there are victims who may never come forward because they are not seeking retribution or compensation, or because they do not trust the institution in which they were abused; but these people also have important truths to tell, he said.

Perhaps most contentiously, Fr. Joe then spoke about the need for the Church to be able to forgive its abusing priests and religious, in a way that does not allow any child to be placed at risk or any abuser to escape justice, but which allows for dignity and purposeful living thereafter. He asked, should a priest in these circumstances not be allowed to celebrate the Eucharist? Should he be stripped of his priesthood and expelled from his congregation or diocese? Is there not a risk of causing a further injustice, while doing nothing to alleviate the pain and heal the injury of the victim? Should financial compensation to victims be at such a level that the future care of elderly religious is put at risk because of the attrition of the resources of their congregation; or that necessary health, social and educational services are deprived of funds diverted to the support of complainants? Fr. Joe did not venture to answer the questions he posed, but they hung in the conference hall as a challenge to the delegates.

Working with respondents to form a risk free future

The final presentation on Day 4 was by Fr. David Songy O.F.M.Cap., President of the St. Luke's Institute in Maryland in the US. Having given some historical context, Fr. David stated that the goal of treatment at St. Luke's is **not** a return to ministry of a man who has been proven to have sexually abused a child. That said, a number of other matters can be addressed, including crisis management, personal healing for the respondent, reconciliation with the Church, and healing of victims, depending on the extent to which he invests in the programmes offered.

Fr. David spoke clearly and sympathetically about the needs of the respondent once they have been informed that a credible allegation has been made against them, including emotional and practical supports. If the allegation of abuse is upheld by the investigations carried out, this spells the end of any active ministry, which in turn triggers another set of challenges for the respondent, according to Fr. David. He described the availability at St. Luke's of a continuing care programme for these respondents, as well as the assistance in drawing up a Safety Plan for him.

Fr. David then spoke of the reality that most priests who have been assessed and treated at St. Luke's have not been paedophilic in their orientation; but

...individuals who abuse children often suffer from a personality disorder. Many have histories as trauma victims and did not experience normal psychosocial development. They generally lack empathy for others. Some have more serious psychological problems. In addition, almost all come with a variety of medical, psychological, and spiritual problems that need attention.

He said that the effective treatment of these priests and religious requires the use of a clinical team approach – a man attending an individual therapist is not advised – and a community-living arrangement with other people with the same or similar personal difficulties. The clinicians should

be specialists in this field of work, he cautioned, as non-specialists can do further harm to their abuser clients.

Warning against any notion of there being a quick-fix approach, Fr. Davis said that

Residential or Intensive Outpatient treatment is necessary due to the prevalence of personality disorders, which generally require a lengthy period of treatment. Shifts occur in many clients only later in the program. The atmosphere is similar to seminary or religious formation. They have structural supports for a healthier diet, exercise, prayer, and common life. Those who struggle with social interactions have many opportunities to engage others in an environment that is safe, confidential, and respectful of their vocation.

To help the respondent to avoid relapse following their treatment, Fr. David stated that an aftercare programme then has to kick in, to include a support group; smooth transition of therapy and spiritual direction to different practitioners; and reintegration with the community in which they will be living – and he detailed how St. Luke’s can assist with establishing such a programme.

Underlining the reality that there is no speedy road to recovery, Fr. David suggested that ‘...five years is considered the “gold standard” for a complete therapy process—if a person is sober or his mood is stable for five years, the chance of relapse is significantly reduced’.

He then detailed the essential elements of a Safety Plan, to include:

- A clear description of the person’s living environment with risks identified and restrictions applied
- The level of supervision/monitoring must be identified
- Rules for personal behaviour need to be outlined
- All parties need to agree to report inappropriate behaviour
- A date for updating a Safety Plan is essential to the agreement

To assist the delegates to explore these issues, Fr. David presented a Case Study and posed questions to be considered.

Fr. David then spoke about the path to personal healing that respondents might follow, if they receive the support and guidance that this requires, and he placed this in a Gospel context. He gave the following quotation from Pope Benedict XVI’s 2007 Encyclical Letter, *Spe Salvi*:

It is when we attempt to avoid suffering by withdrawing from anything that might involve hurt, when we try to spare ourselves the effort and pain of pursuing truth, love, and goodness that we drift into a life of emptiness, in which there may be almost no pain, but the dark sensation of meaninglessness and abandonment is all the greater. It is not by sidestepping or fleeing from suffering that we are healed, but rather by our capacity for accepting it, maturing through it and finding meaning through union with Christ, who suffered with infinite love.

He readily admitted that the majority of respondents in his experience find it really difficult to discover the hope that is required to follow such a path to personal healing.

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Monsignor John Kennedy, Head of Discipline Section, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in the Vatican was the Listener at the feedback session that followed the Group Work discussion at the end of Day 4, and he undertook to bring the insights and experiences of the delegates back to the CDF.

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### **Day 5 – Motu Proprio ‘Vos Estis Lux Mundi’; Summation; and Conference Closure**

On the final morning of the conference, the delegates remained in the Pontifical Irish College for all sessions.

#### Motu Proprio ‘Vos Estis Lux Mundi’

Monsignor John Kennedy, Teresa Devlin and Niall Moore made a short presentation on Pope Francis’ Apostolic Letter, issued on May 7<sup>th</sup> of this year. In his opening address on Day 1, Archbishop Kieran O’Reilly said that the Irish Bishops’ Conference is studying the Apostolic Letter, which seems ‘to raise more questions than it answers’; and this dilemma was also highlighted by the three presenters.

