

**PROTOCOL OF THE PUBLIC ASSOCIATION OF THE FAITHFUL**  
**"MILITIA OF THE IMMACULATA"**  
**FOR THE PROTECTION OF MINORS AND VULNERABLE PERSONS, AS**  
**WELL AS FOR THE PREVENTION OF SEXUAL ABUSE AND FOR THE**  
**REPORTING OF ABUSE**

**I. PREAMBLE**

The founder of the Militia of the Immaculata (M.I.), St. Maximilian Mary Kolbe, is a beautiful reflection of the original and virginal purity of the Immaculate Conception, and she was the recipient of his love and tenderness. Throughout the life of St. Maximilian, the virtues of chastity and charity stand out, which he lived heroically, and which made his apostolic task in the service of the Church very fruitful. In his Franciscan vocation, his fraternal spirit also stands out. In this sense, after returning from his mission in Japan, as guardian of Niepokalanów, a large convent in constant expansion, he dedicated much time to the formation of young friars. He also worked hard to maintain his inner and outer discipline. One of the topics he dealt with in his lectures to the friars was precisely the observance of chastity and the prevention of all kinds of sins against the sixth commandment, in which he followed the principle of “zero tolerance.” Any violation had to be reported to the superior within 24 hours and the sanction was very severe, including expulsion from the convent (Conference of April 13, 1938). St. Maximilian also demanded that anyone who had knowledge of inappropriate conduct in this regard by another friar should report it to his superiors, would share in the same disciplinary responsibility as the offender.

Currently, the Militia of the Immaculata is a Public Association of the Faithful of Pontifical Right (International Association), which is governed by the General Statutes, approved on March 25, 2015 by the Pontifical Council for the Laity (currently, its functions have been absorbed by the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life). Properly speaking, those baptized in the Catholic Church - men and women, lay people, consecrated persons and priests - who have reached the legal age can be part of the association. However, Article 17 of the General Statutes already refers to the apostolate among young people and to the promotion of the Youth Movement of the M.I. Although the current General Statutes do not explicitly refer to the apostolate with children or to the Children's Movement of the M.I., the truth is that in different countries such an

apostolate exists, and this is a great hope for the Association. For its part, Article 18 of the General Statutes refers to the “Knights at the foot of the Cross,” an area of the Association's activity among people who suffer, including vulnerable persons.

In this regard, the Apostolic Letter issued 'Motu Proprio' by the Supreme Pontiff Francis, *Vos estis lux mundi*, of 25 March 2023 (hereinafter "VELM"), includes in its scope of application (Article 1, § 1), among others, the moderators of international associations of the faithful recognized or erected by the Holy See and, in particular (Article 6, letter f), lay faithful who are or who were Moderators of international associations of the faithful recognized or erected by the Apostolic See, for acts committed *durante munere*.

On the other hand, in a letter dated January 21, 2022, the Prefect of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life (protocol no. 2022/15) reminded the International President of the Association of the obligation to establish protocols for the reporting of sexual abuse and for the protection of minors and vulnerable persons. Subsequently, by circular letter, dated 30 March 2022, sent to all the Presidents and Assistants of the National Centers of the M.I. (protocol no. 1/2022), the request of the Prefect of the aforementioned Dicastery was transmitted, requesting information on the activities carried out by the Association at the national level with minors or comparable persons, as well as information on whether these National Centers had established their own protocols against this type of abuse. The few responses received from the National Centers reported that there was no proper apostolate with minors or vulnerable people. In particular, at that time only the National M.I. Center in the United States of America had a code of conduct for relations and activities with minors<sup>1</sup>.

Finally, in accordance with Article 14 of the General Statutes, in its mission, the Association collaborates with the Order of Friars Minor Conventual (OFMCONV), with the Institutes of Consecrated Life and with other institutions or orders of Kolbian inspiration. In this regard, it should be noted that the Minister General of the O.F.M. Conv., by Decree of May 26, 2023, approved the *Linee guida per proteggere da abusi sessuali i minori e le persone vulnerabili e procedure da osservarsi in caso di denuncia*. At the same time, the different provinces and jurisdictions of the Order are adopting their own protocols for the prevention and action against sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable people.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://miyouth.org/policies--code-of-conduct>

In view of the above, the following norms have been drawn up for the guardianship of minors and vulnerable persons in the M.I., in line with the indications of the Holy See and in the hope that the Kolbian ideal of the City of the Immaculata will be realized in the Association through a growth of the “culture of safeguarding,” to promote the virtue of chastity and the fulfilment of the sixth commandment, preventing and avoiding sexual abuse within the Association, especially against minors and vulnerable persons, and in the event that, unfortunately, such abuses are committed, the victim is offered an appropriate hearing, resolution of her complaint and reparation<sup>2</sup>. These norms do not replace the applicable law, both canonical and civil, in the different countries in which the Association is present. In particular, the rules or guidelines contained in this Protocol must be implemented and developed by the National Centers, through the adoption of their own protocols and codes of conduct, which take into account the reality and national civil legislation. This Protocol will be inserted on the Association's website and its content will be disseminated among the members of the Association, sent to the National Presidents and published on the Association's social networks.

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<sup>2</sup> "Reparation, in order to be Christian, to touch the heart of the offended and not to be a simple act of commutative justice, presupposes two demanding attitudes: to recognize oneself guilty and to ask for forgiveness" (Cf. Address of the Holy Father Francis to the Participants in the International Congress "Reparation for the Irreparable" on the 350th anniversary of the apparitions of Jesus in Paray-le-Monial, May 4, 2024).

## **II. INTRODUCTION**

### **1. THE SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION PROTOCOL**

"Protocol" is usually understood as the set of rules established to describe the normal process of action in a given matter. This document deals with the prevention of sexual abuse of minors, as well as vulnerable adults by members of the Association of the Militia of the Immaculata and by all adults (sympathizers, volunteers) who participate in our pastoral, educational, recreational or any other activities with children, adolescents and vulnerable adults.

The concept of "sexual abuse" falls under the broader concept of "abuse," which can include physical, psychological, authoritative or conscientious abuse. Without prejudice to the fact that the Association must promote environments free of all types of abuse and although sexual abuse normally involves other types of underlying or concomitant abuse, this Protocol refers to the prevention of sexual abuse in the Association and, in particular, the sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable persons.

Consequently, this Protocol for the Prevention of Sexual Abuse is intended to be a guide and code of conduct that seeks to take care of the selection of personnel, the adequate training of the people who collaborate with the M.I. and the establishment of good practices within the organization and development of the activities to be carried out with minors and/or vulnerable persons. It also aims to raise awareness of the risks to be avoided, the responsibilities assumed by the people who participate in the aforementioned activities, the functions they must carry out and the actions they must observe. Finally, indications are established for the detection of possible sexual abuse, as well as a channel for its reporting and investigation, while at the same time criteria are given for a communication policy in case it is necessary to face the existence of such abuses within the Association.

