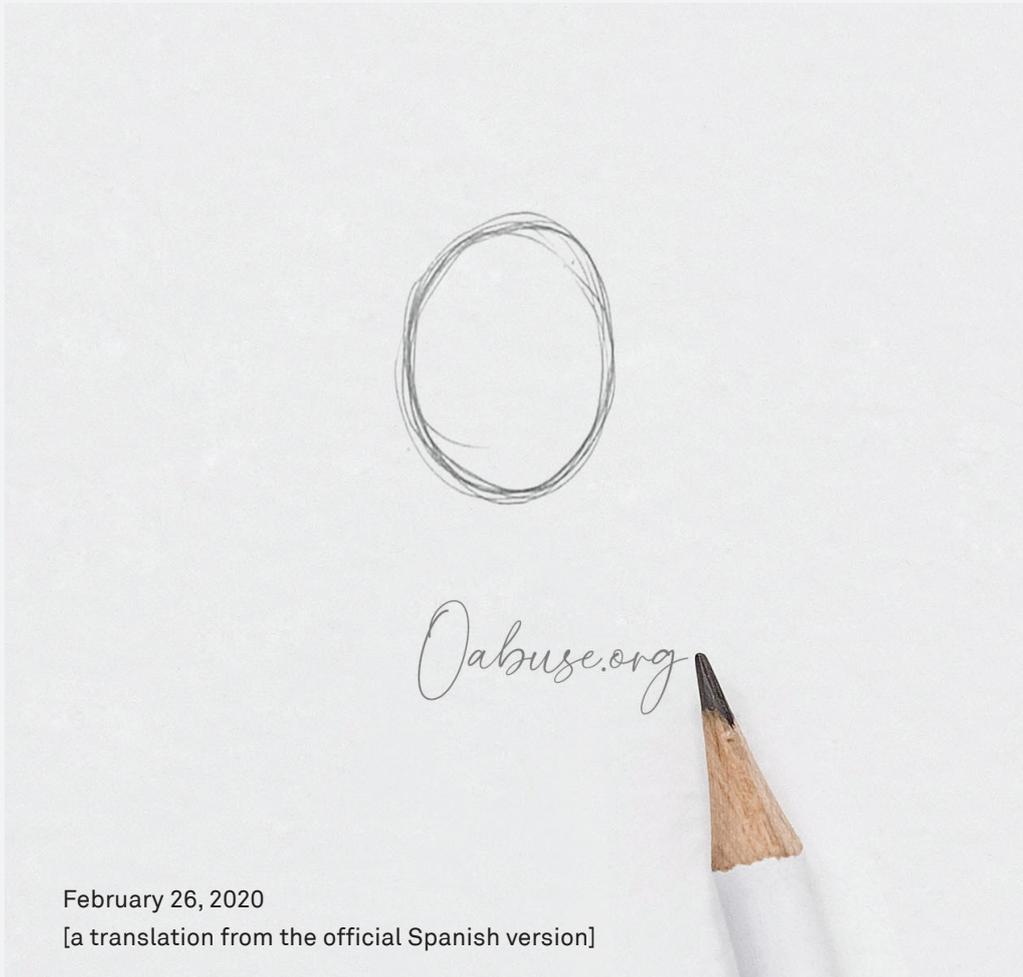


# Towards a Culture of Oabuse in the Congregation of the Legionaries of Christ



Document 1: Conversion and reparation

Document 2: Protect and heal

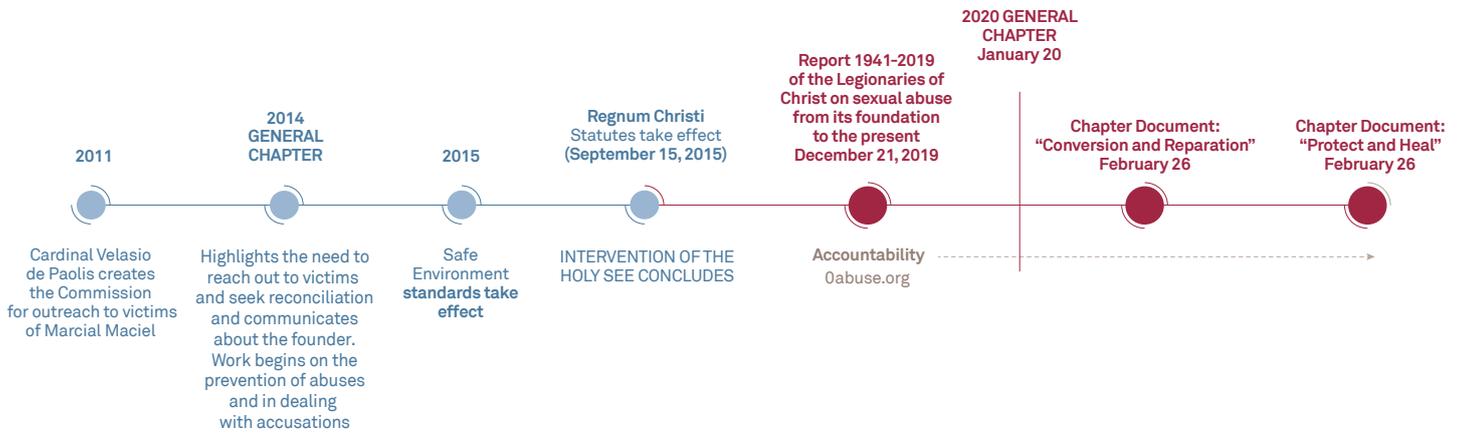
Document 3: Report 1941-2019 on the Phenomenon  
of Sexual Abuse of Minors in the Congregation of the  
Legionaries of Christ from its Founding



LEGIONARIES OF CHRIST



# Towards a Culture of **0**ABUSE in the Congregation of the Legionaries of Christ



# Conversion and reparation

Communiqué from the  
Legionaries of Christ 2020  
Ordinary General Chapter

February 26, 2020  
[a translation from the official Spanish version]



LEGIONARIES OF CHRIST

## An insistent call to conversion

1. *“Repent, and believe in the Gospel”* (Mark 1:15) These opening words of the public ministry of Our Lord Jesus Christ have resonated in many ways in the lives of the Legionaries of Christ over the past few years and have forcefully impacted this General Chapter. We have before our eyes how much pain is caused by behaviors contrary to the Gospel. The recent [1941-2019 Report](#) on the extent of sexual abuse of minors in our Congregation showed us that in our history there were crimes and delicts (“crimes” in canon law) committed by some of our brothers. As representatives of our Congregation and as priests we recognize and shoulder this reality and want to act accordingly. For this reason, with pain and sadness we address, in the first place, the victims of abuse and their families, we ask their forgiveness, welcome their claims, and assure them that we want to be converted and make reparation with concrete actions.

2. Throughout the decades, some of our older brothers made reports so our Congregation could correct its course in regard to the sexual abuse and abuse of power and conscience by Father Marcial Maciel and other Legionaries. Among them we mention Federico Domínguez’s 1954 report and Father Luis Ferreira’s 1956 report. Also Juan José Vaca’s 1976 letter and Juan Manuel Fernández Amenábar who said in 1995 that he forgave but also asked for justice. Then, starting in 1997, the public denunciations of eight victims of abuse by Father Maciel: Father Félix Alarcón, José Barba, Saúl Barrales, Alejandro Espinosa, Arturo Jurado, José Antonio and Fernando Pérez Olvera and the above mentioned Juan José Vaca.

3. We retract the negative institutional and personal judgments about the character and motivations of the people who made legitimate and necessary accusations. Today we recognize as prophetic their accusations in favor of truth and justice (see Matthew 5:6). We ask forgiveness for our blindness and omission, which resulted in harming their reputation, and we thank those who had the courage to come forward, for the good they did, not only to us but also to the Catholic Church itself. Their courage also helped others to report sexual abuse perpetrated by unworthy priests, overcoming the shame that this entails. We recognize that our efforts at reparation have so far reached only some of those who reported abuse.

4. *“Do not disdain the discipline of the Lord or lose heart when reproved by him; for whom the Lord loves, he disciplines; he scourges every son he acknowledges”* (Hebrews 12:6). Seeing the grave discredit that our Congregation has brought to the Church and to the priesthood of Christ, we thank God for the Church’s intervention with the 2009-2010 apostolic visitation decreed by Pope Benedict XVI, the years of renewal until the 2014 General Chapter and the accompaniment of Pope Fran-

cis. By putting into practice the indications we received, we have understood even better that a profound revision of the life and structure of our Congregation<sup>1</sup> was necessary and that our renewal and purification has made progress but is by no means complete<sup>2</sup> and will always remain a challenge for each new generation.

5. During the General Chapter we studied the [1941-2019 Report](#), the phenomenon of abuse and its devastating consequences, the various responses throughout the history of our Congregation, and the lessons and recommendations that emerged. We received with gratitude the contributions and suggestions of a good number of former members of our Congregation who through a survey and other means shared with us the lights and shadows of their time with us. We also welcome Pope Francis' call to the whole Church: to put the victims at the center of our concerns and to frame the problem in the wider context of the abuse of power and conscience. This challenge demands a determined response from all the people of God<sup>3</sup>.

6. From all this, four basic attitudes emerge which illuminate this General Chapter Document and our commitment.

- a) The victims are beloved sons and daughters of God, and brothers and sisters of ours, to whom we have caused great harm.
- b) We reaffirm that our first personal and institutional duty is to consistently live the Gospel and to fulfill the requirements of justice.
- c) We recognize that the increase in our awareness, and our actions for conversion and reparation of evil, are late. This delay has increased the pain of our brothers and sisters who suffered abuse and has created confusion among the members of our Congregation and among those who work with us.
- d) We consider the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, society, the media, and organizations specializing in the prevention of abuses and restorative justice as allies in making reparation for wrong and bringing about the good.

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1 See [Communiqué](#) of the Holy See Regarding the Apostolic Visitation of the Congregation of the Legionaries of Christ, May 1, 2010, n. 2.

2 See [Statement](#) of the Extraordinary General Chapter of the Legionaries of Christ About the Path of Renewal that we are Traveling, January 20, 2014, n. 277.

3 See Pope Francis' [Letter](#) to the People of God, August 20, 2018.

## A personal and institutional conscience examen

7. This General Chapter did an extensive conscience examen and to-day we propose to our brother Legionaries of all ages to personally ask themselves the same questions. We invite them all to join this journey of conversion and reconciliation (see Matthew 5:23) which, animated by the grace and love of God, must always be manifested in concrete actions:

- a) Have I come to see the victims of abuse as brothers and sisters, beloved sons and daughters of God? Do I feel solidarity with their pain? Have I refused to listen to their testimonies? Do I thank them for their courage in denouncing the evil they have suffered, and do I respond with acceptance?
- b) Have I acted contrary to the truth and to people's dignity (lack of empathy, pretense, propaganda, lies, manipulation, any other type of abuse, etc.)? Do I live my religious consecration coherently, especially in relation to my vows and to my affectivity?
- c) How have I responded to the people with whom I live and work and who have suffered the scandal of these crimes committed by certain Legionaries of Christ?
- d) How have I contributed positively to eradicating the plague of sexual abuse of minors and rectifying injustices?
- e) What do I think the Lord is asking me to do to counteract any kind of abuse?

