

Congregation of Jesus and Mary

NORMS

ON CASES OF SEXUAL ABUSE

OF MINORS AND VULNERABLE PERSONS





"Considering the past, what can be done to ask for forgiveness and reparation for the damage caused will never be enough. Looking to the future, nothing must be neglected to promote a culture capable not only of ensuring that such situations do not recur, but also that they do not find fertile ground to be concealed and perpetuated. The pain of the victims and their families is also our pain; for this reason, it is urgent to reaffirm once again our commitment to guaranteeing the protection of minors and vulnerable adults".

It was with these grave words that Pope Francis began his Letter to the People of God of 20 August 2018, and it is in response to this call that this document is drawn up, because the Congregation of Jesus and Mary having made its examination of conscience wants to guarantee that all members of the People of God will find in it a safe space in which no abuse can take place.



INDEX

I. Preamble

- A. Purpose of the document
- B. Commitment of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary

II. Ethical principles and norms in the Eudist mission

- A. Principles
- B. Standards

III. Canonical guidelines in cases of abuse of minors or vulnerable persons: what current Church law says

- A. Clarifications and definitions
- B. Prescription
- C. The procedure
 - C.1 Receipt of the complaint
 - C.2 Preliminary investigation
 - C.3 Denunciation to the civil authorities
 - C.4 Transmission to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith
 - C.5 Possible decisions to be taken with regard to the accused

IV. Accompanying people

- A. Accompanying the victim
- B. Accompanying the accused

V. Prevention and training

- A. General principle of responsibility
- B. Discernment and initial formation of Eudist candidates
- C. Ongoing formation: spiritual accompaniment and accompaniment of human growth

VI. Approval and personal commitment

Abbreviations and acronyms

CIC: Code of Canon Law.

c.: canon.

Const.: Constitutions and Practical Rules of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary.

DDF: Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

DIVCSVA: Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

SST: Apostolic Letter issued «Motu Proprio» *Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*.

RFIS: Congregation for the Clergy, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation. Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*.

VELM: Apostolic Letter issued «Motu Proprio» *Vos estis lux mundi*.

VM: *Vademecum* on certain points of procedure in treating cases of sexual abuse of minors committed by clerics.

I. Preamble

A. Purpose of the document

1. In the past, the common understanding in the Church was that acting with charity meant avoiding any form of correction or punishment. The opposite could also happen, namely that discipline was applied without mercy, as if it were solely a matter of punishment. This misunderstanding gave rise to injustices and abuses of power when discipline was used without charity, as well as impunity or concealment when “charity” was misunderstood, so as not to correct or sanction as required those who had committed offenses. This led to a loss of credibility, scandals, and the suffering of victims, as we have seen in cases of abuse. We Eudists understand that authentic charity does not exclude justice, that ecclesial discipline, when necessary, is a form of charity, because it seeks the good of the individual (to correct, heal, save) and the good of the community (to protect, purify, teach). Jesus himself acted with charity and firmness: he welcomed the sinner, but also told him, “Go and sin no more” (cf. Jn 8:11). Fraternal correction is part of the Gospel (Mt 18:15-17).

Only with time have Church leaders become aware of the damage that abuse causes to the human community and to the ecclesial community; when an ordained minister or a consecrated person sexually abuses minors or vulnerable persons, the damage and scandal are even greater because the dignity of the weakest is denied, and the vocation of each person is betrayed.

Attentive to all that the Church, through her Pastors, has urged us to do and knowing the doctrine that has been given to us on this subject, our Congregation, through this document, joins the Church's cry for “zero tolerance” regarding sexual abuse of children and vulnerable persons and commits itself to follow the path traced by the Church in the prevention of such abuse, the handling of complaints, and the welcoming of victims, seeking to be faithful and irreproachable in the service of those to whom the Gospel of salvation is addressed.

2. This document aims to:

- ✓ Pay attention to people, especially victims, to ensure that they are heard,

considered, supported and helped.

- ✓ Establish standards and protocols applicable to complaints of sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable individuals.
- ✓ Take action to support those involved in such situations, complainants and those reported.
- ✓ Strengthen the initial and ongoing formation of Eudists and all those who collaborate with them to create safe environments.

Therefore, since neither our vocation nor our ministry can ever be a pretext or an opportunity for abusing the trust of those to whom the Lord has sent us through the Church, we promulgate this document which will be binding on members of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, on candidates in formation and on all those who collaborate in institutions under the direct responsibility of the Congregation.