### **2. SEXUAL ABUSE OF MINORS (AND OTHER VULNERABLE PERSONS)**

The conducts that can be classified as sexual abuse of minors (eventually of other vulnerable persons) are multiple and their specific definition or doctrinal, legal or jurisprudential classification may vary according to the different jurisdictions.

However, although the definition of sexual abuse may be very broad, sexual abuse of minors is considered to be any form of sexual behavior, which generally involves a libidinous and objectifying intention on the part of the abuser, an adult, with respect to a minor, whether child or adolescent, male or female. Depending on their typology, they speak of direct sexual abuse, indirect sexual abuse, grooming, sexual harassment, sexual

provocation, sexual exploitation. Some behaviors that are considered sexual abuse of minors are:

- Harassing, frightening, or intimidating with obscene gestures, or obscene communications.
- Making sexual propositions or insinuations related to sexual conduct and proposals for meetings for sexual purposes.
- Asking the minor to expose or exhibit his or her body or parts of his or her body for erotic-sexual purposes, directly or through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs).
- Voluntarily touching parts of the child's body considered intimate or erogenous, over or under clothing, attempts at kissing, body contact, excessive approach, etc.
- Forcing or inciting touching of the adult or other minors for sexual purposes.
- Deliberately displaying and exposing pornographic material to the minor.
- Oral, anal, or vaginal penetration, or attempted penetration, with a penis or objects.
- Inciting or enabling a minor to participate in prostitution, pornography, or sexual performances.
- Possessing for one's own use, selling, disseminating or exhibiting by any direct means pornographic material among minors or vulnerable persons.
- Using the internet to share or disseminate content, messages and comments of a sexual nature, as well as disseminating compromising or inappropriate images or data of a sexual nature with or without the consent of the victim, especially when the victim is a minor or a vulnerable person.

In any of its forms (with or without violence, and whether or not there is surprise, seduction, deception, manipulation or blackmail), it is an immoral and criminal act, which deeply harms the victim (and also, in another sense, since it is a mortal sin, the victimizer). Since the baptized are temples of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 6:19), sexual abuse in an ecclesial setting contradicts Jesus' exhortation to the fullest: "Do not prevent children from coming to me" (Mt 19:14). Jesus himself also observed: "It is impossible for there to be no scandals; but woe to him who provokes them! Whoever offends one of these little ones, it would be better for him to have a millstone tied around his neck and thrown into the sea" (Lk 17:1-2).

Child sexual abuse falls under the broader category of sexual violence and largely shares consequences and responses with sexual violence. At the same time, it should be considered as a type of abuse. Sexual assault is specifically spoken of when the sexual indemnity of a minor is abused and/or violated using violence or intimidation. In the case of carnal access to the minor, it would be rape.

### 3. THE VICTIM AND THE AGGRESSOR

The victim of child abuse is always a person who has not reached the legal age of majority. In many Western countries, this legal age of majority is 18 years old. It should also be considered, in the face of proceedings before the state jurisdiction, it must be considered that, in certain jurisdictions, consensual sexual relations between the ages of 16 and 18 are not punishable.

Likewise, the condition of abused victim is equated to the vulnerable adult who suffers from poor intellectual or physical development, or who the fact of having a mental disorder has placed him or her in a state of total defenselessness.

In turn, the aggressor, abuser or victimizer is the person who perpetrates or commits the abuse of the minor. In general, this would be a member of the Association or another adult linked to the Association (male or female). But it is not possible to rule out an adolescent or pre-adolescent who is in a position of power with respect to the victim, either because of his or her physical development, physical strength or because of the role played within pastoral activities when they are in charge of younger children (catechists, monitors, group leaders, volunteers, etc.).

Anyone can be an abuser, although some characteristics can be identified:

- It is usually an adult, without ruling out adolescents or pre-adolescents.
- He or she uses his position of power or superiority to achieve certain behaviors of the potential victim.
- He or she has the capacity for manipulation and deception. Abuse is not usually linked to physical violence.
- In most cases, the abuser is in a close environment. Most of them are people known to the parents, who entrust their children to them.
- Their appearance and behavior do not usually show their intentions. Try to gain the trust of the children, try, if possible, to be alone with them.
- He or she often employs persuasion and manipulation tactics—games, deception, threats, and coercion—to engage and keep children silent.
- It uses institutions to gain the trust of parents, children and drivers.
- Their seductive and manipulative ability is also applied to others, making them believe that the rules do not apply to them, because they are pleasant and compliant with the rules.

As for the strategies that the abuser usually uses:

- He or she deliberately seeks the closeness of children, young people and people in vulnerable situations and usually has a lot of empathy in dealing with them.
- He or she often seeks a deal with those who are emotionally lacking, building relationships of trust with potential victims.

- Prepares or facilitates abuse with activities, walks, initiatives and personal contacts with potential victims to generate their isolation.
- It casually diverts conversations to sexual topics, generating insecurity in the victims, accompanying these conversations, in some cases, with touching and improper physical contact.
- It generates feelings of guilt in the victim. It uses a series of coercive manoeuvres to ensure the silence of the minor and vulnerable adult.
- It threatens the suppression or diminution of certain privileges or benefits, seeking not only to achieve abuse but also to obtain impunity and ensure the silence of the victim.
- Discourage other adults from supervising or participating in an activity in which they are involved. It allows children to participate in activities that their parents forbid them to do.
- They use secrecy as the most effective and powerful instrument to blackmail their victims.

Sexual abuse occurs within an imbalance relationship in which there is an abuse of power. This relationship, based on maturational inequality, entails a seizure of the victim's conscience through seduction, deception, manipulation and coercion. The sexual aggressor creates an appropriate atmosphere to behave according to his plan of abuse. This process of seduction is a kind of brainwashing, an atmosphere of psychological manipulation that unfolds in various phases and moments:

- The Trust Trap: Abuse often begins with efforts on the part of the abuser to gain the child's affection and trust.
- The imposition of secrecy and silence: the abuser knows that what he is doing is a crime or is immoral and inappropriate, so he imposes secrecy and silence as a form of control towards the victim.
- Threats and role reversal: when the child tries to leave the network of silence, the abuser usually uses threats, even role reversal, manipulating the victim with the insistent idea that no one will believe him, making him feel guilty for what happened or convincing him that he is the one who really has the power to cause greater damage by reporting what happened<sup>3</sup>.