8. In doing our conscience examen we recognize that the sins and crimes committed by specific persons have also left their mark on our Congregation and have distorted our understanding and living of the charism.<sup>4</sup>

9. The dedicated lives of many of our brothers, the good done in our apostolic works and the recent improvements in some areas do not exempt us from the responsibility of purifying ourselves according to the Gospel. To continue to move in this direction, it is necessary to call these negative realities by their name. With pain and shame, we acknowledge:

- a) a) Shortcomings in listening to and accompanying victims of abuse, the lack of an empathetic response, and the failure to take

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<sup>4</sup> See John Paul II's [Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation](#) *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* 16.

full responsibility for investigating cases, punishing crimes and making amends.

- b) At times, disbelieving those who reported certain irregularities and abuses of power or conscience, which prevented us from confronting the truth in a timely manner.
- c) Insufficient measures, in the past, for the prevention of abuse in high-risk environments such as boarding schools. We deplore that minor seminarians and novices who had suffered sexual abuse were often sent home without due care for their needs and those of their families.
- d) The tendency, widespread at one stage in the Church's history, to treat abuse almost exclusively as a moral or religious problem. This did not respond to the serious damage and lasting effects on the victims, the need for psychological treatment, and the application of effective penalties.
- e) Assigning certain priests with a history of abuse to pastoral work with minors or to houses of formation, reopening wounds in the victims and provoking dismay. Many brother Legionaries have been shocked to discover that some of their professors or confessors had committed such crimes and today the superiors themselves feel deceived because they had not been informed.
- f) Accepting unquestioningly Father Maciel's way of thinking and acting and not limiting his authority in accordance with the law.
- g) A formation process too focused on following norms and a way of exercising authority that left little room for personal discernment.
- h) The lack of separation, in the past, between the internal and external forums, depriving the religious of a properly diversified accompaniment.

## A firm commitment to change

10. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). We realize that neither asking for forgiveness nor frankly acknowledging what has been said above has any value without sincerely taking concrete steps to make amends to each victim, to render justice, and to prevent this from happening again in the future. Our resolution of amendment seeks to foster a new mindset within our Congregation capable of promoting true conversion and above all a culture of acceptance and empathy with the victims.

11. Specifically in relation to the sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable persons, the 2020 Ordinary General Chapter, as the highest governing authority of our Congregation, has established the document *Protect and Heal* (PH) containing principles, policies and standards, in addition to the universally binding *Safe Environment Standards*. Here we summarize and highlight several important measures:

- a) Investigate each claim of abuse by collaborating with civil and ecclesiastical authorities (see PH 7 y 36).
- b) Request that the competent canonical authorities lift the statute of limitations when it is necessary to prosecute a past delict of abuse of minors (see PH 52).
- c) Establish structures and procedures to facilitate remediation and therapeutic options for all those affected (see PH 4-5).
- d) Publish the names of Legionary priests convicted in court of abusing minors, unless prohibited by civil legislation (see PH 29).
- e) Prohibit priests convicted of abuse of minors from exercising any public ministry (see PH 47-48).
- f) Exclude priests convicted of abuse from residing in houses of formation (see PH 49).
- g) Canonically investigate possible grave negligence, failure to report abuse, or hindering the investigation of abuse (see PH 8 and 51). A conviction in such a matter will entail the privation of offices, the right to participate in a general chapter or a territorial assembly, and the prohibition of exercising certain pastoral responsibilities (see PH 55-56).
- h) Continue training members of our Congregation to prevent abuse and to care for victims of sexual abuse (see PH 9-10).
- i) Carry out a “purification of memory” by narrating the success and failures in the history of our Congregation in the writings and courses we give to our members (see PH 28).
- j) Encourage attitudes and spiritual initiatives of prayer, penance and atonement for abuses committed by members of our Congregation and of the Church.

## Conclusion

12. “Out of the depths I call to you, Lord” (Psalm 130:1). No matter how many concrete steps we take, and no matter how much we delve into

the past and bring to justice all those involved, we must accept the shortcomings of our actions, and persevere on the path of conversion and reparation, trusting in God's mercy.

13. The Holy Spirit speaks to our hearts through the words of Pope Francis' Letter to Priests:

I am convinced that, to the extent that we remain faithful to God's will, these present times of ecclesial purification will make us more joyful and humble, and prove, in the not distant future, very fruitful. "Let us not grow discouraged! The Lord is purifying his Bride and converting all of us to himself. He is letting us be put to the test in order to make us realize that without him we are simply dust. He is rescuing us from hypocrisy, from the spirituality of appearances. He is breathing forth his Spirit in order to restore the beauty of his Bride, caught in adultery. We can benefit from rereading the sixteenth chapter of Ezekiel. It is the history of the Church, and each of us can say it is our history too. In the end, through your sense of shame, you will continue to act as a shepherd. Our humble repentance, expressed in silent tears before these atrocious sins and the unfathomable grandeur of God's forgiveness, is the beginning of a renewal of our holiness."<sup>5</sup>

14. With our new General Director we address all Legionaries: "The Lord is calling us to conversion. We have embraced it. We want to be new men. It is a central aspect of our charism and our mission. He calls us to heal the wounds of so many victims of abuse" (Homily of Fr. John Connor, February 9, 2020).

15. To our families, to the Consecrated Women, the Consecrated Laymen, all the members of Regnum Christi, friends, pastors of the Church and everyone we serve in our ministry: thank you for your trust and patience. Help us to fulfill the decisions expressed in this communiqué. Pray to the Lord that with his grace we will overcome evil with good (see Romans 12:21) so that we may be better disciples of Christ and apostles according to the Gospel.

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<sup>5</sup> Pope Francis' [Letter to Priests on the 160th Anniversary of the Death of the Holy Curé of Ars, St John Vianney](#), August 4, 2019.



# Protect and heal

Principles, policies and norms for the protection of minors and vulnerable adults in the institutions of the Legion of Christ and to promote healing and reconciliation with the victims/survivors of sexual abuse committed by members of the Legion of Christ

February 26, 2020

Version 2 with modification made May 7, 2020

[a translation from the official Spanish version]



LEGIONARIES OF CHRIST

DG-LC 1180-2020  
Clas. I.3.47  
Decree

DECREE PROMULGATING  
THE DOCUMENT PROTECT AND HEAL  
OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE LEGIONARIES OF CHRIST

- Considering the norms of the Code of Canon Law and specific documents on the abuse of minors issued by the Holy See;
- Considering the Legionaries of Christ's Safe Environment Accreditation Standards
- Considering that the 2020 General Chapter has approved principles, policies and norms for the protection of minors and vulnerable adults in the institutions of the Legionaries of Christ and to promote healing and reconciliation with the victims of sexual abuse committed by members of the Legionaries of Christ

I PROMULGATE

the document Protect and Heal with universal validity for the Congregation of the Legionaries of Christ and its institutions.

These principles, guidelines and policies will govern the decisions that are made from the date of promulgation of this decree onward.

The new regulatory measures become mandatory as of June 1, 2020.

It is the responsibility of the competent major superiors to institute the planned new structures, to promulgate the decrees of implementation and application and to make the corresponding appointments, within a prudential period of one year from the date of publication.

Given in Rome, February 26, 2020

Father John Connor, LC  
General Director

Father Andreas Schöggel, LC  
General Secretary

# Introduction

1. In recent years, the Church and society have been acquiring a new awareness of the very high responsibility to protect children and adolescents, based on the principle of “putting the interests of children first,” which should govern the actions that are aimed at this portion of the People of God and society. The evil and profound effects of all kinds of sexual abuse, and the deep personal and social wounds it causes are also understood better today, leading to important steps to listen to, understand, support and welcome the victims who have suffered such abuse.

In this context and in light of the [1941-2019 Report](#) on the sexual abuse of minors by some Legionaries of Christ, the Congregation of the Legionaries of Christ, on the occasion of its General Chapter held in January and February 2020, did a conscience exam and, after careful reflection, confirmed and established principles, policies and norms for the protection of children, adolescents and adults.<sup>1</sup> We also commit ourselves to the search for truth and pathways of reparation, healing and justice for those who have suffered abuse by members of the Legion of Christ, with our eyes set on the desired pastoral goal of reconciliation.

We also reaffirm our resolve to continue to develop and offer effective tools and a rapid response to any information, communication, news or claim of inappropriate behavior that transgresses the applicable laws or codes of conduct, so as to reinforce the establishment of safe environments where the Legion of Christ is entrusted with the educational and pastoral care of children, adolescents, young people and vulnerable adults.

All this in observance and application of the universal and particular ecclesiastical laws, as well as the civil legislation of each place.

2. In this way, the Legion of Christ and each of its members are determined to continue our journey of conversion and our pastoral service to the Church and to each person, proceeding responsibly as authentic shepherds after the example of the Lord, renewing our effort to live virtuously and evangelically.

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<sup>1</sup> The first version of the Territorial Safe Environment Accreditation Standards was promulgated December 30, 2014.

We make our own Pope Francis' message in his 2019 Apostolic Letter, *Vos estis lux mundi*:

*The crimes of sexual abuse offend Our Lord, cause physical, psychological and spiritual damage to the victims and harm the community of the faithful. In order that these phenomena, in all their forms, never happen again, a continuous and profound conversion of hearts is needed, attested by concrete and effective actions that involve everyone in the Church, so that personal sanctity and moral commitment can contribute to promoting the full credibility of the Gospel message and the effectiveness of the Church's mission<sup>2</sup>.*

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POPE FRANCIS, Apostolic Letter *Vos estis lux mundi*, issued Motu Proprio, May 7, 2019.

# Part 1

## Principles and Policies

### A. To promote healing and reconciliation with victims/survivors of sexual abuse committed by members of the Legion of Christ

3. The Congregation of the Legionaries of Christ is committed to welcoming, listening to, helping and providing healing for the victims, families and communities affected by the sexual abuse committed by some of its members or in its institutions, and to offering just and due reparation.

4. The Legion of Christ or its institutions shall have standing committees or bodies that serve to listen to victims, receive them, and reach out to them, as well as to receive accusations or claims against members of the Legion of Christ or employees of its institutions who have committed sexual abuse and to provide the appropriate follow-up. The Legion will also make it easier for people to submit their accusations to bodies independent of the Legion of Christ, if they so desire, where they can be in an environment where they feel safe. In all cases, the jurisdiction and functions of civil or ecclesiastical bodies which, country by country, have an official mandate to receive and deal with complaints of abuse shall be respected.