B. Commitment of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary

3. The General Government of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary and the Provincial Superiors, as major superiors, undertake to follow the civil and penal legislation of the countries in which they are established and to apply the canonical legislation of the Catholic Church.

As the Constitutions (no. 16) state, "*Eudists are jointly responsible for the life and apostolate of the Congregation*", and this principle applies to the implementation of the norms and orientations of this document. However, all those invested with authority for the service of communities, at all levels, have a particular responsibility to ensure its application.



II. Ethical principles and norms in the Eudist mission

A. Principles

4. Saint John Eudes often recommended to his brothers an attitude of great respect in pastoral relations. For example, in a letter to a superior of missionaries, he wrote: *"Often recommend to missionaries' interior piety and exterior modesty, and to give themselves often to Our Lord to do his work in his spirit, that is to say in the interior and exterior dispositions in which he did all his actions when he was on earth. I beg them to give themselves to him strongly to do the divine deeds, I mean the priestly functions in a manner worthy of God, to treat sinful souls in the spirit of his charity and gentleness, and to live and converse with one another with respect and brotherly love, so that each of you is not preoccupied with his own interests; think also of those of others (cf. Phil 2:4) ... And then remember that one soul is a world before God".* (Complete Works X p. 480)

5. Our missions are essentially carried out in a web of human relationships, and it is even with a view to new relationships, imbued with the Gospel, that we carry out all kinds of missions. Our pastoral action is aimed at promoting just and healthy relationships that are responsible and respectful, in keeping with the family of God. Our service is aimed at the good of people in every area of their being. Among those who must particularly solicit our pastoral attention to bear witness to God's love are the most vulnerable, the weakest and the smallest. Only an authentic and transparent love enables us to give this witness.

6. Fraternal life in community, lived in truth, is the place where this quality of relationship is learned and tested, as our Constitutions state precisely (no. 45): *"Charity among Eudists manifests itself in simple and cordial relationships; they accept and support each other; they render each other the many services that daily life provides the opportunity for; they share in each other's joys and sorrows; they take part in common activities and recreation; they help each other in their spiritual or intellectual search; they talk among themselves about their apostolic activities; they pray for each other; they know how to forgive each other."* As a society of apostolic life, the whole of Eudist life is ordered to the mission, in particular fraternal life in community, a place of growth in the human and spiritual quality of our

relational capacities.

7. Because we have chosen the Eudist life and, for the most part, the priestly life, we demand of ourselves precise qualities which correspond to our consecration to God and which are precisely reflected in our human relationships. The Constitutions (no. 59) show us the way to this love that we want to live: *"For love of Jesus Christ, the Eudists have chosen to live perfect and perpetual chastity in celibacy. They know that this is a gift from God and they ask him for it for the good of the Church. They take care to live their celibacy with prudence, asceticism and in humble and trusting recourse to Christ and the Virgin Mary. Their affective maturity blossoms in apostolic dedication, in the cordiality of fraternal life, and in simple and genuine relationships with the men and women they meet"*.

8. Consequently, Eudists and candidates on probation commit themselves to taking the means to achieve physical, psychological and spiritual balance in the free and conscious choice of celibacy, by questioning themselves honestly about the truth of their life balance. The Congregation, through the structures of the provinces and vicariates, undertakes to offer formation sessions as part of initial and ongoing formation projects (cf. Part V).

B. Norms

9. Eudists are aware that their mission is to serve the People of God, which places them in a position of authority and power over people. Saint John Eudes defines humility as *"the mother of all virtues"*, thus making it a necessary and permanent step for life and ministry to be imbued with it. Living this virtue leads to more fraternal and therefore more just relationships, warning us against the danger of self-sufficiency and self-referentiality, against authoritarianism and against the temptation to consider, even unconsciously, that the clerical state or the vocation we have received places us above others.

Therefore, since the mission has been entrusted to us not for our own benefit, nor to satisfy our desires, nor to exert dominion over others or pressure them in any way, we must keep in mind this spirit of respect for the dignity of others, whether the mission is carried out within the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, in parish ministry or in any other form of apostolate. Sensitivity is required in our dealings with minors and vulnerable people, for

whom we seek to create safe environments, free from sexual and any other kind of abuse, acting on their behalf in the spirit of humility and service that should characterize every Eudist.