In this regard, it must be considered that certain persons (especially persons who hold a position in the Association, but also spiritual assistants, leaders of youth groups or consecrated persons) enjoy a special trust and authority in relation to those entrusted to their care. Therefore, any attempt to transform a pastoral or similar relationship into a sexual one (or by making it erotic or by taking advantage of it sexually), constitutes a

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<sup>3</sup> See: “Guía para la prevención y reparación de abusos sexuales a menores en centros educativos”, Escuelas Católicas, Madrid 2023, p. 23. (available here: [https://www.escuelascaticas.es/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/EC\\_Guia\\_prevencion\\_reparacion\\_abusos\\_sexuales\\_a\\_menores\\_en\\_centros\\_educativos.pdf](https://www.escuelascaticas.es/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/EC_Guia_prevencion_reparacion_abusos_sexuales_a_menores_en_centros_educativos.pdf)).

betrayal of trust, an abuse of authority and professional misconduct, in addition to going against the virtue of chastity and being a very serious sin against the sixth commandment.

Precisely, the fact that it is a close adult, in whom the child or adolescent trusts, invested with professional or moral authority, who sexually abuses them, usually has much more serious consequences than the abuse committed by a stranger.

Even if the minor is trying to sexualize the relationship, it is the adult's responsibility to protect the boundaries against a sexual offense.



### III. ABUSE PREVENTION

#### 1. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1.1. The measures and procedures contained in these guidelines or indications aim to contribute to establishing and maintaining an environment that is respectful and aware of the rights and needs of minors and vulnerable persons (cf. VELM, art. 1 §1, a) that excludes the risks of exploitation, sexual abuse and ill-treatment in the activities carried out within the scope of the Association and the activities of the Association entrusted to the International Center and each of the National Centers of the M.I., as well as to each of the members of the Association, as members of the Association. This assumes that every person has the natural right to be respected, educated, cared for and protected integrally, that is, physically, psychologically, and spiritually. In the case of minors and vulnerable persons, this responsibility is aggravated, given their natural defencelessness. It is therefore essential to have and carefully observe the relevant preventive measures, evaluating and updating them permanently, in order to guarantee throughout the Association that all activities carried out with children, young people and vulnerable people tend to their affective, social, intellectual, moral and spiritual development.

1.2. These indications are addressed to the members of the Association constituted in the service of authority or spiritual assistance and, in general, to all the people who collaborate with the Association, especially all the people who are in charge of the care, accompaniment, training and leadership of minors and vulnerable people, who must know and comply with the applicable both state and canonical laws and protocols and those of the Association itself, to prevent and recognize any abusive conduct.

1.3. These indications refer to the relationship of the members of the Association with all those persons who require special protection and respect, namely:

- a) "minor": in general, a person under the age of eighteen;
- b) "person who habitually has an imperfect use of reason", when declared to be so by a special psychiatric evaluation or is legally subject to a guardian (see. *Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*, Article 6, 1°);
- c) "vulnerable adult" means any person in a state of illness, physical or psychological impairment, or deprivation of personal liberty which, in fact, even occasionally limits his or her capacity to understand or to will or, in any case, to resist the offence (see VELM, Article 1 § 2 a, b).

1.4. The objectives and principles pursued by these guidelines in the eradication of abuse of minors, people who habitually have an imperfect use of reason and vulnerable people within the scope of the Association and in relation to its members are set out below.

a) Objectives:

- Promote awareness and respect for the rights and needs of minors, people who habitually have an imperfect use of reason and vulnerable adults through training; and appropriate training for their protection;
- Prevent any form of violence, physical, mental or spiritual abuse, neglect, abandonment, maltreatment or exploitation;
- Raise awareness of the obligation to bring abuses to the attention of the competent State and religious authorities and to cooperate with them in activities aimed at preventing and combating them;
- Prosecute all abuse or mistreatment of minors, people who habitually have an imperfect use of reason or vulnerable adults;
- Provide victims and their families with adequate pastoral care and, where appropriate, medical, psychological and legal support.
- Continuously monitor and evaluate prevention mechanisms, to review their effectiveness and compliance.

b) General principles of regulation:

- Recognize the right of people who claim to have been victims, as well as their families, to be received, listened to and accompanied; and the right to have their news or complaints followed up in accordance with the regulations of the Church and the State;
- Guarantee to the persons involved a procedure in accordance with the rules of law (c. 221 § 3 of the Code of Canon Law, hereinafter “CCL”) and respectful of both the principle of the presumption of innocence and the principles of legality and proportionality in criminal matters;
- Immediately remove from activities a member of the Association who, following legitimate criminal proceedings, has been convicted of abusing a minor, a person who habitually has an imperfect use of reason or a vulnerable person;
- Ensure the good reputation of all persons involved at each stage of the procedure. (CCL can. 220; 1390)

1.5. The leaders of the Association, respectively the International President or the National President, should strive to ensure that the alleged victims are treated with dignity and respect. In particular, according to their capabilities, they must provide them: a) reception, listening and accompaniment, also through specific services, if the case requires it; (b) spiritual care; (c) medical, therapeutic and psychological assistance, as appropriate.

1.6. The image, privacy and confidentiality of the data of the people involved must be protected.

## 2. SELECTION OF STAFF AND COLLABORATORS

2.1. The accompaniment, discernment and admission of candidates to be part of the Association is of vital importance, but especially of those who are going to carry out pastoral tasks or participate in activities aimed at minors or vulnerable people. Persons who are not suitable and who have been convicted of any type of abuse of minors or vulnerable persons may not be appointed for any reason for such tasks, and it is also absolutely discouraged to appoint persons who have been reported with plausibility with respect to such abuses. In the same way, the selection of people who are involved in dealing with minors, adolescents (and by extension vulnerable people) marks the beginning of preventive action.

2.2. It is essential that, in each nation, the norms established by the state authorities be observed for a prior verification of the suitability of the members or collaborators of the Association who carry out an apostolate that may involve interaction with minors or vulnerable persons. In order to make this selection, it will be mandatory for the Association and its different bodies (International, National, Regional and Local Centers) to ensure that there is no record of possible abuses committed by the persons referred to in the previous paragraph. Where legally possible, such persons shall be required to provide a negative certificate in relation to offences of a sexual nature, issued by the corresponding public registry. It will be the responsibility of the different instances of the Association to prove compliance with this requirement.

2.3. All the aforementioned persons must also voluntarily sign a written document, expressly stating:

- Personal rejection of all types of sexual abuse.
- Knowledge of the Church's doctrine on this matter and the conviction that the person who commits this type of crime manifests conduct gravely contrary to God's law and ecclesial norms.
- That their conduct is also criminal under state law and that they have been informed of the laws in force in this area.
- That, if they commit any act of abuse of minors, they do so by deceiving and betraying the will of the Church and the Association, being responsible for them, solely and exclusively those who carry them out.