Teresa and Niall presented a short exploration of the content of the Apostolic Letter under the delicts that it lists, the reporting mechanism that it establishes, and the inbuilt protections for the accused, victims, and whistleblowers. They then set out some of the thinking generated in Ireland about the Apostolic Letter as a prompt for a discussion and a question and answer session which Monsignor John moderated.

The delicts set out in *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* are:

- Delicts against the sixth commandment
  - Forcing someone by violence or threat or through the abuse of authority to perform or submit to sexual acts
  - Performing sexual acts with a minor or vulnerable person
  - Production, exhibition, possession or distribution of child pornography, including recruitment or inducement of a minor or vulnerable person to participate in pornographic exhibitions
- Conduct carried out by Church authorities consisting of actions or omissions intended to interfere with or avoid civil investigations or canonical investigations, whether administrative or penal, against a cleric or religious regarding the delicts above.

The Reporting mechanisms established by the Apostolic Letter were described as follows:

- The Motu Proprio requires mandatory reporting within the Church.
  - While there is reference to the Motu Proprio taking account of civil law, it would have been helpful to see more explicit reference to civil law requirements
- The establishment of a Metropolitan reporting system for investigating Church authorities.
  - Time frames and how they interact with civil law
- Establishment within every Church body of a stable structure to report and manage allegations of abuse of cover up.

The presenters then described the safeguards that have been created:

- It sets out specific requirements to protect those that report allegations and whistleblow in good faith; and it
- Outlines the importance of supporting and caring for the complainant

When the presenters had identified some of the clarifications that are needed before Church authorities can confidently implement the new requirements of *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*, the session was then opened to the floor for comments and questions. In moderating this, Monsignor John undertook to bring the delegates' contributions back to the CDF, which in turn will generate the additional information and explanations that have been requested.

### Summation

Virginia Noonan from New Zealand and Peter Kieran from Ireland gave a brief summation of key points raised on each day of the conference, using the three questions posed by Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly on Day 1 in his Opening Address as their framework:

- Is the Church in which I minister a safe place for children?
- Are those who have been given the gift of ministry aware of their obligation to prevent abuse and to respond to those who have been harmed?
- What can I do to improve safeguarding practice in my ministry, and the ministry of others?

Delegates contributed comments and suggestions in the subsequent discussion.

### Closing Address

Bishop Stephen Lowe gave the final address to the conference, using another Maori proverb, which in translation says: *With your food basket and my food basket the people will thrive*. He spoke of the genuine sharing that had been a hallmark of the week the delegates had spent together - a week of shaping with stimulating input and conversations; a week of weaving friendships and networking; a week of spinning new ideas and initiatives.

Bishop Steve looped back to the concept of Formation that he had used in his presentation with Virginia on Day 2 – ‘...the action, or the art, of shaping’ – and he anticipated that we would all continue our own formation ‘... as the words we have shared take flesh in us’, and ‘...as our insights go out to the Vatican and beyond’.

Referring to the 18 countries represented at the conference, Bishop Steve reminded delegates that we share the same mission as one Church, to deliver ‘Justice and healing for victims, in a safe Church’.

He thanked the two organising teams, from Ireland and from New Zealand; the leaders and speakers; the Irish College; the Notre Dame Centre; and the Pontifical Commission.

Bishop Steve then quoted from Pope Francis’ Letter to the People of God of 2018, which he had started with a quotation from St. Paul’s first Letter to the Corinthians: - *If one member suffers, all suffer together with it*.

He concluded his Address with three related elements:

1. An invitation:

Remember the past with gratitude,  
live the present with enthusiasm,  
look forward to the future with confidence.

2. A quotation from Scripture:

Jesus took the children in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them (Mk 10:16).

3. A hymn to Mary, Mother of God (in both Maori and English):

We sing to Mary, our mother  
The one who heard God’s call

To be the mother  
The mother of the Lord  
Gentle woman  
Loving mother, Our Lady of Queen of peace  
We sing to Mary,  
The mother of us all, of us all

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The conference concluded with concelebrated Mass, followed by Lunch
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### **Post-Conference Delegate Feedback**

The organisers did not formally seek feedback from delegates by asking them to complete a Feedback Form at the end of the Conference. However, a total of 27 delegates chose to write to the NBSCCCI on their return to their home places, all of them expressing thanks and appreciation for having had a positive experience at the Anglophone Conference. Here is a flavour of the type of unsolicited feedback received:

Thanks very much for the kind note. It was my pleasure to assist as a group facilitator. I thought the conference was excellent. Thanks to everyone who planned and organized a substantive meeting. Continued best wishes and prayers for the important work that you are doing - I hope our paths cross again.

**Francesco Cesareo - Chairman of the National Review Board USA**

We travelled well back home, full of joy and enthused by the presentations and the sharing at the Anglophone Conference. Thank you for the wonderful work done by you and all other organisers.

**Fr. Mosebetsi Mokoena - Pastoral Care of Vocations, The Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference**

Thank you to the whole Irish team (and NZ) for a wonderful conference! I very much enjoyed being part of it.

**Jodie Crisafulli - Director, Diocesan Office for Safeguarding, Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay, Australia**

Following that successful, enlightening and forward looking conference - May the Lord God bless you for the role you played and continue to play in the caring ministry of safeguarding. Be ever blessed.

**Bishop John Oballa - Bishop of Ngong, Kenya**

Arrived home safely and back to work seems ages since in Rome and days have passed quickly since. Thank you once again for supporting the conference the quality of speakers and networking was the best yet and I hope it leads onto something better and we do not lose the opportunity to extend and share this with others.

**Christopher Pearson – Chairperson National Catholic Safeguarding Commission England and Wales**