10. Since we are faithful Christians gathered for the purpose entrusted to us by the Church, we Eudists categorically reject abuse of any kind and any attitude that harms people, especially those with whom we live and interact. We also reject all forms of intimidation and harassment, whether physical or moral, verbal or written. We undertake to conduct our relationships in a way that respects the human and Christian dignity of those with whom we have to enter a relationship, i.e. by treating them in an evangelical manner, with the heart of a pastor, and with professionalism.

11. As Eudists, we commit ourselves to doing everything possible to ensure that minors and vulnerable people are not subjected to any form of abuse in the institutions and missions we serve. We commit ourselves to renouncing the temptation of complacency or the connivance of silence, not turning a blind eye to difficulties or minimizing them.

12. Incorporated Eudists and candidates for Eudist life must be aware of and implement protocols to prevent abuse of minors or vulnerable persons, to detect it and to report it promptly to the competent authorities: provincial or regional superior, or territorial vicar, parish priest, rector in seminaries or houses of formation. The competent authorities must be informed when suspicious or at least inappropriate behavior towards a minor or vulnerable person is detected.

13. Information on suspected abuse - or on the danger that such abuse may occur - transmitted by a Eudist or by a candidate, compromises neither charity nor respect for the dignity of people, since neither can dispense with the truth and the search for justice, without prejudice to the obligation to respect sacramental secrecy.

III. Canonical guidelines in cases of abuse of minors or vulnerable persons: what current Church law says

A. Clarifications and definitions

The Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith has exclusive jurisdiction over certain offences, known as "*delicta graviora*", which are reserved for its judgement.

14 Sexual abuse is defined as any external offence (sin) against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue committed by a cleric¹ and, since the Motu Proprio *Vos estis lux mundi*, members of institutes of consecrated life or societies of apostolic life, against a minor or a vulnerable person. These offences are described in the new Book VI as offences against human life, dignity and freedom.

These offences are listed in c. 1398 of the Code:

- ✓ The offence against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue committed: on someone with violence, threats or abuse of authority or coercion (can. 1395 §3 new), on a minor under 18 years of age and on a vulnerable person or similar.
- ✓ Sexual abuse is a very broad concept that includes any type of external act contrary to the sixth commandment of the Decalogue and may consist, "for example, in consensual and non-consensual sexual relations, physical contact with sexual intent, exhibitionism, masturbation, production of pornography, incitement to prostitution, conversations and/or advances of a sexual nature, even on social networks²".
- ✓ Recruiting or inciting a minor or a person usually affected by an imperfect use of reason or a person to whom the law recognizes similar protection, to perform or participate in real or simulated pornographic exhibitions (c. 1398 §1.2° new).
- ✓ Acquiring, possessing or disclosing pornographic images of minors under the age of 18 or disabled persons in any manner or by any means (c. 1398 §1.3° new).
- ✓ Absolution of an accomplice in a sin against the sixth commandment (can. 1384 new).
- ✓ On the occasion or on the pretext of confession, solicitation to sin against the sixth commandment (can. 1385).

¹ C. 1398 § 1, 1°. SST 2001, revised 2021 art. 6, 1°.

² VM n. 2

- ✓ Behavior of responsible bishops or supreme moderators of religious institutes or societies of apostolic life, as well as of monasteries *sui iuris* or even international associations of the faithful, "consisting of direct actions or omissions aimed at interfering with or evading civil investigations or canonical, administrative or penal investigations, opened against a cleric or religious for the offences mentioned³ " (against the Sixth Commandment).

15. A "*minor*" is defined as any person under the age of eighteen; a minor is also defined as a person who habitually has an imperfect use of reason⁴.

16. *Vulnerable adult*" means any person who is in a state of infirmity, physical or mental impairment, or deprivation of personal freedom, which in fact, even occasionally, limits his or her capacity to understand or to will, or in any case to resist the offence⁵.

B. The statute of limitations

17. The statute of limitations for criminal proceedings in canon law is now explicitly 20 years in the Code for the offences referred to in c. 1398 § 1.

18. The period of prescription for criminal proceedings relating to reserved offences is 20 years from the day on which the offence was committed. In the case of minors who have not reached the age of 18, the limitation period is also 20 years and begins to run from the day on which they reach the age of majority.