2.4. It is appropriate to explore in a personal interview with those who have to work with minors (members of the Association, volunteers, catechists and other pastoral agents) the precautions and doubts about their work with them: problems and advantages. In the same interview, the existence of this Protocol must always be shown, which must be given to the person at the time of their selection for their full knowledge and

commitment to compliance. In the same way, the commitment to participate in the training topics offered by the Association in relation to the work it assumes, in general, and on abuses and their consequences, as well as the way to act against them, will be requested.

2.5. As for the members of the Association who hold positions of responsibility in the Association, as well as the spiritual assistants, they will strive to provide the necessary personal and spiritual accompaniment and to enable the appropriate formation of all the members of the Association and sympathizers or volunteers who collaborate with it. Special attention will be paid to those people who are in the period of initial formation, to their adequate human maturation, as well as to the preparation to respond to the vocation and mission to which they have been called within the Association, whose values include respect and care for minors and vulnerable people.

2.6. In due course, the necessary training of all members of the Association in the prevention of sexual abuse will be promoted and especially the permanent training of those who regularly work in the Association for minors or vulnerable persons. In this regard, it will be mandatory for these people to attend training on the prevention of abuse and promotion of safe environments as often as established, in order to raise awareness of the seriousness and characteristics of abusive behavior and to acquire the most suitable tools to detect them and, as far as possible, prevent them. The scope and content of the formation program should be based on a comprehensive anthropology, based on the Doctrine of the Church, and be appropriate to the risks of abuse and the levels of training required for persons who are directly or indirectly related to the treatment of minors and vulnerable adults. The formation program should help the members of the Association to grow in the practice of the virtue of prudence and chastity, each according to his or her own state of life, identifying circumstances in the life of the Association, whether recurring or not, that are incompatible with the exercise of prudence.

2.7 Where appropriate or required by local ecclesiastical or civil authorities, those who work with minors or vulnerable persons (members of the Association, volunteers, catechists, and pastoral agents) must undergo a vetting and background check process before beginning their duties. The Association shall follow the corresponding procedures established by the local Church or competent authorities to ensure the safety and protection of minors and vulnerable persons.

2.8. By way of example, the general training programme in the field of prevention, mentioned in section 2.6 above, will include the following contents:

- a) Knowledge and application of this protocol of the Association, especially in view of the recurrent circumstances in the life of the Association, which require special vigilance and healthy modesty.
- b) Knowledge of the maturation characteristics of each age.

- c) Signs of possible sexual abuse and the need to learn how to deal with them properly.
- d) Civil legislation on the subject of the nation in which the Association carries out its activity.
- e) Canonical norms on sexual crimes affecting minors and vulnerable adults.
- f) Abusive proceedings that an adult may engage in with a minor; behaviors and, especially, ways of relating between an adult and a minor that may lead to an abusive interaction in the sexual area
- g) Doctrine of the Church on the matter, and, in addition, background information on how she has responded to these situations.
- h) Procedures and criteria on how to act before the ecclesiastical and state authorities in the event of the possibility of sexual abuse of a minor;
- i) Any other content on the subject that the Church defines in the matter.
- j) The prevention of abuse and the education of affectivity in light of the Moral Doctrine of the Church.
- l) Prevention in the family.
- m) Child abuse and abuse in the family.
- n) Child protection in the digital age.
- p) Prevention in other areas (school, sport, etc.).

2.9. The National or International Presidential Council, depending on the scope of the program, shall appoint a Training Committee on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse. This Committee shall be composed of professionals in Psychology, Educational Sciences, Law, and Theology, and shall be accompanied by a priest who serves as a spiritual assistant.

2.10. The Training Committee shall be responsible for defining and implementing the formation and training programs described in Sections 2.6 and 2.8.

2.11. In carrying out its duties, the Training Committee must take into account the views of parents and guardians of minors and vulnerable persons, actively involving them — along with the Association's responsible persons and animators — in the development and delivery of the training.

2.12. Among other functions, the Training Committee on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse will:

- a) Prepare and implement training programmes on the application and scope of this protocol.
- b) Coordinate with public or private organizations for the development of courses, workshops, seminars, debates, campaigns, and any other training activity related to the application and scope of this protocol.
- c) Develop courses, workshops, and any other training activity in the different groups of the Association in the field of promoting safe environments, prevention of abuse and violence, alternative conflict resolution, and application of this protocol.
- d) Promote in the Association the development of campaigns against abuse and violence and to raise awareness of the application and scope of this protocol.
- e) Advise and accompany the Association when training activities are carried out for its members, on the application and scope of the protocol.
- f) Assist the Association with training subsidies both in terms of the application and scope of this protocol, as well as in the prevention and approach to situations of abuse, violence or conflict.
- g) The Training Committee appointed by the International Presidential Council shall coordinate with, cooperate with, promote and oversee the activities of the National Training Committees on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse.

### 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF DAILY PREVENTIVE PRACTICES

- 3.1. In order to ensure the creation of a safe environment for minors, as well as for the protection of the members of the Association, workers, collaborators, animators or volunteers, some practical criteria for operation and coexistence are offered below.
- 3.2. Every adult, who has regular contact with minors in the work or pastoral activity of the Association, must know well his role, what the ministry is or the function that he exercises and that is entrusted to him, in order to act in a respectful, prudent and balanced way in dealing with minors or vulnerable people.
- 3.3. When developing a Code of Conduct, aimed at all people who are in contact with children, young people and vulnerable people in the care of the Association, to guarantee a safe environment that respects their moral and physical integrity, this Code will be based on the general principle of careful treatment of others and abstention from any type of abusive behavior. By way of illustration only, the following preventive aspects should be taken into account and followed in dealing with minors (and by extension with vulnerable persons):

- a) Physical displays of affection for minors should be with moderation and respect and should never be or appear disproportionate<sup>4</sup>.
- b) Always respect the physical integrity of the minor, allowing him or her to reject displays of affection, even if they are well-intentioned.
- c) Avoid being alone for a long time with a child and never with the door closed; for example, in the sacristy of the church or in a parish hall or dependency.
- d) If a sick or injured child is to be examined, it should always be done in the presence of another adult.
- e) When it is necessary to speak privately with a child, it should be done in an environment that is visible and accessible to others. A good practice is to have transparent glass doors or glass doors in the offices of priests, directors, formators and animators.
- f) Leaving the door open when talking to a minor in an office or room without glass. Or talk to him in a place where other adults can witness the encounter.
- g) Always inform and receive parental consent for their children's participation in specific activities, as well as unusual situations in which a minor is going to be or has been alone, or when relevant physical contact is going to be or has been had for health or other reasons, always justified.
- h) Absolutely prohibit games, jokes or punishments that may have a sexual connotation, avoiding any type of behavior that implies or suggests it.
- i) Since physical punishment is prohibited, physical contact cannot be justified on this ground under any circumstances.
- j) Inform parents and always ask for signed parental authorisation for outings, cohabitations, excursions, camps, etc. that involve minors having to sleep away from home, ensuring a sufficient number of companions and organising what is necessary for the differentiation of children's accommodation by sex. An adult should never share rooms or tents with teenagers or children. In cohabitations, camping or trips it is convenient to invite some parents to go, even if they are an active part of the activity. In any case, in this type of activities in which minors or vulnerable people participate, at least two adults from the organization of the event must attend, and at least one of them must be of the same