5. The Legionaries of Christ are committed to promoting outreach initiatives (such as, for example, the so-called “restorative justice” processes<sup>3</sup> that are being successfully developed in some places), guided by independent experts. These initiatives seek to facilitate restorative encounters, the healing of wounds, a listening to victims which is both constructive and healing, and the restoration of peace and justice in the areas where crimes, abuses, boundary violations or other transgressions of the Code of Conduct have been committed, whatever their gravity.

6. In considering the impact and consequences of the abuse suffered, the appropriate bodies of the Congregation are prepared to pay for necessary therapy and to agree on other forms of assistance, according to parameters and channels duly defined for each country.

7. The Legion of Christ will continue the effort of investigating and clari-

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<sup>3</sup> See Glossary.

fying cases of abuse from its past, in order to reach out to those affected and restore justice, as far as possible. Where merited, the competent superior shall open the relevant canonical judicial processes or shall submit the allegations to the competent civil authority.

8. The appropriate authorities of the Legion of Christ will conduct a complete documentary review of each case of substantiated accusations of sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable adults to verify if the cases were properly addressed. If there is sufficient evidence of a crime of concealment or grave negligence, the major superior shall proceed in accordance with Canon Law or shall refer the case to the appropriate authority.

9. Every major superior and every safe environment coordinator in the institutions of the Legion of Christ will receive specific training in the pastoral care of victims of sexual abuse and their families. Each territory of the Legion of Christ must also have people trained in the pastoral care of those who have suffered sexual abuse and their families.

10. With the help of institutions specialized in the subject of abuse, Legionaries will be encouraged to participate in certificate courses or other similar initiatives to update their knowledge in the understanding and prevention of abuse, as well as in the pastoral care of the victims of the different kinds of abuse.

11. The institutions or the appropriate authorities of the Legion of Christ will not impose confidentiality clauses in the agreements they establish with persons who have been abused by one of their members or employees. Exceptions will be granted only at the express written request of the victim. (Rescript and Instruction of the Secretariat of State, December 6, 2019, 5)

## **B. For the protection of minors and vulnerable adults, and for the creation of safe environments**

12. The Legion of Christ has codes of conduct and safe environment standards (which may be established generally, by country, by type of institution or by type of activity) that must be observed as mandatory by all members and persons who offer services, work in its institutions or collaborate in its activities (e.g. teachers, employees, volunteers, etc.) (see [code of conduct](#)).

- a. These Standards shall be constantly updated, in accordance with the development of best practices and each country's civil legislation in this field.
- b. Regular training sessions will be promoted so that the Standards and Codes of Conduct are effectively known and complied with by all.

c. The Code of Conduct shall include sanctions to be imposed on those who do not comply with it.

13. To ensure a culture of care for children, major superiors must ensure that trained staff and resources are available everywhere to meet safe environment standards.

14. As part of its admission processes, the Legion of Christ is committed to carefully evaluating, with the help of specialists, the background of candidates who wish to enter the Congregation and, subsequently, to follow strict criteria for admission to the various stages of religious life. The purpose of this is to preventively detect the unsuitability of those who might in the future put minors or vulnerable adults at risk and to prevent them from continuing on the path to the priesthood.

15. The competent superior must carefully review the file and record of each religious before assigning him to serve in an institution of the Legion of Christ, in order to ascertain his suitability for work with minors or vulnerable adults.

16. The institutions related to the Legion of Christ shall apply similar criteria to those mentioned in the two previous numbers when hiring employees or enlisting volunteers.

### **C. To ensure a rapid, effective and pastorally timely response to allegations or accusations of sexual abuse**

17. Each territory, or each institution related to the Legion of Christ, must have a rapid and comprehensive response plan to address any allegations or accusations against Legionaries, employees or volunteers working in their institutions. These allegations or accusations will be dealt with by a team that listens to all those involved, observing the provisions of civil and canon law, in order to protect the rights of all.

18. The institutions and entities of the Legion of Christ confirm their obligation and decision to comply promptly and responsibly with civil and canon law. Without prejudice to the sacramental forum, they commit to report the probable commission of crimes to civil authorities and to cooperate with them.

19. In addition, in each situation, the victim will be informed of his or her right to file a complaint with the civil authorities.

20. For each territory or country, the Legion of Christ will establish a review board, made up of a majority of external specialists, to give advice as to response and follow-up to be given to complaints, accusations or allegations, on a case-by-case basis. This review board will also have

the function of evaluating the processes and decisions taken by the authorities to ensure the application of established standards and best practices. Its powers must be defined in the Standards and relevant regulations. The review board may be replaced by equivalent state or Church bodies.

21. In favor of excellence and transparency, the institutions of the Legion of Christ are committed to seeking certification of the application of safe environment standards and codes of conduct, preferably by an independent external body.

## D. To ensure justice and the rights of all

22. Particular care must always be taken to protect the rights of all parties involved, particularly those of the person claiming to have been sexually abused and those of the person against whom the charges have been brought.

23. In addition to observing state law, the Legion of Christ, as a clerical religious institute of pontifical right, will constitute an ecclesiastical tribunal, in accordance with Canon Law (see Canons 1427 and 1438, 3). This tribunal will hear cases and disputes concerning religious who, due to their nature or by directive of the Holy See, must be judged in the canonical sphere by the major superiors of the Legion of Christ.

24. In accordance with canon and civil law, any Legionary accused of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult shall be presumed innocent until proven guilty or as determined by the competent judicial authority. All possible measures shall be taken to protect the reputation of the accused during the course of the investigation and the judicial process, if any<sup>4</sup>.

25. The accused Legionary, if he so wishes, may have access to legal counsel, both civil and canonical.

26. If an accusation is proved to be unfounded, or if the cleric or religious is judged innocent, and the case is public knowledge, then the appropriate and possible measures will be taken to restore his good name.

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<sup>4</sup> See Pope Francis, *Vos estis lux mundi*, art. 12 §7; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Circular letter to assist episcopal conferences in developing guidelines for dealing with cases of sexual abuses of minors perpetrated by clerics*, 3 May 2011, I, d, 2-3).

## E. In order to promote the necessary communication and foster appropriate transparency

27. The appropriate bodies of the Legion of Christ will inform its members and the general public of proven cases of sexual abuse committed by any of its members within the limits imposed by civil law and, as the case may be and the circumstances require, with due respect for the good name of the persons involved. At the local level, special attention will be given to persons, communities or institutions directly affected by cases of sexual abuse.

28. The Legion of Christ will regularly update, on a general and territorial level, the published reports on the abuses perpetrated by any of its members, observing the applicable civil laws, specifically the laws and norms on the privacy of information.

29. The Legion of Christ adopts the following guidelines for the public communication of cases of sexual abuse by members of the Legion of Christ:

- a. In principle, it is considered legitimate (and in this light we interpret canon 220 of the Code of Canon Law) and necessary for the protection of children and the common good, that the major superior authorize the publication of the name of Legionary priests who have been convicted, either canonically or civilly, of abusing a minor, unless the applicable civil law prohibits such publication (e.g., laws or norms on data privacy);
- b. It may also be legitimate for the major superior to authorize the publication, including the name, in the case of Legionaries, former Legionaries or deceased persons, whose moral certainty is comparable to the certainty of a canonical or civil conviction, who have abused minors, even if they have not been tried civilly or canonically, when there is a responsibility to protect society, to do justice or to fulfil a duty of reparation to the victims, unless civil law forbids such publication;
- c. It may also be lawful to authorize the publication of a name to clarify, confirm or deny rumors of allegedly criminal acts;
- d. During the preliminary investigation, in order to maintain the presumption of innocence and to protect the right to a good reputation, in principle, the name of the accused will not be published beyond the requirements of the investigation itself, unless current ecclesial practice or the norms of the episcopal conferences establish it as a mandatory measure.

## F. To offer more general support to the Church and society

30. As far as possible, the Legion of Christ will promote interdisciplinary centers for the study of the phenomenon and prevention of sexual abuse, relying on its university institutions, or on public institutions specialized in children's rights, human rights, and so forth.

31. The Legion of Christ will also encourage, as far as possible, the establishment of interdisciplinary teams at the service of the family, society and the Church, composed of specialists in the various branches (psychologists, psychiatrists, doctors, lawyers, educators, and the like), dedicated to the care of victims of sexual abuse and open to receive those affected by these crimes.

## Part 2

### Substantive and procedural norms

#### Standards, safe environments and codes of conduct

32. Every territory of the Legion of Christ must have a trained safe environment coordinator. This should also be the case for each educational institution and other institutions serving minors or vulnerable adults. The duties of the coordinator are defined in the Safe Environment Standards, the Code of Conduct and the corresponding instructions.

33. The Standards and Codes of Conduct should be updated regularly to take account of legislative changes and best practices, as needed.

34. Each novice and each member of the Legion of Christ is obliged to comply with the Code of Conduct in force in the nation in which he carries out his apostolate or institutional activity. Assent to this Code is a necessary precondition for him to exercise priestly ministry or, if he is a novice or religious in formation, any apostolic activity. Anyone who fails to comply with this Code must be sanctioned as set out in the Code of Conduct itself.

35. Superiors, directors of institutions and directors of any apostolic activity, in collaboration with the safe environment coordinator, must ensure compliance with the Safe Environment Standards and the Code of Conduct in their communities and institutions. They must be warned, sanctioned or removed from office in the event of habitual omission or negligence in complying with this norm.

#### *Preliminary investigation*

36. Whenever there is information<sup>5</sup> of a possible crime of sexual abuse or other forms of child abuse presumably constituting a crime against a minor by a Legionary that seems credible, the major superior, as part of the rapid response procedures, in addition to referring it to the civil authorities in a timely manner, has the obligation to initiate quickly and carefully an investigation of his own, if civil law allows it. It can be done personally or by a delegate and concerns the facts, circumstances and imputability of the accused (see Canon 1717, § 1). At the same time, the ecclesiastical authorities will be notified, as established.

37. Canonical investigations must be coordinated with civic judicial processes in such a way as not to interfere with them.

38. Any person who brings forward an allegation will be treated with

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<sup>5</sup> Information should be understood as any formal testimony or allegation, as well as a written statement. If not submitted formally, then anything that leads to the suspicion that a crime has been committed may also be considered information.

due respect, employing the pertinent formalities and with the confidentiality required by the case.

39. When a Legionary witnesses, finds out about or has good reason to believe that a crime has been committed against a minor, in addition to complying with civil law, he has the obligation to remit the information or allegation to the safe environment coordinator or the territorial director without delay and preferably in writing, and if he considers it necessary, to inform the general director, always respecting the sacramental seal.