³ VELM art.1, §1 b

⁴ VELM art.1, §2 a

⁵ VELM art.1, §2 b

C. Procedure

C.1 Reception of complaints

19. Complaints may be lodged by anyone who knows or suspects that sexual abuse has taken place or that there is a risk of sexual abuse, including negligence on the part of a superior in handling such cases,

- ✓ Alleged victims and/or their families,
- ✓ Pastoral services, work colleagues,
- ✓ Incorporated members of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary and candidates,
- ✓ The person who has committed the abuse or who feels in danger of committing it.

20. The obligation to report is without delay to the major superior. The report may also be sent directly to the Holy See.

21. The diversity of potential complainants requires that procedures be adapted considering at least the following three elements: the nature of the accusation, the immediate needs of the alleged victim and the specific situation of the accused (state of mind and dangerousness).

22. According to the *Motu Proprio Vos estis lux mundi*, the report must contain the most detailed information possible, such as the time and place of the events, the persons involved or informed, and any other circumstances that may be useful in ensuring an accurate assessment of the facts.

23. Whenever one of the above-mentioned offences has been committed and the Ordinary⁶ is aware of it, the Major Superior will officially receive the allegations of sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable persons against recruits or candidates. Actions after the receipt of complaints, if not taken by the major superior who received the complaint, may be carried out by a delegate of the major superior. In this case, the appointment, made with

⁶ Norms on reserved offences. art. 10 §1

the necessary formalities, may fall to a person who is competent to carry out this task, whether that person belongs to the Congregation of Jesus and Mary. A preliminary investigation by the Major Superior or his delegate is intended to ascertain "the plausibility of the accusation"⁷ .

C.2 The preliminary investigation

What must the preliminary investigation establish?

24. The preliminary investigation is not a trial. Its purpose is to gather information that will be useful in establishing a sufficient basis in law and in fact to consider that the charge is likely⁸.

25. The purpose of the preliminary investigation is: a) to gather useful information to further investigate the offense (*notitia de delicto*); and b) to establish its plausibility, i.e., to define what is known as the *fumus delicti*, which is the sufficient legal and factual basis for considering the accusation plausible. It is important to reconstruct, as far as possible, the facts on which the charge is based (the number and timing of the criminal acts), the imputability of the criminal acts and their impact on the victim, *the circumstances, the identity of the alleged victims, adding an initial assessment of any physical, psychological, and moral damage caused*⁹.

To protect the presumption of innocence¹⁰ at this stage, professional secrecy must be respected¹¹ ; however, it may be appropriate to inform the presumed accused¹² , thus allowing him or her to put forward his or her point of view; as for the person making the report, he or she is not bound by confidentiality.

26. An incorporated Eudist who is aware of the accusations in the complaint may, in good conscience, ask the Supreme Pontiff, through the intermediary of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, to be released from his incorporation and from the clerical state.

⁷ VM n. 33

⁸ VM n. 33

⁹ VM n.33-34

¹⁰ C. 1321 CIC

¹¹ VM n.30

¹² VM n.30

Therefore, at this stage, the major superior should clearly inform the person concerned of this right¹³. However, even in this case, the investigation may continue - if appropriate - out of a need for justice towards the victims¹⁴.

Finally, in cases where there are serious and well-known indications, or when there is an open state criminal proceeding, the major superior may refer the case directly to the Dicastery, without personally conducting the preliminary investigation¹⁵.

27. If the person concerned is in charge of a pastoral service in a diocese, the bishop will be informed and will act accordingly.

28. Regarding the care of victims by the superior, art. 5 of the *Motu Proprio Vos estis lux mundi* provides as follows

§1 The Ecclesiastical Authorities are committed to ensuring that those who claim to have been offended, as well as their families, are treated with dignity and respect, and offer them, in particular:

- a) a welcome, a listening ear and support, including through specific services.
- b) spiritual assistance.
- c) medical, therapeutic and psychological assistance, according to the specific case.

§2 In all cases, the legitimate protection of the good reputation and the private sphere of all persons concerned, as well as the confidentiality of personal data, must be safeguarded...".

However, secrecy cannot be demanded from victims, nor from the person making the report, nor from witnesses¹⁶.

29. From the preliminary investigation stage or at the end of it, the major superior can and must adopt protective and restrictive measures for the ministry, safeguarding what is provided for in c. 1319 § 2. If, after careful consideration, a penal sanction must be imposed, the provisions of cc. 1317 and 1318 must be observed.