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<sup>4</sup> Keep in mind that, in general, this type of affectionate displays that involve physical contact must be done by touching "safe areas", such as back, shoulders, head, arms... In certain cultural contexts, it is common for adults to hug, hold and kiss young children, and to hug and kiss older children and adolescents. These displays of affection have their socially accepted limits: kisses are given on the cheeks; they are not hugged by force or with excessive pressure or duration and intimate or erogenous areas are never touched.

sex as the minors. If the group is large, it must be ensured that the presence of responsible adults is proportional to the number of minors participating.

l) Do not enter the changing rooms, bathrooms or showers while the minors are there. If necessary for disciplinary or control reasons, it is advisable that two adults of the same sex as the minors present enter. Unless it is imperative to act for something urgent, they will keep their distance from minors who are changing or showering.

m) Implement control mechanisms together with parents to hold meetings or communications with students outside the parish, school, sports context, etc., whether in person, by email or mobile phone or through social networks other than the official ones of the center, parish or group. In the event when groups on WhatsApp or other platforms or similar applications are formalized or e-mail or social networks are used to convene, organize or coordinate activities, parents must receive the messages and participate in the communication, never being oblivious to it.

n) Any sentimental relationship, consensual or not, of an adult with minors (students, altar servers, members of catechetical groups, other children's or youth groups) or with other vulnerable people will be grounds for immediate cessation of the activity entrusted to them by the Association.

o) Minors and vulnerable persons can express feelings of affection and/or infatuation with priests, leaders, catechists, teachers or monitors which could often respond to the consideration of the adult as an idol. Adults must always be aware of their own responsibility if these situations become evident. At no time should you respond or insinuate yourself positively to that type of affection but rather establish unequivocally and with good manners the appropriate limits of behavior, relationship and appreciation.

p) Avoid taking private images of minors, and if they are done in the development of the Association's activities, they will be carried out, if possible, with technical devices of the Association itself (cameras, video cameras, etc.), rather than with personal material (mobile phones, tablets, computers, etc.). The parents will be informed of the taking of these images, they will not be exhibited or disseminated publicly or privately without their consent, and they will be kept in a single file for which the Association will be responsible.

3.4. A list of inappropriate behaviors in relation to the treatment of minors and vulnerable persons is annexed to this Protocol.



#### 4. PREVENTIVE ACTIONS AGAINST POSSIBLE ABUSE

4.1. The persons responsible, the coordinator or leader of a youth group or, where appropriate, the Association itself through its governing bodies, must act whenever they know, by their own knowledge or warning from third parties, that there are people in their charge who violate or do not follow the good preventive practices of this Protocol.

4.2. The members of the Association and all the people who work or collaborate in its activities have the obligation to report, to those responsible for the area in which they carry out their function, the violation of the preventive practices of this Protocol or, even more so, when they have suspicion or knowledge of the sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable persons.

4.3. To this end, the person reporting the possible abuse must make a written statement that allows a record to be kept of such communications.

4.4. In this letter it is advisable that the following data be included:

- Person and position making the document.
- Person and position from whom testimony of the facts has been received (if different from the person who makes the writing).
- Date of the letter.
- Identification of the victim (name, age, grade, group, etc.).
- Identification of the accused (name, activity carried out in the Association, etc.).
- Detailed description of the facts that are made known (dates, places, witnesses, connection or manner in which they have been known, actions carried out so far must be indicated... value judgments or opinions should also be avoided).
- Known physical or psychological sequelae consequences of the reported event.
- People who know or have been informed of the alleged abuse.
- Other issues that are considered important.
- Signature.

The Association will provide a template of the letter on the official website of the Association.

4.5. This letter must be sent by e-mail to the address provided by the National Centers or, failing that, to the complaints channel of the International Center of the M.I.: [protezione.minori@mi-international.org](mailto:protezione.minori@mi-international.org). If the document is submitted in person or by post (addressed to the national or international headquarters of the M.I.), including three copies shall be submitted. One of them, signed or stamped by the person in charge who has received it, is returned to the person who has made the communication letter. The second copy is sent to the National President or, where appropriate, the International President, and the third to the Association's Abuse Complaints Office (National or International).

4.6. In the processing of complaints, due confidentiality must be guaranteed for all parties, to avoid reprisals against whistleblowers and to preserve, whenever possible, the good reputation of the person who is the subject of the complaint. In no case can this confidentiality be equated with secrecy or an attempt to buy the victim's silence.

4.7. Those responsible who receive this information must necessarily act immediately, verifying the veracity of the complaint submitted. In the case of minor situations, the action can range from a simple indication or suggestion for improvement to a call for attention. In the case of serious crimes, the complaint must be reported immediately to the National President or, failing that, to the International President, in accordance with the Protocol on Detection, Reporting and Action, established in the following section. As soon as they are operational, the complaint may be lodged with the relevant international or national abuse complaints office of the Association. For the record, the National Presidents or the national offices of complaints of abuses of the Association must communicate to the International President the complaints received at their national level, as well as report on the actions taken as a result of such complaints. The International President will forward these communications to the International Abuse Complaints Office of the Association.

## IV. PROTOCOL FOR DETECTION, REPORTING AND ACTION

### 1. COMMITMENT TO DETECTION, REPORTING AND ACTION

1.1. The Association "Militia of the Immaculata" is committed to initiating and monitoring the application of current rules and protocols, in the face of concerns, repeated comments and complaints regarding the abuse of minors and vulnerable people, with the corresponding legal and sacramental limits, and to offer appropriate attention to anyone who communicates or denounces the commission of abuse, recognizing their particular needs, including the willingness of the Association's authority, on behalf of the Church, to meet with the complainant or victim in person.

1.2. In this sense, applying the provisions of article 2 of the motu proprio *Vos estis lux mundi*, the Association will create an International Office to receive possible complaints of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable people. This office is located at the international headquarters of the Association, in via San Teodoro 42, 00486 Rome, Italy, which can be contacted by email at the address: [protezione.minori@mi-international.org](mailto:protezione.minori@mi-international.org). Likewise, the National Centers must create their own offices to receive possible complaints of sexual abuse of minors, which are discussed within the territorial scope of each National Center.