40. During the preliminary canonical investigation, the accused will be informed in writing what he is accused of. Once the preliminary investigation has been completed, he will be informed, also in writing, of the results.

41. From the beginning of the investigation, the territorial director may, as a precautionary measure, at any time restrict an accused priest's exercise of sacred ministry, or of an office or position in any institution of the Legion, while waiting for the accusations to be clarified. In any case, the defendant shall not participate in any pastoral activities with minors or any activities involving overnight stays outside the community, nor shall he have any responsibility in the safe environment field. These measures are intended to prevent others from being put at risk or for there being occasion for further scandal. However, it must be clear to both the cleric and the community that these measures are a preventive and temporary measure, and that at no time should they be considered a judgment that violates the presumption of innocence of the person under investigation.

42. The preliminary canonical investigation must be conducted in a professional manner and be concluded within a maximum of 90 days from the date the major superior received the accusation or information of the possible crime<sup>6</sup>.

43. While the final discernment of what constitutes notice of a crime rests with the major superior, the failure to begin or complete the preliminary investigation and to apply appropriate precautionary measures in order to protect others could constitute the crime of negligence contained in Canon 1389 §2 of the Code of Canon Law<sup>7</sup>.

44. When the investigator has gathered the necessary elements, he must submit his opinion to the major superior, who must decide the veracity, imputability and steps to be taken, in accordance with canon 1718.

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6 See POPE FRANCIS, *Vos estis lux mundi*, 7 May 2019, art. 14 §1.

7 "A person who, through culpable negligence, unlawfully and with harm to another, performs or omits an act of ecclesiastical power or ministry or office, is to be punished with a just penalty." (Canon 1389 §2).

45. If there is sufficient evidence that a crime of sexual abuse has been committed and that a canonical procedure is to be initiated (see Canon 1718 and substantial norms for the *delicta graviora* of the CDF), the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is to be notified. In this case the abovementioned precautionary measures are to be confirmed or imposed (see Canon 1722), which must always include the separation of the accused from the public exercise of sacred ministry.

#### *Archives*

46. All information about allegations of abuse (i.e., the initial or formal allegation, the canonical investigation, the verdict and canonical restrictions, the safety plan) and also formal corrections and canonical warnings about risky behavior are to be filed in the priest's or religious' personal file. The major superiors will have access to this information in case of other accusations or allegations in order to fully assess the situation of the accused.

#### *Measures and sanctions*

47. For any priest who is found guilty canonically of multiple or repeated sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable persons, the recommendation of the general director to the Holy See shall ordinarily be expulsion from the clerical state. In these cases, if the age of the priest, his health or other serious circumstances make it advisable, the general director will ask the Holy Father to allow him to continue to be a member of the Congregation even if he loses his clerical status or has no pastoral function whatsoever.

48. For any priest who is found guilty canonically of having committed sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable person, but has not been removed from the clerical state, in addition to complying with the instructions of the Holy See, if any, the priest must be required to take such measures as may be necessary to avoid putting minors or vulnerable adults at risk and to avoid further occasion for scandal. The readmission of the priest to the public exercise of ministry is excluded.

49. In all cases, the offending cleric must undergo the therapy deemed necessary and lead a life of prayer and penance, imposing on him the obligation to reside in an appropriate community of the Congregation where he can live out the restrictions and measures imposed (i.e., a personal safety plan), excluding the possibility of residing in a house of formation of the Congregation.

50. The territorial director shall assign a competent person to monitor the measures of the cleric's personal safety plan and to report regularly to him and to the review board about the priest's compliance.

51. Once the existence of a crime of sexual abuse has been confirmed, if there is sufficient evidence and if the competent major superior considers it necessary, he will open investigations or judicial proceedings on possible negligence related to the abuse that may have occurred in discovering or reporting the conduct. If appropriate, the major superior

may impose some precautionary measures during the preliminary investigation or the judicial process.

52. For cases of priests who were not tried in a formal process in the past and who, after investigating the facts, are found to have committed a notorious and undoubted crime or to have admitted their participation in a crime, the case will be presented to the Holy See requesting that the statute of limitations be lifted in order to initiate the due canonical process.

53. If the major superior receives information that a priest has committed sexual abuse with a minor or vulnerable person before becoming a cleric, he is to proceed according to canon 695. If a territorial director decides that the dismissal of the religious “is not completely necessary and that correction of the member, restitution of justice, and reparation of scandal can be resolved sufficiently in another way” (695 §1), requires the confirmation of the general director, who must hear the opinion of his review board and the general council. In any event, the act will be made known to the civil authorities in compliance with legislation of the place where the events occurred.<sup>8</sup>

54. Any religious in formation, not yet a cleric, who is judged to have committed sexual abuse will have his request to leave the Legion accepted, if he submits it, or the process of dismissal from the Congregation will be initiated, in accordance with canon 695.

55. Anyone found guilty of failing to report, hindering the investigation or preventing the proper handling of a case of sexual abuse should receive a just penalty and be ineligible for appointment to a position of authority, a position as councilor to a superior, or to have responsibility in the field of safe environments (coordinator, investigator, review board, expert, and so forth).

56. Anyone found guilty of gross negligence in the handling of a sexual abuse case must receive a just penalty and cannot be appointed to one of the positions mentioned in the previous article for a period of at least six years after conviction.

57. About the possibility of being elected to the General Chapter or the territorial assemblies:

- a. One who has been canonically convicted of the sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult will lack passive voice (i.e., the ability to be elected) to participate in territorial assemblies and/or the General Chapter;
- b. If any priest has been found guilty by canonical sentence of having been gravely negligent, in accordance with canon 1389 §2,

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<sup>8</sup> Modified May 7, 2020

or of not reporting, hindering or interfering with civil investigations or canonical investigations, be they administrative or penal, against a cleric or religious in the crime of sexual abuse, he shall lose his passive voice for elections to the assemblies and general chapter during the time he has been punished with this expiatory sanction.

58. Anyone who has been formally reprimanded twice by the major superior for boundary violations with a minor cannot be appointed or assigned to any ministry involving contact with minors or vulnerable adults for a period of at least six years after the second reprimand. If there is a recurrence, these measures may be imposed without any time limit.

59. These principles for the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults, and these norms for application, may be updated or amended by the general director of the Legion of Christ with the consent of his council.

## Conclusion

60. The Legion of Christ maintains its commitment to ensure safe environments in all its houses and institutions, to reach out to victims and to address any allegations or accusations that may arise. Furthermore, the Congregation is committed to ensuring that these measures are for the glory of God, the good of the Church and—rooted in the Gospel—the service of all people, especially those most in need. In these circumstances the Legion of Christ makes its own the words of the Apostle Paul: “Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good” (Rom 12:21).

# Appendices

**Sexual abuse of a minor:** contact or interaction between a minor and an adult in which the minor is used for the sexual stimulation of the adult. The crime occurs whenever an adult commits acts of a sexual nature with a minor. The Church establishes 18 years as the age of majority. In the civil sphere, the definition of minority varies from one country to another, depending on the legislation in force<sup>9</sup>.

Delicts against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue consisting of the following:

- a. forcing someone, by violence or threat or through abuse of authority, to perform or submit to sexual acts;
- b. perform sexual acts with a minor or a vulnerable person;
- c. the production, exhibition, possession or distribution, including by electronic means, of child pornography, as well as by the recruitment of or inducement of a minor or a vulnerable person to participate in pornographic exhibitions<sup>10</sup>.

**General Chapter:** is the supreme authority of an institute of consecrated life. The General Chapter of the Legion of Christ meets every six years to elect the general government, to deal with the most important matters, as well as to make norms that are binding on all<sup>11</sup>.

**Moral certainty:** is that which is based on sufficient information or evidence, to the extent that something cannot reasonably be doubted.

**Proper law:** the legislation proper to an institute of consecrated life. It is said in reference to “common law,” which is the canonical legislation for the whole Church.

**Canon law:** the general legislation of the Catholic Church.

**Review Board:** a panel of people who function as an advisory body to the major superior. The board offers advice to the major superior to help him or her evaluate reports of child sexual abuse and sanctions.<sup>12</sup>

**Restorative justice:** Restorative justice is a process through which the restoration of social order and the reparation of the damage or injury caused is sought by opting for dialogue and encounter, mitigating confrontation. It encourages the parties to seek the truth and to voluntarily acknowledge the existence of a conflict as a prelude to its resolution. It allows the victim and his or her timeframe to be the protagonist of the

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9 Safe Environment Accreditation Standards of the Legion of Christ ([glossary](#) on the Vatican website)

10 See *Vos estis lux mundi*, art. 1 §1 a.

11 See Canon 631 §1.

12 See [www.vatican.va](#), [Glossary and terms](#),

process, and encourages awareness and responsibility of the offender in the recognition of the damage caused<sup>13</sup>.

**Boundaries (in the treatment or relationship with another person):**

A prudential criterion, often dictated by the cultural context, which makes it possible to determine whether or not an action is appropriate in the relationship between two people. It applies especially when there is an unequal relationship between them (e.g., doctor/patient, psychologist/client, religious minister/faithful, social worker/person receiving services, and the like) and it has to do with both strictly professional behavior and behavior outside the professional sphere<sup>14</sup>.

Boundaries are usually classified as physical, emotional or behavioral:

- Physical boundaries have to do with who can touch a person, in what part of the body and to what extent;
- Emotional boundaries have to do with how close and intimate a relationship is acceptable, how much time is spent with a person and how much information is rightly shared;
- Behavioral boundaries have to do with what a person will or will not ordinarily according to his or her principles and convictions<sup>15</sup>.

**Minor:** Any person under the age of eighteen, or who is considered by law to be the equivalent of a minor<sup>16</sup>.

**Culpable negligence:** Whoever performs or illegitimately omits to perform an act of authority, of ministry or other function that has been assigned to him, resulting in damage to a third party.<sup>17</sup> Its seriousness is judged according to the usual criteria of law or morality.

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13 See <http://diccionariojuridico.mx/definicion/justicia-restaurativa/>. Starting from the old paradigm that states that every infraction is a violation and rupture of people and their relationships, restorative justice is a process through which the restoration of social order and the reparation of the damage or injury caused is sought by opting for dialogue and encounter, mitigating confrontation. It encourages the parties to seek the truth and to voluntarily acknowledge the existence of a conflict as a preliminary to its resolution. It turns the victim and his or her timeframe into the protagonist of the process, and encourages the awareness and responsibility of the offender in the recognition of the damage done. It recovers the vocation of re-inserting the process of justice, transcending the paradigms of the punitive systems of retributive justice and of the formal legal spaces based on the reproach and the return of the legitimate violence of the state as a response to the infringing violence, without invalidating or substituting its social function. It uses tools such as mediation, restorative meetings, listening circles, truth commissions...etc., in the search for elements, sometimes not evident, that can build reparative maps that formal justice does not reach. Restorative justice processes sometimes succeed in undoing the link between the victim and the victimizer (hatred, disgust, anger, guilt...etc.), putting an end to and undoing the bond established in suffering, and sometimes bringing about the emergence of a new bond and a new relationship based on reconciliation as a goal and a horizon" (See RÍOS MARTÍN, JULIÁN CARLOS - OLALDE ATAREJOS, ALBERTO JOSÉ, "Restorative Justice and Mediation. Postulados para el abordaje de su concepto y finalidad", in *Revista de Mediación* [2011]). (<https://revistademediacion.com/articulos/justicia-restaurativa-y-mediacion-postulados-para-el-abordaje-de-su-concepto-y-finalidad/>)

14 See GENERAL SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL, *Professional Boundaries: Guidance for Social Workers*, Reino Unido 2011.