¹³ VM n.157.

¹⁴ VM n.163. For leaving the clerical state is a grace, dismissal a sanction.

¹⁵ cf. VM n.133, 348.

¹⁶ VELM art. 4 § 3

He may: prohibit the public exercise of the sacred ministry, suspend the exercise of a charge, for example by prohibiting any relationship with minors, prohibit or impose residence in a specific territory¹⁷, or even forbid participation in the Eucharist in public¹⁸. He may also suggest psychological treatment and specific spiritual accompaniment. He shall also ensure that the confrere does not lack spiritual accompaniment and psychological support. The physical and mental health of the person under investigation must also be ensured.

It should be noted that these precautionary measures will be imposed by means of a special precept¹⁹, to protect the integrity of the process, the safety of persons and the good of the Church, without this constituting a canonical penalty. The victim will be personally informed.

30. If, at the end of the investigation, the allegations are found to be unfounded, the major superior will issue a corresponding decree explaining the reasons for his conclusion, lift the precautionary measures, if they have been imposed, and do everything in his power to restore the good name of the person under investigation.

C.3 Reporting to the civil authorities

31. The Congregation of Jesus and Mary undertakes to cooperate fully with investigations carried out by the civil authorities in the various countries where it is established.

32. Whenever the Major Superior becomes aware of an allegation of sexual abuse of minors by a member of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, he or she must inform the civil authorities of the place where he or she is to protect both the alleged victim and other minors from the danger of further criminal acts²⁰.

33. From the outset of the preliminary investigation, the Major Superior shall inform the diocesan Bishop of the place where the events are alleged to have taken place. It is desirable

¹⁷ C. 1317 CIC

¹⁸ C. 1722 CIC

¹⁹ VM n. 61

²⁰ VM n. 17

that he keep him informed of any procedural steps that follow the presentation of the complaint until the final conclusion of the case. "With the exception of what is established in Article 3 § 3, the Ordinary who has received the report shall forward it without delay to the Ordinary of the place where the events are alleged to have taken place, as well as to the Ordinary proper to the person accused, who shall proceed in accordance with the law provided for the specific case²¹ ».

C.4 Transmission to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith

34. If the preliminary investigation proves positive, after cooperation with the civil authorities, the superior will report to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith²², any recruits or candidates who have committed a *contra sextum* offence:

- ✓ on minors or on individuals with an imperfect use of reason,
- ✓ or possessing child pornography images.

35. Once the preliminary investigation has been completed, the Major Superior shall forward a certified copy of the records as soon as possible to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, accompanied by his *votum*. In this report, he shall:

- ✓ Indicate the precautionary measures already taken²³.
- ✓ Specify that the competent civil authorities have been notified in accordance with current legislation²⁴.
- ✓ Attach a reasoned evaluation of the results of the investigation (*votum*), indicating its opinion on how to proceed canonically: judicial criminal proceedings, administrative proceedings, closure of the case, or pastoral measures²⁵.

36. When it is a provincial superior who has commissioned the investigation, he will also forward a copy of the dossier to the supreme moderator of his institute, with whom the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith will subsequently communicate²⁶.

²¹ VELM, art. 2 § 3

²² SST 2021 art 1.

²³ cf. c. 1722 CIC.

²⁴ cf. VELM art. 19 §2.

²⁵ SST art 10 § 1

²⁶ The supreme moderator will also send his own assessment to the DDF (VM n. 70)

37. This report will be made to the Disciplinary Section of this dicastery. However, it should be remembered that this dicastery will only deal with sexual abuse committed by clerics on minors or people with an imperfect use of reason. Other cases of *contra sextum*, particularly abuse of vulnerable persons, will be examined directly by the competent dicasteries, i.e. by the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (DIVCSVA) for religious and members of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary.

38. Once the case has been submitted to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the latter will, as a general rule, await the conclusion of the corresponding state procedure, of which it must be informed in a timely manner by the major superior or the ordinary.

Once the analysis of the case has been completed, the Dicastery may:

- ✓ refer the most serious cases to the Roman Pontiff for a decision²⁷.
- ✓ judge the case directly, through a judicial or administrative penal process²⁸.
- ✓ or authorize the ordinary or major superior to conduct the penal process, as appropriate.

During this time, canonical precautionary measures may be maintained or modified in accordance with the good of the community and the protection of the persons involved²⁹.

