

Message from the Provincial Leadership Team

May 2024

Child abuse is a crime in Ireland and in most countries in the world. It is also a crime under the laws of the Catholic church – Canon Law – in every part of the world. Abuse of a child by a priest or religious not only causes physical, emotional and psychological harm but also imperils their relationship with God.

It saddens me greatly that some members of the Irish Province of our Congregation have abused children. My predecessors on the Leadership Team put policies and procedures in place to ensure, as far as is humanly possible, that such abuse does not happen again. I, along with the current Leadership Team, am determined to continue that work and build on it, to meet whatever challenges emerge in the future.

The Spiritan Safeguarding Office was established in 2012 and continues to update our safeguarding procedures in line with recommendations from the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCC) and as necessitated by changes in legislation. It organizes Garda vetting for all Spiritans, employees and volunteers, and delivers a training programme to meet the needs of the different ministries in the Congregation.

In 2021 the Congregation was approached by some victims/survivors and asked to explore another way of reaching out to those who had been abused in Spiritan schools and who had not yet come forward. In collaboration with this group of victims/survivors a Restorative Justice process was established. This process was piloted with a small cohort of victims/survivors, and after being reviewed, was extended to all who have suffered abuse in Spiritan schools or other Spiritan ministries.

The Congregation ensures that all allegations of child abuse against Spiritans and personnel are reported to the relevant statutory authorities. People who come forward to speak of their experience will be treated with respect and compassion, and offered support.

We must not become complacent. We have to continue to ensure that all children participating in activities under the auspices of the Congregation receive optimum protection. I exhort all Spiritan personnel – confrères, employees and volunteers – to keep the safeguarding of children as a priority in all our ministries, mindful of our commitment to the “little ones”.

I encourage anybody who has a safeguarding concern to contact the Spiritan Safeguarding Office or the Restorative Justice Co-Ordinator; contact details available on this website.

I – along with our Leadership Team, confrères, employees and volunteers – will do all in my power to continue to provide a safe, supportive environment for all children with whom we interact.

Fr Martin Kelly CSSp (Provincial)