

The Focolare Movement makes public the measures to be taken regarding the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults in response to the Independent Inquiry by GCPS Consulting

Significant steps forward are being taken to expand and strengthen measures concerning prevention, training, compensation, and the assessment of responsibility. These will guarantee justice to all victims and implement a culture in which absolute priority is given to charity, to the dignity of the person, and to safety and transparency in all areas of the Movement.

"Today we are publishing a first response to the recommendations made by the [Report issued by GCPS Consulting](#) on the cases of child abuse by a former member of the Focolare Movement in France. We realise that these initial measures are not exhaustive, but form part of **a decisive process of realignment of the life and activities of the Movement so that children and every person, in all their diversity, are at the centre of all processes concerning care, safeguarding, reparation and new beginnings**".

With these words Margaret Karram, President of the Focolare Movement, presented the steps the Movement is now taking, thanks also to the recommendations made by GCPS Consulting. These measures are in addition to the [Guidelines](#) for the Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults (being followed in the Focolare Movement since 2014 and currently being revised according to international standards) and to the training courses on safeguarding for members of the Movement.

"First and foremost," she explained, "**I wish to address all victims of sexual abuse, particularly in France.** Personally and on behalf of the Movement I wish to thank you for your courage in sharing your testimony and your pain. For us they are the essential starting point in this process of purification. I also wish to thank the community of the Movement in France for its courage in the face of so much suffering. We now announce the establishment of a central disciplinary commission, which will have the task of assessing the responsibilities of the Movement's leadership, in cases of abuse, in order to reach clarity and provide justice for the victims.

Margaret Karram concluded, "First and foremost we are placing the Gospel at the basis of this **process of renewal**. We want to put the Gospel back at the centre of all we do. Moreover, the serious challenges that the world is experiencing today call for a renewed application of the spirituality of unity so that it can be an instrument of fraternity and peace."

The measures set out below will be implemented over the short, medium, and long term and are considered the most urgent and essential steps to set the Movement firmly on a path of reparation and positive new beginnings.

- **Victims at the centre: the President's personal request for forgiveness**

The victims of abuse are the absolute priority in this process. Therefore, listening, asking for forgiveness, offering help and the path of reparation are the starting point.

Margaret Karram has been in contact personally, when possible while respecting their privacy, with the

victims in France. Her wish is to reach them all, while respecting those who wish to remain anonymous.

- **A network for welcoming and listening to victims**

Local commissions for the welfare and safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults will be strengthened (where they already exist) or be set up wherever necessary and will include professionals in the fields of psychology, law, training, and education. These commissions are independent of the governance bodies of the Focolare Movement and will be the point of contact for allegations of abuse and have the task of initiating procedures. The local commissions will also serve as listening points and the first port of call for anyone wishing to share their experience of abuse, violence, distress, or traumatic experiences of any kind, also accessing - if requested - counselling to identify the next steps. In this respect, listening points are already active in some countries, such as France and Germany.

- **Drawing up a protocol for the compensation of victims of abuse committed within the Focolare Movement**

A Focolare Movement procedure for compensating victims is being drawn up.

- **Establishment of a disciplinary commission**

A central disciplinary commission will be established, made up for the most part of external professionals in the fields of law and psychology, to assess the responsibility of the leadership of the Focolare Movement in dealing with sexual abuse, spiritual abuse, and the abuse of authority. It will work on the basis of a disciplinary code, which will be drawn up in agreement with the Commission itself, and will establish ethical principles and sanctions.

- **Publication of an annual report in the whole world**

A report on the work carried out by the Central Commission for the Welfare and Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults (CO.BE.TU) on cases of abuse and on measures taken regarding prevention, and on the safeguarding of children, will be published annually.

- **Safeguarding is the responsibility of all the Movement's members**

To strengthen this awareness, the Movement will enable every member, including children and those who wish to become members, to attend a foundation course on the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, organised by the local commissions for the welfare and safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.

- **Training courses for those in leadership roles**

Courses are being prepared to train those in leadership roles - at whatever level they work - to implement forms of co-responsibility, greater transparency in decision-making processes, the alternating of roles, and training in accompaniment in the light of the distinction between the sphere of governance and the sphere of conscience.

- **Opportunities for sharing and courses for the Focolare Movement's wider communities**

The wider Focolare communities in various localities should enable the necessary processes of discernment, open dialogue, and an understanding of correct relational dynamics. Following the publication of the Independent Inquiry by GCPS Consulting, many of the Movement's groups and communities have already begun to have times of sharing and dialogue on issues regarding abuses. The Movement encourages such initiatives with the support of experts and professionals, where necessary or requested, taking into account different cultural sensitivities.

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