1.3. In order to respond to possible complaints and accompany victims, the Association and, in particular, the Office mentioned in the previous section will have expert professionals in the psychological, pedagogical, legal and theological-pastoral fields.

### 2. SEXUAL ABUSE SCREENING

2.1. There are two basic ways in which abuse manifests itself: through indicators and through disclosure. Anyone who intervenes with minors or vulnerable persons should be able to respond to both.

2.2. Many children and adolescents or vulnerable people do not tell or express what is happening to them for different reasons. But, even if they don't say it, abuse leaves a trail of tests or signs that we call "indicators," which reveal anomalous and unusual physical situations and behaviors. The obligation of the people responsible for pastoral work or assistance to minors and vulnerable people or who habitually deal with them on behalf of the Association, is to know these indicators and take them as warning or alarm signals that help to detect a possible situation of sexual abuse.

2.3. As soon as the existence of sexual abuse is known, by detection or disclosure, the preliminary investigation begins.

2.4. A member of the Association, a spiritual assistant, a worker, a supporter, a collaborator, an animator or a volunteer who has become aware of a case of sexual abuse of a minor should not take the initiative to formally interview a child or adolescent. It is advisable that the interview is carried out by a trained professional.

### 3. ACTIONS RELATED TO THE DETECTION OR DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE

3.1. When a minor or a vulnerable person manifests the abuse to which they have been subjected, it is necessary to take into account a series of guidelines for action:

3.1.1. It is important to be sensitive to the child's needs. When a child or adolescent confides his secret or clearly shows what is happening, the first and foremost task is to support him. A child who is being abused is especially vulnerable. He needs to feel that he is believed, so you must show him a willingness to listen and help him.

3.1.2. Disclosure should not be delayed. The minor or a vulnerable person should be listened to at the time they have chosen to initiate communication, without delaying it.

3.1.3. Always remain calm and listen carefully to the complaint. Behaving calmly and understandingly shows the child that their story can be accepted and they are encouraged to tell what has happened. For this reason, it is important not to interrupt during disclosure, nor to show the adult emotions of the person who listens or attends to you (anger, stupefaction, indignation...). Neither conduct the conversation as if it were an interrogation, nor judge the victim or insult the alleged abuser who must be referred to as a person who needs help.

3.1.4. Give support and confidence. It is useful to ask open and general questions since, at that time, you only need to know basic facts to be clear that it is abuse. It is not the time to investigate or go into details that unleash shame, misunderstanding or guilt. The child must feel the confidence of feeling listened to, having our support and perceiving that we are going to help him.

3.1.5. Be aware of what to say and what not to say to the child. As for what must be said to him, it is important to emphasize that, from the outset, what he refers to is not distrusted and that he is taken into account; that he has done well to tell it and has been brave; that he is not to blame and is not responsible for what has happened; that we are going to talk about it and bring it to the attention of their parents. As for what not to do: you should not ask for details to influence your story or use words that could scare you, and you should not promise him that you will keep the secret or something that can't/should not be fulfilled.

3.1.6. It is very important to always be sincere and tell the child how you are going to act: you have to answer their questions honestly. If you don't know the answer, you have to admit it ("I'm not sure, really", "Well, I don't know, but I'm going to find out"). You

have to tell the child or adolescent what you think is going to happen after the revelation: that you are going to help him, that you are going to communicate it to people who can support him, that his parents have to know. Do not deny from the outset that the complaint is true or underestimate it. Nor blame the child, adolescent or vulnerable person for the abuse or the consequences of their complaint.

3.1.7. Immediately inform the parents of the complaint received from the minor; Collect their information on the indicators, suspicion or disclosure of their child about possible abuse and agree with them on the strategy and actions to be taken from that moment on.

3.1.8. Put in writing what you have heard after the meeting with the child and in front of the parents. It is important that, as soon as possible, you take notes of what you have just told us, reflecting the day and time, collecting what is remembered literally from your speech, writing down your words and if you showed any relevant behavior when saying it.

## V. STANDARDS FOR VERIFICATION OF AN ABUSE COMPLAINT AND FOR PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

### 1. INVESTIGATION PROCESS

1.1. When the President of the Association (International, where appropriate, National) becomes aware of the existence of a complaint, either personally, or because it has been sent to the Office referred to in point 1.2 of section 4, or by third parties, he must initiate the preliminary investigation. When the National President has not initiated the preliminary investigation, and the complaint of which he has become aware of is recorded in his territorial area, the International President shall request the National President to initiate the corresponding investigation within the period indicated for that purpose. In the event that such an investigation is not initiated within the aforementioned period without justification, the International President shall initiate such investigation himself, without prejudice to the possible sanctions that may be imposed on the National President for his omission, including dismissal from office.

1.2. The preliminary investigation is not a judicial process, but an administrative action aimed at the President of the Association (International, where appropriate, National) to make a judgment of probability as to whether or not the crime was committed.

1.3. The object of the preliminary investigation is the facts, circumstances and imputability of the subject. Once the external offence has been committed, imputability is presumed, unless otherwise established (CCL, canon 1321§3).

1.4. In order to carry out the preliminary investigation, the President of the Association (International, where appropriate, National) must undertake the following actions as soon as possible and without undue delay:

1.4.1. **Appointment of instructor:** The investigation can be carried out personally by the President of the Association (International, if applicable, National), or by the person appointed for it. In the event that the accused is a National President, the competent person to appoint the investigator will be the International President. The appointment is made by decree, if it is not stated in the decree opening the preliminary investigation.

1.4.2. **Interview with the complainant:** The President of the Association (International, if applicable, National) or his delegate meets, as soon as possible, with the complainant in the presence of a witness; it ascertains the seriousness of the complaint and tries to obtain, as far as possible, that the complainant reflects it in writing if he has not already done so. A report of the meeting is written.

1.4.3. **Meeting with the victim, family or legal representatives:** The President of the Association (International, if applicable, National) or his delegate will contact the victim

if he is already of legal age, or with his family or, where appropriate, with his legal representatives, if he is still a minor, to explain the situation, if he does not know it, and to show him, with a pastoral attitude of compassion, empathy and proximity, the interest of the Association in providing support and guidance to face the problem, explaining, where appropriate, the development of the research process. Provision shall be made to provide the victim with psychological and spiritual assistance, for example through the support of the Office referred to in paragraph 4(1.2), if such assistance has not already been received. To this end, in addition, there must be a list of professionals or institutions specialized in the provision of specialized therapy or accompaniment. Likewise, the victim or his family or his legal representatives shall be duly informed of his right to initiate the corresponding criminal proceedings before the competent state or ecclesiastical jurisdiction, indicating the course to be followed.