15 See PRAESIDIUM SAFETY BULLETIN, *Spotlight on Boundaries*, Issue 8.

16 See *Vos estis lux mundi*, art. 1 §2 a.

17 See Canon 1389 § 2.

**Vulnerable person:** Any person in a state of illness, of physical or psychological impairment, or of deprivation of personal liberty which, in fact, even occasionally limits his or her capacity to understand, to want or to resist the offence<sup>18</sup>.

**Rapid Response Plan:** Procedures for a rapid and professional response to allegations or accusations of sexual abuse<sup>19</sup>.

**Major superior:** The general or territorial superior.

**Territory:** Equivalent to “province” in the ecclesiastical sense, i.e. a group of several houses of an institute of consecrated life under one superior.

**Boundary violation (in relations with another person):** Occurs when a person exceeds the acceptable limits in a relationship with another person. It can happen inadvertently or consciously. The other person may not initially interpret it as inappropriate. It may also be the result of recklessness. This is not necessarily a morally wrong act or a crime. However, frequent boundary violations can be (or be perceived as) preparation for abuse, or even turn into an abuse<sup>20</sup>.

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18 *Vos estis lux mundi*, art. 1 §2 b.

19 Safe Environment Standards, No. 11.

20 VIRTUS, *Teaching Touching Safety: A Guide for Parents, Guardians, and Other Caring Adults*, United States, 2004.

see GENERAL SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL, *Professional Boundaries: Guidance for Social Workers*, United Kingdom, 2011.



# Report 1941-2019 on the Phenomenon of Sexual Abuse of Minors in the Congregation of the Legionaries of Christ from its Founding to the Present Day

*Conducted by the Commission for Past Cases  
of Abuse of Minors and Attention to Those  
Affected*

21 December 2019

(The current text is a translation from the Spanish version  
published the same date)



LEGIONARIOS DE CRISTO

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# I. Framework of the study

## 1. Origin and purpose of the study

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness in the Church<sup>1</sup>, in society and in the Congregation of the Legionaries of Christ concerning the phenomenon of sexual abuse by priests<sup>2</sup>, its causes and the very serious consequences for the victims.

At the end of his meeting in Rome with the presidents of the bishops' conferences from around the world, Pope Francis recognized that “the universality of this plague, while confirming its grave effect on all of society, in no way lessens its atrociousness when it takes place within the Church”<sup>3</sup> and neither does it diminish its atrociousness within the Congregation of the Legionaries of Christ. As the Pope himself states in this speech, a single case would merit that it be addressed with the greatest seriousness.

In the 2014 General Chapter<sup>4</sup>, the Congregation of the Legionaries of Christ highlighted the need to reach out to victims<sup>5</sup> and seek reconciliation. Since then, work has consisted above all in the prevention of abuses and in dealing with accusations. Nevertheless, in 2019, the superior general clearly noted the need to address with greater depth, fairness, rapidity and resoluteness, the cases of sexual abuse of minors committed by some members of the Congregation that arose prior to the implementation of the Safe Environment Policy in 2015.

In this regard, the superior general of the Congregation decided to submit to the General Chapter—the highest authority of the Congregation, which will begin on 20 January 2020—a report on the situation, detailing the progress and challenges still to overcome. To this end, on 20 June 2019, Father Eduardo Robles-Gil, superior general of the Congregation

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1 [Letter of his Holiness Pope Francis](#) to the People of God, 20 August 2019 and *Motu Proprio Vos estis lux mundo*, 7 May 2019.

2 Priests or clergy in this Report refers to ordained members, including deacons

3 [Address of his Holiness Pope Francis at the end of the Eucharistic Celebration Sunday](#), 24 February 2019.

4 A general chapter is an assembly composed of a representative group of members of a religious institute that holds supreme authority in the institute according to the norm of the constitutions, and is to be a true sign of its unity in charity (see *Code of Canon Law* 631; *Constitutions of the Legionaries of Christ* 124).

5 See [Communique of the Extraordinary General Chapter of the Legionaries of Christ about the path of renewal we are traveling](#) (20 January 2014), nn. 4-5 and 8-9 and [Communique of the Holy See on the Apostolic Visitation to the Congregation of the Legionaries of Christ](#), 1 May 2010, n. 5.

of the Legionaries of Christ, after consulting with his council, created the **“Commission for past cases of abuse of minors and attention to those affected.”** This commission is internal to the General Directorate of the Legionaries of Christ and will cease to function when the General Chapter begins. The superior general gave the commission authority to request information and collaboration from relevant governmental departments of the Congregation, to propose and conduct interviews to clarify cases from the past, and to access archives (observing the pertinent data management policies) to better understand the phenomenon of abuse of minors and promoting reconciliation with those affected.

The objectives set for the commission are mainly the following:

1. To make a historical diagnosis of the phenomenon of sexual abuse of minors committed by Legionaries of Christ<sup>6</sup>, from the Congregation’s founding in 1941 to the present day.
2. To deal with the extant cases according to established criteria<sup>7</sup> and to promote outreach to the victims of abuse of minors.
3. Ensure compliance with civil and ecclesiastical laws.
4. Review the ministry restrictions imposed upon members of the Congregation who have abused minors and ensure that the competent authority in the Congregation is enforcing them.
5. Make recommendations to address the phenomenon of sexual abuse of minors in the past and identify any necessary improvements to the safe environment policy to ensure that it meets the highest standard.

## 2. Working methodology

The commission is made up of members from different departments of the Congregation’s General Directorate (general secretariat, safe environment, communications, initial formation, general archive and mission)<sup>8</sup>. It has met about 25 times and spent more than 150 hours working as a team, in addition to each member’s personal work. The commission functions collegially to ensure responsible decisions and collaboration in its work, taking advantage of each member’s areas of specialization.

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6 In this report, a “Legionary who has committed sexual abuse” refers to a Legionary who has received credible allegations of sexual abuse, that is: allegations that, with the information available, cannot reasonably be doubted, either because the accused has admitted having committed the abuse, because he has been judged guilty by a civil or ecclesiastical court, or because there are witnesses and other reliable indications that abuse occurred.

7 [Accreditation standards of Safe Environment Policy](#)

8 The superior general of the Congregation, with the approval of his council, named Father

The commission contacted 13 victims who had not previously been contacted. It also conducted in-depth interviews with some 40 members of the Congregation. The commission is grateful for the willingness, especially on the part of the victims, to open this painful part of their personal history and so to contribute to the commission's investigations.

The following were used to facilitate research and comparative verification so as to ascertain, within the limits of this kind of work, the credibility of the various accusations of sexual abuse of minors: all the books and documents published on the Internet; accusations published in various digital forums which the commission could find; in addition to the information provided by the various territorial safe environment offices.

The commission conducted an in-depth study of the unresolved cases, listed in order of priority.

The commission reported its findings to the superior general and the territorial superiors of the Congregation, so that the competent authority: (1) would investigate the cases of Legionaries currently residing in their territory; (2) collaborate with the investigation and reach out to the victims of cases of Legionaries accused of acts perpetrated in their territory; (3) ensure that sanctioned Legionaries residing in the territory comply with the restrictions imposed on them.

### 3. Limits and scope of the study

The Commission has reviewed the records of the Legionaries of Christ for whom there was some reference to inappropriate behavior with minors or vulnerable adults. Therefore, the report covers all known cases of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults until 16 December 2019.

The commission did not address the issue of abuse of power and conscience, nor has it delved into the shortcomings of the actions of some superiors to analyze where there may have been cover-up, negligence or omissions. The commission is aware that this is an important pending task.

The information reported on abuse victims and those who have perpetrated abuse corresponds to the information available today. At the same time, the commission does not claim that its study could have discovered all cases. Abuse occurs in secret, many times it can take

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Andreas Schöggli, LC, as president of the commission, Father David Joyce, LC, as secretary, and Legionary Fathers Gerardo Flores, Sylvester Heereman, Steven Reilly, Juan Sabadell and Aaron Smith as members of the commission

years for a victim to feel ready to report it. On the other hand, the information that is available in print or online and in the archives is not exhaustive. Therefore, there are likely more abuse cases than are reported here and the statistics will have to be updated periodically.

Because of differences in national legislation and due to the ethical considerations at play, the Report does not include a list of the names of priests who have credible allegations of abuse of minors. The Legion of Christ in the United States has decided to publish its list according to the practice of several dioceses and religious congregations.

#### 4. Oabuse.org

Recognizing that a culture of silence prevents overcoming patterns that facilitate abuse, and considering the importance of adequate accountability in a culture of care and protection of minors, the Congregation has created the website [Oabuse.org](https://oabuse.org). In Oabuse, the Congregation will periodically update statistical data, safe environment policies, and press releases on particular cases of abuse of minors.

#### 5. To whom this report is addressed

In continuity with the report published on 5 December 2013 by the then superior general of the Congregation (prior to the 2014 General Chapter of the Congregation), this report is published for study by all members of the Congregation and particularly those attending the 2020 General Chapter, so that the Chapter Fathers may receive feedback from the members of the Congregation and thus all join in the effort to eradicate the abuse of minors.

The commission also hopes that this report will be for the victims a sign of a desire to continue taking steps on the path of reconciliation with each of them. The report desires that this may be a first step on this path, by recognizing the history of the Legionaries of Christ.

We are making the report public so that other members of Regnum Christi, its institutions, and any social sphere where members of the Congregation are present will be aware of it. It is important that they have at their disposal truthful and complete information of the progress made on this topic. The fight against sexual abuse requires informed knowledge on the part of the Congregation's members and collaborators, so that they can creatively and demandingly help create a culture of protection and care of minors and contribute to the systematic fight against abuse.

## II. Analysis of the phenomenon of abuses in the Congregation

This section aims to help measure the phenomenon of sexual abuse of minors in the Congregation using statistical information starting from the foundation in 1941 until 16 December 2019 in relation to the number of victims, the number of priests who have committed abuses, the pastoral fields where they occurred and the current status of those who have committed abuse.