39. For causes whose offences are not reserved to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, the initiation of penal proceedings, according to can. 1718, depends on the Ordinary of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, who chooses the judicial or administrative route (simplified procedure).

40. The Motu Proprio *Vos estis lux mundi* stipulates, in art. 6 and following, provisions for procedures involving the supreme moderator of an institute of consecrated life or of a society of apostolic life of pontifical right or of a monastery *sui iuris*; the dossier will be

²⁷ cf. SST art. 21 §1.

²⁸ cf. SST art. 21 §2.

²⁹ cf. c. 1722 CIC; VM nn. 131–150).

transmitted to the Holy See (DIVCSVA if a Superior General is involved³⁰), ... The dicastery will give directives for the management of the investigation.

C.5 Possible decisions to be taken about the person accused

41. Several penalties may be applied to the accused. Normally, there are as many punishments as there are offences, except in certain cases (accumulation of punishments that are too severe) which are left to the prudent judgement of the judge³¹.

42. The (new) c. 1336 lists the expiatory punishments that may be imposed on the offender either for life or for a specified period.

The legislator prescribes:

- ✓ to remain in each place.
- ✓ to pay a fine or a sum of money³².
- ✓ prohibitions of residence, of the exercise in whole or in part of the power of order or government, of active or passive voice in religious institutes, of the right to wear the clerical or religious habit, etc.
- ✓ deprivation of offices and positions, of receiving confessions or preaching, of ecclesiastical remuneration, etc.
- ✓ dismissal from the clerical state.

43. Canon 695, for institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life, examines the most serious situations in the grounds for compulsory dismissal, in particular sexual abuse or pornographic exhibitions with minors or vulnerable persons (cf. c. 1398 new). In such cases, the Major Superior, after gathering proof of the facts and their imputability, serves the accusation and its proof on the member to be dismissed, giving him the opportunity to present his defense. All the documents, signed by the Major Superior and the notary, together with the member's responses, drawn up and signed by him or her, shall be forwarded to the Supreme Moderator³³. Unless the Major Superior considers that dismissal is not absolutely necessary and that there is some other way of providing sufficiently for

³⁰ VELM art 10

³¹ C. 1346

³² C. 1336 § 2

³³ C. 695 § 2 CIC

the amendment of the member, the restoration of justice and the reparation of the scandal³⁴.

44. It should be noted that in cases where the allegations are proven, together with the just punishment that the offence deserves, resignation from the Congregation of Jesus and Mary may also be imposed (can 746).

45. A member of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary who feels aggrieved by a sentence following proceedings for the offence *contra sextum* has the right to appeal against a final decision³⁵.

³⁴ C. 695 § 1 CIC

³⁵ C. 1737 § 2 CIC; SST art 24 §1.

IV. Accompanying people

A. Accompanying the victim

46. Canon law pays particular attention to victims, setting up mechanisms to accompany and support them. If a meeting is arranged with the complainant or the victim, the Major Superior must endeavor to listen to them and their families with kindness and humility; if the accused has not admitted to the acts of which he or she is accused and if the competent authorities have not yet taken a definitive decision, the Major Superior may receive and accompany the victims, but must be careful not to assume that the allegations have been proven before the competent authorities do so. This is why, in a letter of 2 February 2015 to the Presidents of Bishops' Conferences and Major Superiors, Pope Francis asks "that pastors and religious community leaders be available to meet with victims and their relatives; these are precious opportunities to listen and ask forgiveness of those who have suffered much."

47. During the preliminary investigation and any criminal proceedings, the Major Superior ensures that the victim and his or her family have access to human and spiritual support, "medical, therapeutic and psychological assistance, according to the specific case³⁶". To this end, he may appoint a person to provide this support.

B. Accompanying the individual accused

48. When the principle of proportionality of punishment prevents or advises the infliction of punishments other than resignation from the clerical state or dismissal from the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, it is the responsibility of the Institute to ensure that the confrere found guilty receives the necessary human, spiritual and psychological support so that, once the punishment has been served, he can resume his priestly ministry. In this case, the greatest care should be taken to ensure that his community life and apostolic activities enable him to continue the path of conversion and protect him from possible relapses.

³⁶ VELM art. 5.1.c.

49. Without prejudice to the right to protection of privacy, a confrere who has agreed to undergo psychological therapy is asked to inform his legitimate superiors of the results.