**1.4.4. Interview with the accused:** The President of the Association (International, if applicable, National) or his delegate meets, as soon as possible, with the accused, in the presence of a witness, to inform him of the complaint received and of the steps to be followed, to guarantee respect for his rights (cf. CCL can. 1717, 2), to offer him the help he needs, to inform him of the obligations of the Association before the courts, and to inform him of the precautionary measures that are established, which will always include his removal from the place or activity carried out, as well as any type of relationship with the victim, his family and the complainant. A report of the meeting is drafted, signed by both parties.

**1.4.5. Establishment of precautionary measures:** In the event that the person denounced is a religious, consecrated person or diocesan priest, the facts denounced will be communicated to the Order, Congregation or Institute of which said person is a member or, where appropriate, Diocese; suspending the processing of the investigation procedure of the Association in the event that these reported facts are going to be investigated by the Order, Congregation or Institute of which said person is a member or, where appropriate, Diocese.

**1.4.6. Determination of plausibility:** The purpose of the preliminary investigation is to determine whether the complaint is based on truthful facts, not to verify whether there is innocence or guilt. The limit of the evidence necessary to establish whether or not there is "an appearance of truth" (cf. CCL can. 1717 §1) is very low and should not be overestimated.

**1.4.7. Measures in the face of unfounded accusation:** If the President of the Association (International, if applicable, National) or his delegate considers that the complaint is absolutely lacking in credibility, the procedure will not be continued. He will notify both the complainant and the accused of this. If an accusation is proven to be unfounded, every measure shall be taken to restore the good reputation of the person falsely accused. In the event that the well-founded or unfounded nature of the complaint

is found, both the complainant (the victim) and the accused may request a review of this assessment.

**1.4.8. Complaint to the state authority:** If the possible veracity of the complaint is verified once the preliminary investigation has been concluded, and if it has not already been carried out in the police or judicial sphere, the President of the Association (International, where appropriate, National) has the obligation to bring the facts to the attention of the competent State authority.

**1.4.9. Preparation of the instructor's report:** The person appointed to carry out the preliminary investigation shall send the report to the President of the Association (International, where appropriate, National) indicating the conclusion reached on the probability or otherwise of the commission of the crime, and how he or she has proceeded in the course of the investigation.

**1.4.10. *Votum* of the President of the Association (International, if applicable, National):** The President of the Association (International, where appropriate, National), taking into consideration the report submitted and using, if he deems it appropriate, the advice of experts, formulates his own opinion on the probability or not of the commission of the crime.

**1.4.11. Concluding Decree:** The preliminary investigation concludes when the President of the Association (International, in some cases, National) declares, by decree, that sufficient elements have been gathered to determine the probability of the commission of the crime (CCL can. 1718 §1). The assessment of the plausibility of the abuse will in any case imply the adoption of administrative measures against the accused, such as the cessation of the positions or responsibilities held in the Association or even the expulsion of the member of the Association, in accordance with the provisions of Article 15 of the General Statutes<sup>5</sup>. In the event that the preliminary investigation has been processed by the National President, he shall send a copy of the concluding decree to the International President. In view of the concluding Decree, especially if it is archival or exculpatory, the International President may revoke it and order the resumption of the preliminary investigation, carrying out the investigation himself or appointing his delegate for that purpose.

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<sup>5</sup> “MI members are to be baptized members of the Catholic Church and have reached the age of maturity. To belong to the MI it is essential to give oneself completely to the Immaculata: body and soul, human abilities and spiritual gifts. One may enrol in the MI after sufficient preparation, the recitation of the act of consecration and receipt of the Miraculous Medal. The enrolment is celebrated following the ways of the locality. The name of the new member is inscribed in the register of the Association at a Local Center or a juridically erected National Center. A member of the MI who wishes to voluntarily relinquish his/her membership in the Association must provide written notice to the National President, after having consulted with the National Assistant. A member of the MI may legitimately be expelled from the Association for serious incompatibility with the life and work of the Association, but while safeguarding the right of the member in question to offer arguments in his/her own defense.”



**1.4.12. Archiving Research Documentation:** If criminal proceedings are not opened, unless the accusation is manifestly inconsistent, the minutes of the investigation and the decrees of the President of the Association (International, if applicable, National) with which the investigation is initiated or concluded, as well as those that precede the investigation, must be kept in the archive of the International Center of the Association and, shall be the case, in the archive of the relevant National Center (CCL can. 1719).

**1.4.13. Sending the documentation to the International President of the Association:** If the accused is a member of the association and the investigation has been conducted at the national level, the National President shall collect all the information received in the preliminary investigation. This documentation, together with his individual vote or opinion, will be sent to the International President, who will forward it to the competent Dicastery, pending the response of these Dicasteries on how to proceed canonically (cf. *Normae de gravioribus delictis* approved by Benedict XVI on May 21, 2010, art. 16).

**1.4.14.** The above investigation process should be carried out within a month after its initiation according to section V, point 1.1. Any exceptional delay regarding this period should be properly justified.

## **VI. PROTOCOL FOR REPORTING TO THE COMPETENT STATE AUTHORITIES**

### **1. IN RELATION TO THE CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION OR PROCEDURE**

1.1. The President of the Association (International, where appropriate, National), has the obligation to always collaborate with the state authorities, facilitating the clarification of the facts. All contacts with the State authority should be made only through lawyers.

1.2. Immediately, as soon as a case reported to the state authority is known, one of the previously chosen lawyers must be contacted.

1.3. The member of the Association should be advised to appoint counsel to defend him/her. In particular, the presence of a lawyer is necessary in the event of arrest, during interrogations and throughout the investigation of the case.

1.4. Absolute respect for the course of justice must be maintained, without interfering in the procedure by appealing to contacts or relationships that may be had. You have to stick to the advice of the lawyer. The initiative should not be taken, without consulting him, to carry out actions aimed at investigating the facts, to prevent them from interfering in the actions of the State authorities or being taken as such.

1.5. Before the judge, the President of the Association (International, if applicable, National), or his delegate must be clear on two points: recognize the seriousness of the accusations and express the desire that justice be done according to the law.

1.6. Any pressure on victims or their families must be absolutely avoided.

### **2. ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE ACCUSED**

2.1. As long as there is no conviction, the presumption of innocence of the accused must be respected, but without ceasing to take seriously the suspicion that falls on him for the acts of which he has been accused.

2.2. The accused must be made aware that the Association cares about his situation and offers him accompaniment (aimed at his healing and conversion, especially in the event that his guilt is proven). At the same time, he is clearly shown the categorical condemnation of the acts committed, reminding him of the law and the need to bear a sanction in the event that the responsibility of the accused is proven. All contacts, especially written ones, must be presided over by prudence to avoid interfering in one way or another in the judicial investigation.