Certainly, it is a complex phenomenon that involves multiple factors. The attempt to comprehend it only produces tentative conclusions that can always be improved as the information increases and we collect new evidence. Even so, the available information allows and even requires us to make a first attempt using corroborated and reliable data. This, subsequently, opens up possibilities for further specialized studies.

### 1. Stages in dealing with abuse in the Congregation

The Congregation's response to sexual abuse of minors can be divided into four stages:

#### a) From 1941 to 2005

During this period, the institutional response to the phenomenon of abuse was very much characterized by the general mentality of the time when abuses were a social taboo. It was also marked by the figure of Fr. Marcial Maciel as founder, who was also the superior general and the highest authority. According to the Constitutions of the Congregation at that time, Father Maciel, as superior general, had direct responsibility for all important government decisions, including appointments, admissions to priesthood, investigations and sanctions, and the pastoral assignments of all members.

#### b) From 2005 to 2014

During this period, first under the government of the new superior general, Fr. Álvaro Corcuera and, later, under the pontifical delegate, Cardinal Velasio De Paolis, the Congregation becomes aware, in a slow and painful process, of the abuses Father Maciel committed and of the consequences they had on the Congregation. Codes of conduct and procedures are implemented in many territories, with the United States and

Ireland being the two countries where the problem is confronted with the highest priority. At the international level, however, having to face the process of revision and institutional restructuring of the Congregation, cases of sexual abuse of minors are not given equal priority and relevance and, therefore, consistent action is not always taken on past cases. During the mandate of Cardinal De Paolis, an increase in the awareness towards the prevention of sexual abuse of minors begins, as well as a better understanding of the phenomenon, its scope in the Congregation, the response that was given and the need to reach out to victims. The pontifical delegate instituted an outreach commission to help the victims of Fr. Maciel.

### c) From 2014 to 2019

In these years, the 2014 General Chapter, with a clear declaration, calls for conversion in favor of the victims and reconciliation. From 2014 to 2018, Fr. Eduardo Robles-Gil concentrates his attention and efforts in setting up and establishing the Safe Environment Policy<sup>9</sup>. At the same time, there are delays and a lack of determination to systematically address the cases prior to 2014.

### d) From 2019 onward

As was happening in the rest of the Church and as the fruit of an ongoing conversion, the general government begins to review with greater breadth and dedication the way in which the Congregation handled cases prior to 2015 when the Safe Environment Policy came into effect. The “Commission for Past Cases of Abuse of Minors and Attention to Those Affected” is created and this report is prepared.

## 2. Global statistics from 1941-2019 on abuse of minors by priests in the Congregation

Throughout its history, 1,353 priests were ordained in the Congregation, 367 of whom either since left or have passed away. In this section on statistics, the report uses the expression “number of priests in the Congregation” when referring to the total number of priests ordained, even if they have passed away or subsequently left the Congregation. Since the phenomenon we are studying is the sexual abuse of minors in the Congregation, all those who committed abuse as Legionary priests were included, whether they left or not<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> In Appendix I the steps taken are explained

<sup>10</sup> Using the phrase ‘priests in the Congregation who have abused’ includes in two who were deacons at that moment.

“Substantiated allegations” includes those allegations that, with the information available, should not reasonably be doubted, either because the accused has admitted to committing the abuse, or because he has been found guilty by a civil or ecclesiastical court, or because witnesses and other reliable indicators are available.

The term “victim” refers to any minor who suffered abusive acts of sexual nature, even though in some cases the law does not consider them a crime civilly or canonically (ecclesiastically).

#### a. The victims

- The study identified 175 minors as victims of sexual abuse committed by 33 priests of the Congregation. This number of victims includes at least 60 known minors abused by Father Marcial Maciel.
- The vast majority of the victims were boys between the ages of 11 and 16.
- The Congregation has begun a path towards healing and reconciliation with 45 of these victims. There is still a great need to continue opening this path up for others. (See Chart 1 in Appendix II.)

#### b. Priests who abused minors

- A total of 33 priests of the Congregation committed abuse as priests or deacons. This number represents 2.44% of the 1,353 ordained throughout the history of the Congregation. (See Chart 2 in Appendix II.)
- Of the 33 priests of the Congregation who committed abuse, six have passed away, eight have left the priesthood, one has left the Congregation and 18 are still in the Congregation. (See Chart 3 in Appendix II.)
- Of the 18 who remain in the Congregation, 14 have no public priestly ministry; four have a restricted ministry that excludes pastoral work with minors (schools, youth groups, etc.). In addition, they have a personal safety plan. (See Chart 3 in Appendix II.)
- Classification according to the number of victims of the priests credibly accused of abuse (see Chart 4 in Appendix II):



- In parishes, we know of three victims who were abused by three priests.
- In the youth ministry of the Congregation, a priest abused one victim.

#### d. Judicial situation of the cases (civil and ecclesiastical)

- Civilly, six of the 33 priests passed away without trial, one was convicted, another—already removed from the clerical state—is currently on trial. The others, so far, have not been prosecuted for various reasons, such as the legal situation in different countries or statutes of limitations.
- Canonically, five of the 33 passed away without going to trial, 15 were sanctioned, six are in the process of being tried, three are under preliminary investigation with precautionary restrictions, one received dispensation from ministry without trial, and three were accused after they had already left the Congregation.

#### e. Chains of abuse

Studying this phenomenon, an overview of its historical evolution indicated that there were chains of abuse in which a victim of a Legionary, over the years, sometimes later became himself an abuser. It is worth noting that 111 of the victims were either victims of Father Maciel, or were victims of his victims or of a victim of one of his victims. This represents 63.43% of the 175 victims of priests in the Congregation. Today, none of these 11 priests involved in this chain of abuses publicly exercises priestly ministry in the Congregation. Three of them have passed away. (See Chart 6 in Appendix II.)

#### f. Abuse of authority and the superiors

14 (42.4%) of the 33 priests committed the abuse while they were in positions of authority in the Congregation. This fact made it very difficult—and sometimes impossible—to report and penalize this grave evil. The sexual abuse of minors in the Congregation was linked to the abuse of power and conscience on the part of some who took advantage of their posts to abuse. (See Chart 7 in Appendix II.)

In most of the abuse cases, according to the historical records, superiors treated the abuse of a minor as a reason to not ordain a seminarian to the priesthood, in accordance with can. 695 of Canon Law. In fact, in eight decades, of the 74 Legionary seminarians<sup>13</sup> who abused, 60 (81.08%) were not ordained in the Congregation. Of the 14 who were ordained, two have since passed away, two have restrictions, four are under investigation, and six are no longer under the jurisdiction of the Congregation. According to the historical records, of the three that were ordained after 2005, the superiors admitted them to ordination without knowledge of the facts. (See Chart 8 in Appendix II.)

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<sup>13</sup> In the history of the Congregation, there have been over 6500 who entered the first stage (novitiate). 74 abused as seminarians, 33 as priests (of whom 3 had abused also as seminarians). Those who abused in the Congregation are 1.60% of all Legionaries.

## III. Epilogue

The commission delivers this report very conscious of its limits and that it represents only one step on the path of conversion and continuous improvement that we want to continue to traverse as a Congregation. We have experienced up close the wound that the abuses open in the victims, in the Church and in our own Congregation. Experience tells that any step in approaching a victim is an essential step towards justice in truth, and that shedding light on the past, however painful it may be, is liberating and an indispensable foundation for building the future.

We deplore and condemn the abuses committed in our history, as well as those institutional or personal practices that may have favored or encouraged any form of abuse or re-victimization. We ask forgiveness of the victims, their families, the Church and society for the grave harm that members of our Congregation have caused. We acknowledge with honesty and shame the reality of the crimes of sexual abuse of minors in the Legion's history, sincerely desiring a continued personal and institutional conversion.

The commission's study of the phenomenon of abuse in the Congregation between 1941 and 2019 led it to develop a series of proposals and recommendations that it will present during the General Chapter to further consolidate the commitment against child abuse and safe environments. We have noted in the historical investigation, how necessary and timely the standards of prevention are, especially in the response and supervision employed in the past few years since 2015. There is still a need to examine where there may have been cover-up, negligence or omissions.

We continue to seek reconciliation with the victims of abuse and healing. We wish to renew our willingness [to listen to those who want to come forward](#), and to pursue paths of reconciliation and reparation.

We renew our commitment to provide safe environments for minors and vulnerable adults, by means of necessary prevention and rapid response policies to any allegation, which includes the collaboration with civil and ecclesiastical authorities.

December 21, 2019

*Commission for Past Cases of Abuse of Minors and Attention to Those Affected*

# Appendix I:

## Path towards a new culture of care and protection of minors, meeting with victims and systematically combatting abuse (2014-2019)

The 2014 General Chapter requested that the general government continue the Legion's efforts to foster safe environments in its houses and institutions<sup>14</sup>. The Chapter specifically asked the government to establish procedures and criteria for action regarding safe environment policies that all territories would be required to fulfill in the next six years<sup>15</sup>.

On 30 December, 2014, the general superior, with the consent of his council, approved the [Standards for Safe Environment Accreditation: Prevention, Response and Supervision](#).

Each territory had to adapt this general code of conduct to ensure clear and effective policies in educational institutions, Regnum Christi sections and apostolic activities.

The document established 25 standards that articulate a comprehensive response to the phenomenon of sexual abuse of minors:

- **Preventive measures:** selection of candidates entering the Legion; adequate initial training for members, especially in the affective-sexual maturation; codes of conduct; sex abuse prevention training programs; immediate intervention in the event of any boundary crossing; support and assistance to members with affective-sexual immaturity; means of perseverance for members..
- **Response measures to any allegation:** qualified personnel for any complaint; pastoral care of the affected; thorough investigation; and in collaboration with civil and ecclesiastical authorities.
- **Supervision:** establishing safety plans for anyone credibly accused of these crimes, and to prevent them from harming more people.

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<sup>14</sup> See General Chapter [Communiqué](#) 2014, 210.

<sup>15</sup> See General Chapter [Communiqué](#) 2014, 211.

A two-year time frame was established for the territories to implement these policies, at the end of which a certification<sup>16</sup> process began.

On 13 March 2017, the general coordinator of safe environments proposed to the general director and his council to contract the American agency Praesidium, Inc. to carry out the certification processes for the implementation of the Standards of Safe Environment Accreditation. The proposal was approved because it could not be the Legion of Christ itself who determined that all was well in matters of safe environment.

In October 2017 the territory of Spain began the accreditation process, which concluded on 7 September 2018, becoming the second country accredited by Praesidium after the United States.

During the accreditation in Spain, the first meeting took place with the safe environment coordinators who would initiate the accreditation process in their respective territories: Chile, Brazil, Colombia-Venezuela, Mexico, Monterrey, Italy and the Rome Delegation, with training given by Praesidium, Inc. In this meeting, the coordinators agreed that the certification would begin in one year from that date. Mexico, Monterrey, Colombia-Venezuela and Chile are already in the second phase of the accreditation process.