50. Even in cases where resignation from the clerical state and/or the Congregation of Jesus and Mary has been imposed, the Institute will ensure that the person does not become destitute (cf. can 1350.2).

V. Prevention and formation

A. General principle of responsibility

51. The Congregation of Jesus and Mary is committed to creating safe spaces where relationships do not give rise to abuse of any kind; everyone, but especially those who make up the People of God, has the right to expect this of consecrated and ordained ministers. As the presbyteral formation of diocesan clergy is part of our charism, we will integrate into the formation programs of the "good workers of the Gospel" the culture of prevention of abuse, but not only sexual abuse, but also other forms of abuse such as abuse of power, psychological pressure, manipulation of conscience, clericalism or any other type of abuse.

52. Codes of conduct will be drawn up for Eudists working with children or vulnerable people, to define in clear language common rules on what to do and what to avoid. The Eudists will ensure that the institutions under their responsibility have clear protocols so that those who work there feel co-responsible for obligations related to abuse of any kind.

B. Discernment and initial formation of Eudist candidates

53. When drafting its Eudist Formation Itinerary "Forming Jesus in Us"³⁷, the Congregation incorporated the recommendations of the *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis* (RFIS) of 8 December 2016, so that formation programs offer all the necessary means for this human dimension, the indispensable foundation of all the other dimensions of formation. Thus number 71 of the Eudist Formation Itinerary states, "*Human formation helps to forge the totality of the candidate's dimensions. It is concerned with the physical, psychological, moral and artistic points of view so that, achieving a healthy balance of self-esteem, he can recognize his qualities in order to place them at the service of the People of God, establish mature relationships with his social environment, recognize with honesty and humility his weaknesses in accompaniment, and constantly assume an attitude of conversion and renewal (RFIS 97-100).*"

³⁷ Enacted on March 29, 2020.

54. In the fifth part of the Eudist Formation Itinerary dealing with criteria and norms, explicit mention is made of discernment, psychological health and the prevention of abuse. Sessions should be organized on the specific subject of prevention of sexual abuse, both for the candidates themselves and in their future responsibilities as educators and formators.

55. The formators undertake to work in depth on this document with the Eudist candidates, as well as on other Church documents on the subject, calling on the services of competent people, both civil and canonical, in the psychological and educational fields.

56. Formators must be alert to any signs or signals indicating a propensity for abuse. When the facts are established, it is sufficient to apply the rules and dismiss the candidate. In cases where there are only rumors of acts against the Sixth Commandment committed by a candidate, formators must make every effort to clarify whether or not these rumors are founded. If, after diligent investigation, no reasonable conclusion can be drawn as to the truth or falsity of the rumors, no risks should be taken, and the candidate should not be admitted to the next stage; very careful consideration should be given to whether he should be dismissed from training or transferred to another house. When an action of this type has been concluded, a record is made of any complaints or rumors against the candidate, any answers the person concerned may have given, the actions of the trainers and the final decision. If rumors or signs arise during the training period, those responsible for the training will have to exercise their responsibility extremely precisely to clarify the situation, and in the event of significant doubt not to take any risks. It will be necessary to record this information in the file so that it can be passed on to any other training center.

C. Ongoing formation: spiritual accompaniment and accompaniment of human growth

57. The formation of priests is one of the main areas in which the Congregation of Jesus and Mary works. For this reason, it is necessary to propose that each Eudist be adequately accompanied throughout his life. This implies genuine personal and spiritual accompaniment. The major superiors must ensure that each member of the Congregation has a spiritual director and meets with him regularly. If a confrere neglects spiritual

direction, the Major Superior will encourage him to take it up again, even suggesting names of specific people who could take on this role.

58. In fulfilling their duty to look after the integral good of the person, superiors should take particular care of confreres and candidates who are experiencing personal or spiritual difficulties; to this end, they should set up a team of therapists and spiritual directors to whom confreres and candidates can have access either of their own accord or at the request of the superior. Sometimes it will be necessary for the Eudist or candidate to be admitted to a rehabilitation center or to undergo a particular type of therapy; in this case, the provincial superiors will be responsible for proposing, even insistently, the therapy to which the person should submit and the place where this therapy should be followed; however, the superiors' obligation does not end there because, in addition to covering the costs, they must monitor the progress of the confrere or candidate.