2.3. During the judicial proceedings, the accused must be removed from the activities or responsibilities that he or she exercises in the Association.

### 3. ATTITUDE TO MAINTAIN WITH THE VICTIM

3.1. You must always show closeness to the victim and his family, listen to them, keep them informed of the stages of the procedure.

3.2. The victim and his or her family should be asked for forgiveness for the damage caused, discerning the need or convenience of a restorative help plan, without excluding economic means (for example, for therapies with the victim).

3.3. Such spiritual or psychological assistance as may be necessary should be offered, in order to reincorporate it into the normality of social and spiritual life.

3. 4. The injured person and their family must be protected from any intimidation or retaliation; protect their image and privacy, as well as the confidentiality of their personal data.

## VII. COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL

No member of the Association, worker or any other collaborator or sympathizer must become an informant or interlocutor on behalf of the Association or its institutions before any entity, media or person, except for those to whom the President of the Association (International, where appropriate, National), may have entrusted this task. It is exclusively the President of the Association (International, where appropriate, National), or his delegates, for these purposes, who must be in charge of the necessary and convenient communication. Special care must be taken with information and notifications in the following areas:

### 1. COMMUNICATION WITH THE BISHOP

1.1. When a civil or canonical process is opened, the President of the Association (International, if applicable, National), will inform the Bishop of the diocese where the events took place as soon as possible, informing him of the precautionary measures taken. It is important that the bishop and the President of the Association (International, if applicable, National) coordinate their actions as soon as necessary.

1.2. In particular, close agreement must be taken with the services of the bishopric as to the way in which the matter is to be handled in the media and in the diocese.

1.3. *Mutatis mutandis*, the superior of the OFMCONV (Minister or Provincial Custodian) must be informed as soon as possible of the place where the events took place.

### 2. COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

2.1. The local group of the Association or the group of young people or children affected by the reported events and their families; agents or monitors or any other type of community in which the crime occurs, suffers shock when a case of sexual abuse against a minor is known in their environment.

2.2. It is necessary, on the part of the Association, to ensure truthful and proportionate information for each of these areas and, in addition, to provide the appropriate accompaniment so that religious, educational and pastoral care can be restored. Special care must be taken with this accompaniment of minors and vulnerable people.

### 3. MEDIA RELATIONS

3.1. As far as possible, choose a single interlocutor for the media. This may be the President of the Association (International, if applicable, National), or its delegate (another member of the Association, the lawyer representing the Association or an expert in the field of media).

3.2. Once the scope of the crisis has been assessed, and prioritizing communication with all the people directly affected, an official statement will be drawn up condemning any type of abuse of people and especially minors; the person who suffered the abuse and his family will be asked for forgiveness; and the firm commitment to the clarification of what happened will be expressed, making itself available to the authorities for whatever is necessary and protecting at all times the personal data of both victims and defendants and other members of their pastoral or educational environment. This statement will be published in all the official websites of the Association (the International Center or, where appropriate, the National Center) and will be sent to the relevant media depending on the actual or expected impact on them.

## **ANNEX**

### **Listing of inappropriate behaviors in treatment or interaction with minors and vulnerable people (for information purposes only)**

- Any conduct or contact of a sexual nature with minors or vulnerable persons, including acts of sexual exhibition, that violate morality and good customs and, in general, modesty and/or the Sixth Commandment.
- Inflicting corporal punishment of any kind.
- Establishing a preferential relationship with a single child or a small group of children, including giving gifts in a personal capacity to children or vulnerable people.
- Leaving a minor exposed to a situation that is potentially dangerous to their mental or physical safety.
- Addressing a minor in an offensive manner or engaging in inappropriate or sexually suggestive behavior.
- Photographing or filming a minor without the written consent of their parent or guardian.
- Publishing or disseminating images that portray a minor in a recognizable way, including through the web or social networks, without the written consent of parents or guardians.
- Making any insinuation, comment or joke of a sexual nature in front of minors, especially those referring to physical attributes, even if compliments, or the sexual tendency of a person or invading the privacy of another person with direct or indirect questions about their sexuality or comments that violate their modesty or disseminating information about their sex life.
- The use of words, insinuations, actions, or physical or cybernetic approaches of a sexual nature.
- Exhibiting any type of sexual or pornographic material to minors.
- Excessive consumption or being under the influence of alcohol, drugs or using foul or vulgar language. Providing minors or vulnerable people with alcoholic beverages or drugs.
- Display, provide, or facilitate, send to minors, adolescents, youth, and vulnerable persons any material of a sexually explicit or morally inappropriate nature. In particular, possessing, exhibiting, producing or distributing any type of pornographic material by any means, form or channel.
- Demanding secrecy or confidentiality from a minor in relation to his or her parents or guardians.
- Holding meetings alone with a minor in a room or other enclosed environment. When this is not possible, the meeting will take place with the door open, ensuring

the possibility of being observed at all times. Under no circumstances will meetings be held in dormitories, private rooms, restrooms and others, but in sectors specifically authorized for this purpose.

- It is not advisable for an adult to travel by car or other means of transport alone with a minor. When it is impossible to avoid this situation, parents or guardians should authorize it.
- Avoid physical contact with minors as much as possible, beyond the socially accepted uses and customs and, in general, that may be misinterpreted by a third party, either as inappropriate or out of the cultural context. If it is the child who initiates gestures such as a hug, the response should be sober, brief and appropriate, always in public places and in front of other people.
- Limit, within reason, the relationship between adults and minors through social networks (extending invitations to contact through social networks), avoiding, if they are developed, references of a personal, sexual or any other nature that may be considered to violate the privacy of the minor or harmful to their psychophysical integrity. In this regard, in the case of creating chats or groups on social networks, they must have at least two other adults.
- All types of affective-sexual relations between those responsible or spiritual companions and minors or vulnerable people who participate in the various activities of the Association.

## REFERENCES

- Apostolic Constitution *Sacrae disciplinae leges* of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II for the promulgation of the new Code of Canon Law, of 25 January 1983.
- Apostolic Letter issued 'Motu Proprio' by the Supreme Pontiff Pope John Paul II, *Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*, of 30 April 2001.
- Apostolic Letter issued 'Motu Proprio' by the Supreme Pontiff Francis, *Vos estis lux mundi*, of 25 March 2023.
- Guía para la prevención y reparación de abusos sexuales a menores en centros educativos, Escuelas Católicas, Madrid 2023 ([https://www.escuelascaticas.es/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/EC\\_Guia\\_preencion\\_reparacion\\_abusos\\_sexuales\\_a\\_menores\\_en\\_centros\\_educativos.pdf](https://www.escuelascaticas.es/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/EC_Guia_preencion_reparacion_abusos_sexuales_a_menores_en_centros_educativos.pdf)).