Territories such as Central Europe and the United States also follow the protocols established by the episcopal conferences or by the governments of the countries where the Legionaries carry out their apostolate.

Sex abuse prevention training was given by the general directorate in Spain to all the Legionaries (2014 and 2017), to the novices of Spain (2018 and 2019), to all the Legionaries of the Monterrey Territory(2018), and to all the Legionaries of the Territory of Mexico (2019).

The standards were updated in 2017 incorporating the suggestions from the accrediting agency that reinforce the following standards:

- Standard 1: presence on social networks and the Internet of candidates who ask to be admitted to the Legion.
- Standard 4: letters of good standing for priests, seminarians and consecrated persons planning to participate ministry with minors outside their assigned territory.
- Standard 19: notify the certifying agency if a member has been found guilty of sexual abuse of a vulnerable minor or adult.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

On 22 June 2018, the superior general wrote to the territorial directors to reflect with them on how best to help the Legionaries acquire a profound safe environment culture. On this occasion, the objective was to point out to the territorial superiors some areas that deserve special attention. These are:

- He reminded them of the importance of codes of conduct and their value as secondary codes. He established that any religious, unwilling to comply with the norms, could not receive any kind of ministry.
- He reminded them that local superiors have the duty to offer their seminarians means of support and perseverance in their vocation.
- He invited them to practice fraternal correction, in order to admonish any boundary transgression.
- He asked that they help Legionaries to understand the suffering and consequences of abuse for victims and their families.
- He invited them to know and diligently apply the rapid response plans whenever any allegation arises, seeking healing for victims.
- He insisted on the supervision for those Legionaries who committed abuse to guarantee that they do not commit other abuses.

On 11 February 2019, a third update of the standards was presented to take meaningful action for people who have suffered sexual abuse as minors by a Legionary:

- Each territory should establish independent channels for people to come forward with allegations. These channels would not substitute the duty that each territory has to reach out to victims, but would function as a means to report allegations. These channels had to be established by May 2019.
- All information on possible abuses must be archived *sine die*, to be able to respond in a timely manner to any allegation, which could arrive years after the events.

On 21 February 2019, several guidelines for the pastoral care of victims of sexual abuse were approved and communicated to all Legionaries, aware that no effort will ever be enough to help in the process of a victim's healing. On this occasion, the territorial directors were also asked to offer specific training to those in charge of this pastoral care.

In March 2019, the superior general gave a conference on the culture of safe environments and protection of minors to the Legionaries of the Territory of Mexico, inviting them to continue along this path of cultu-

ral awareness. This conference was distributed to all the Legionaries around the world inviting local superiors to watch it with their communities at an opportune moment.

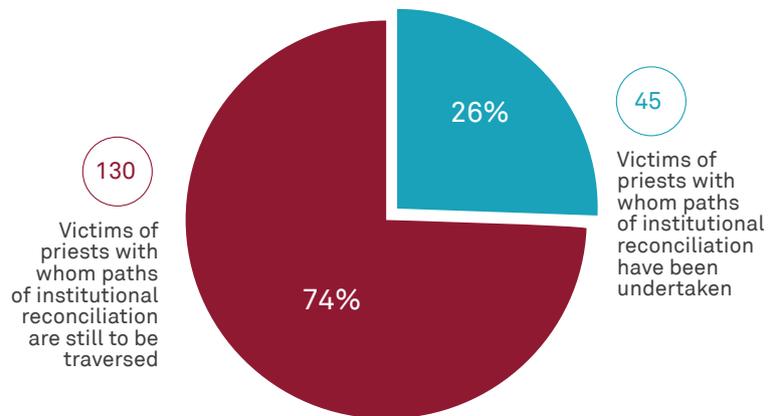
As of June 2019, the work at the General Directorate in relation to the abuse of minors was reinforced through the “Commission for past cases of abuse of minors and attention to those affected.”

## Appendix II: Charts 1941-2019



### Path towards institutional reconciliation

Chart 1



### LC priests that committed child abuse as priests\*

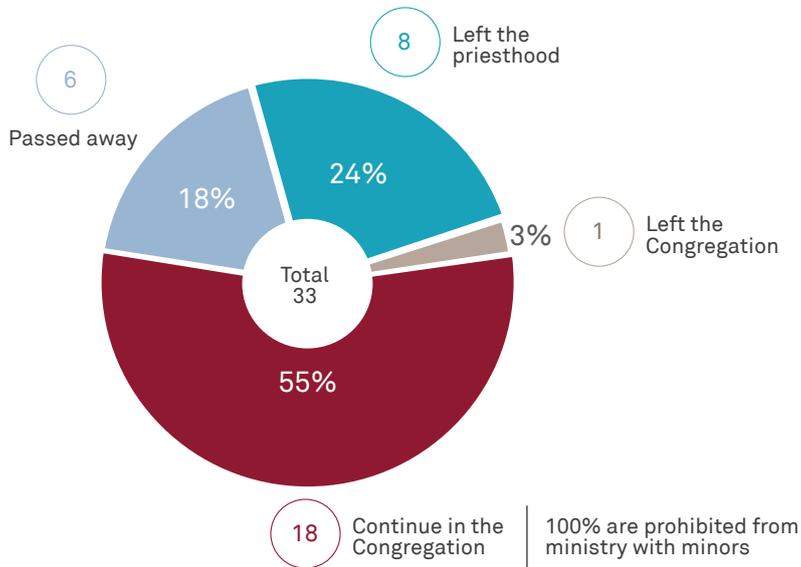
Chart 2



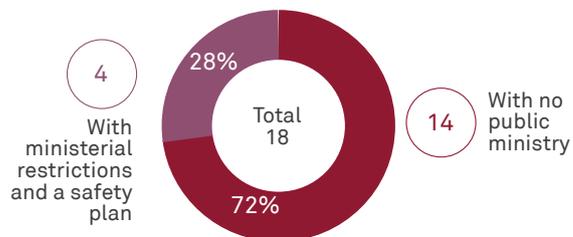
\*To see the statistics of seminarians who committed abuses and were ordained priests [see chart 8](#).



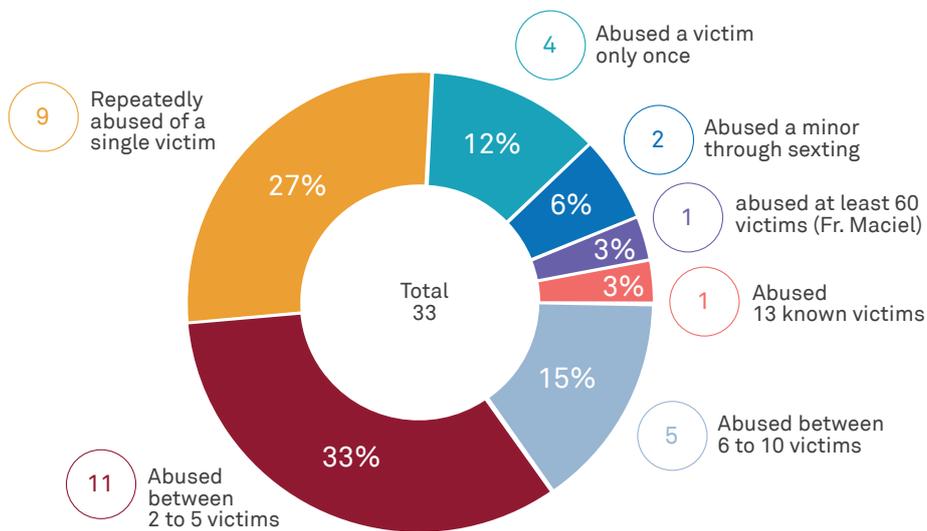
### Status of the 33 LC priests who committed abuses as priests Chart 3



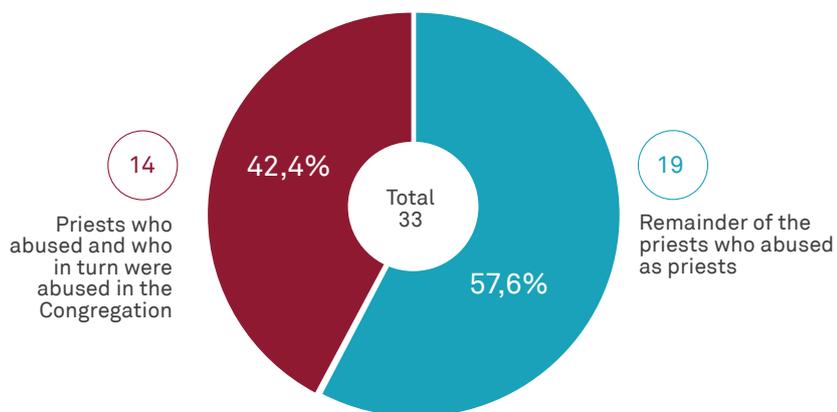
#### Current status of the 18 priests that committed abuse during their priesthood and continue in the Congregation