59. The Congregation undertakes to use this document as an opportunity to organize training sessions in all the provinces, with the participation of people qualified to provide precise information on sexual abuse, the protection of minors and the prevention of abuse. For these training courses, the organizers should look for people who are competent in the various subjects (psychology, spirituality, educational sciences, civil and canon law, etc.).



VI Approval and personal commitment

60. This document, which neither replaces nor seeks to replace canonical legislation on the subject, has been designed to encourage training sessions in all provinces where precise information is provided on the prevention of abuse and the protection of minors and vulnerable people.

61. We must continue to strengthen the call to holiness and mission in the communities of the Congregation; authentic fraternity lived in community is a bulwark that helps to combat all forms of abuse. Our Constitutions present communities as schools of holiness (Cst. 35), and we must strive to achieve this, with care for each person and for the good of all.

62. All members of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary and all those who ask to be incorporated into it are required to know and respect the present document.

63. This text was approved by the Superior General with the consent of the General Council and presented to the provincial superiors meeting in the Council of Congregation on 17 July 2019.

64. It was revised in 2025 to incorporate the new canonical data promulgated since 2019.

65. At its session on 3 June 2025, the General Council decided that all incorporated members of the Congregation, and henceforth candidates when they enter probation, must sign a document stating that they have read the Norms of the Congregation and undertake to comply with them. This provision also applies to associate members when they receive a direct and explicit mission from a major superior of the Congregation.

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Some recent canonical texts

- Apostolic Letter *Motu proprio Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*, by Pope John Paul II, 30 April 2001.

Revision by Pope Benedict XVI, 21 May 2010.

Revision by Pope Francis, rescript of approval, 8 December 2021.

- The Apostolic Constitution *Pascite gregem Dei*, promulgated on 23 May 2021, introduced a comprehensive update to Book VI of the Code of Canon Law concerning penal sanctions in the Church, with the aim of ensuring more effective protection of the rights of the faithful. It officially entered into force on 8 December 2021.

- The *Motu proprio* contains the *Norms on crimes reserved to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith*, published on 11 October 2021.

- The *Vademecum* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, ver. 2.0, published on 5 June 2022, offers procedural guidance on certain legal aspects of the treatment of cases of sexual abuse of minors perpetrated by clergy.

- The Motu Proprio *Vos estis lux mundi* promulgated by Pope Francis on 25 March 2023 refines and expands the document of the same name that was adopted ad experimentum in May 2019. The updated version of the Motu Proprio came into force on 30 April 2023.

Some recent documents

- Pope Francis, *Letter to the People of God*, 20 August 2018.

This message, in an unusual form, marks a significant step: it calls for a global reaction by the Catholic community against clericalism, which is largely responsible for a culture of abuse.

- The protection of minors in the Church. Documents from the international meeting of the presidents of bishops' conferences at the Vatican (21-24 February 2019), Bayard, 2019.

- CIASE, *Les violences sexuelles dans l'Église catholique. France 1950-2020*, October 2021 report. It can be found, along with its extensive appendices, on the CIASE website (still open)

- LUC CREPY, *La foi à l'épreuve de la toute-puissance. Lutte contre les abus dans l'Église*, Lessius 2021.

The bishop gives his diagnosis of sexual abuse in the Church, which he links to expressions of omnipotence, and therefore to spiritual abuse or abuse of authority, woven from domination and seduction. A useful guide to support initial and ongoing training courses



WEBSITES

- Code of Canon Law

https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/cic_index_en.html

- The norms of the Motu proprio '*Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*' (2001), Historical Introduction by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (in Italian)

https://www.vatican.va/resources/resources_introd-storica_it.html

- Apostolic Letter in the form of a «Motu Proprio», *Sacramentorum Sanctitatis Tutela*, of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II, promulgating norms concerning the most serious crimes reserved to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (30 April 2001)

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- Letter of the Holy Father Francis to the People of God (20 August 2018)

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- Apostolic Letter in the form of a «Motu Proprio» of His Holiness Pope Francis *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* (7 May 2019)

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu-proprio-20190507_vos-estis-lux-mundi.html

- Norms on Crimes Reserved to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (11 October 2021)

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20211011_norme-delittiriservati-cfaith_en.html

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<https://www.ciase.fr/>

- Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith *Vademecum* on certain points of procedure in treating cases of sexual abuse of minors committed by clerics (5 June 2022)

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/ddf/rc_ddf_doc_20220605_vademecum-casi-abuso-2.0_en.html