**LC priests guilty of abuse, by type of abuse and number of victims**  
**Chart 4**

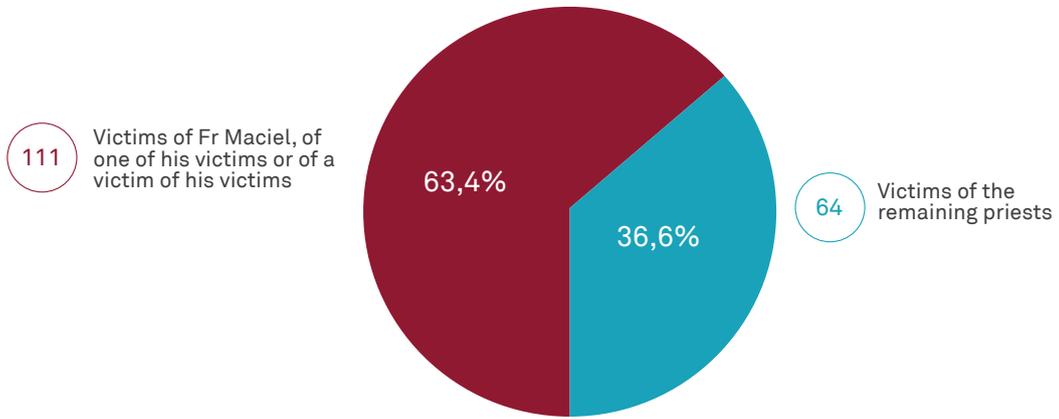


**LC priests who abused as priests and who in turn were victims of abuse in the Congregation**  
**Chart 5**





### Victims of Fr. Maciel, and victims abused by his victims Chart 6

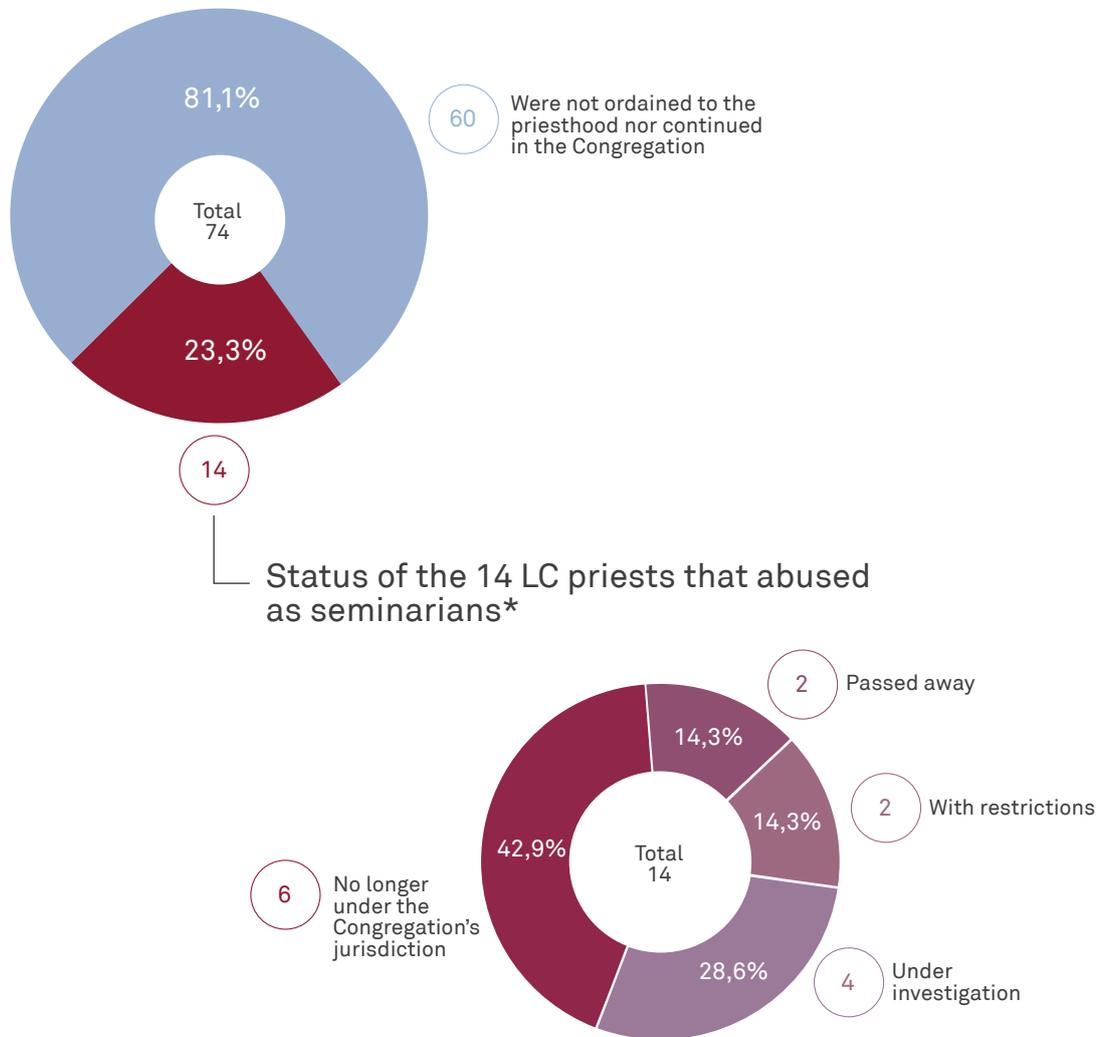


### LC priests that abused as superiors Chart 7





## Response to the LC seminarians who abused Chart 8

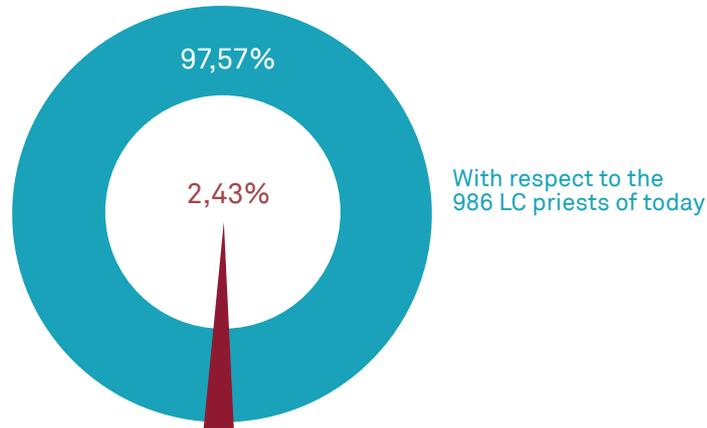


\*Of the three that were ordained after 2005, that the superiors admitted them without prior knowledge of the facts.



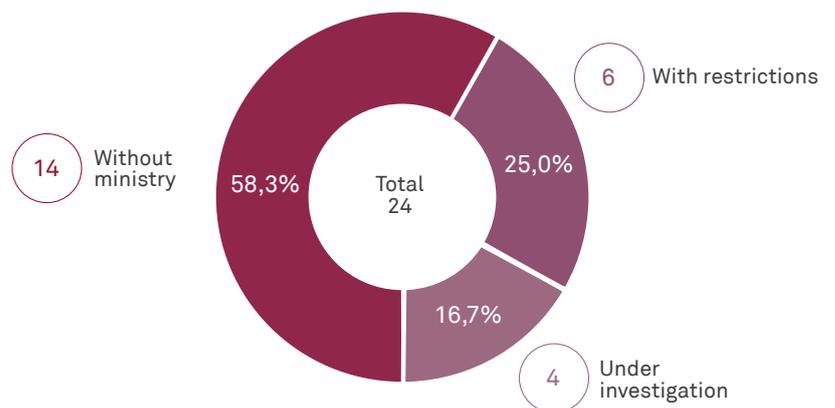
## LC priests who have abused at some point during their life in the Congregation

Chart 9



24

Today there are no religious in formation with a history of abuse. The current status of the 24 living legionary priests who have abused at some point during their life in the Congregation is:



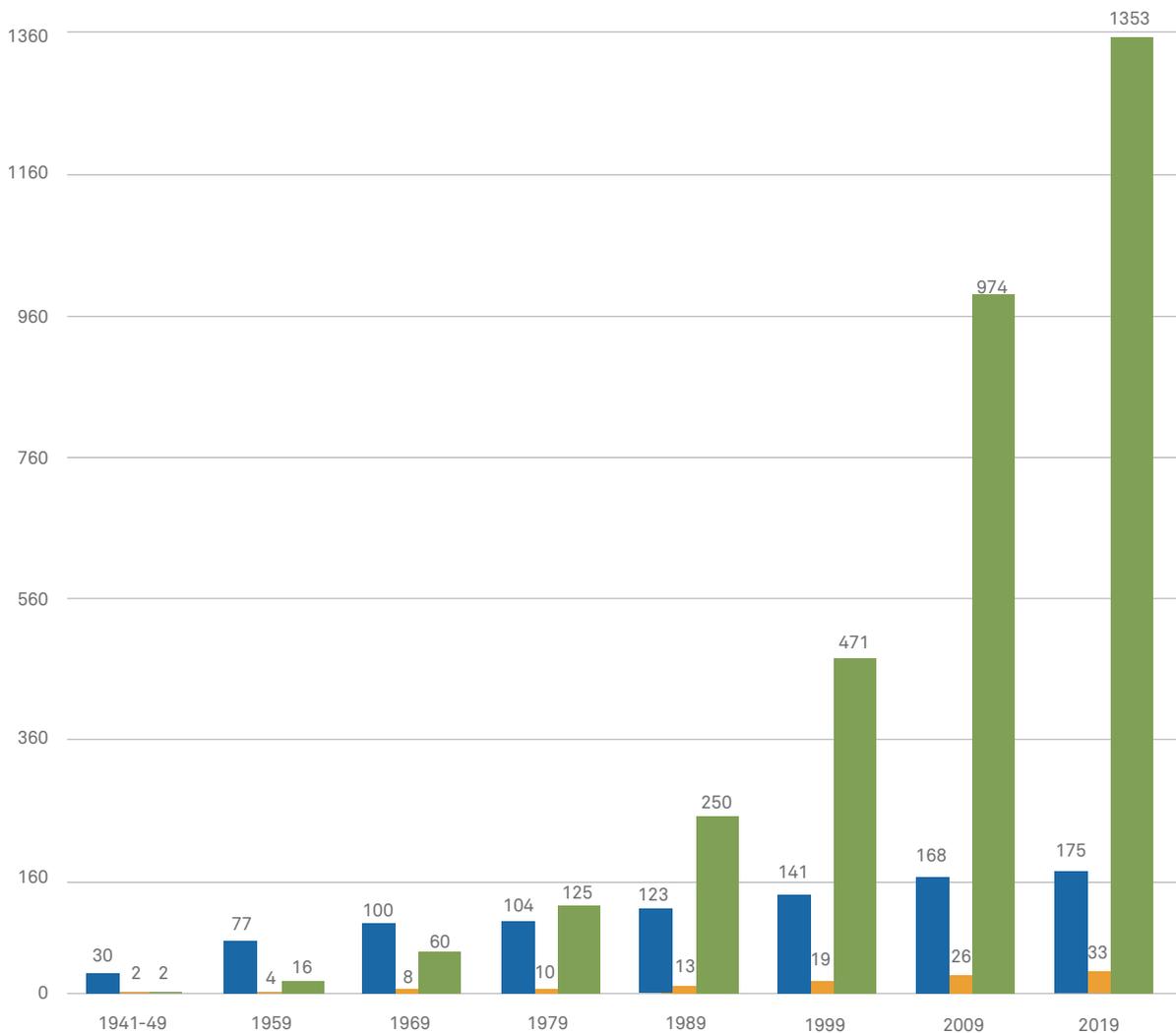


## Comparative Historical Evolution of the sum total of LC Priests, the Victims and LC Priests who Abused between 1941-2019

Chart 10

- Sum total of victims
- Sum total of LC priests that abused
- Sum total of LC priests

	1941-49	1959	1969	1979	1989	1999	2009	2019
Sum total of victims	30	77	100	104	123	141	168	175
Sum total of LC priests that abused	2	4	8	10	13	19	26	33
Sum total of LC priests	2	16	60	125	250	471	974	1353





# LEGIONARIES OF CHRIST

[Oabusos.org](http://Oabusos.org) | [Oabuse.org](http://Oabuse.org)  
[legionariesofchrist.org](http://legionariesofchrist.org)