

## Message from the Spiritan Provincial Leadership Team

On behalf of the Spiritan Congregation (formerly Holy Ghost Fathers) I want to express my deep sorrow, shame and anger that in the past innocent children were sexually abused by some members of our Congregation and that when this abuse was disclosed the response by the Congregation at the time may not have been as compassionate as it should have been. I want to assure you that we have for some time policies and procedures in place that ensure, as far as is humanly possible, that what happened in the past will not be repeated in the future, and that we comply fully with all civil legislation in this area.

To ensure that we offer the highest level of safeguarding for children/vulnerable adults and also that we reach out to survivors in a safe way, respecting their right to privacy, we have:

- Undertaken to continue to comply fully with current and future civil legislation
- Committed ourselves to implementing in full the recommendations of the Review of the Congregation carried out last year by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland
- Appointed two lay people to a newly established Spiritan Safeguarding Office – a Designated Person, Liam Lally, who will receive, record and report allegations of sexual abuse of children by Spiritans to the civil and church authorities, and a Support Person, Jane Ferguson, who will provide assistance to survivors and their families. Their contact details are available elsewhere on this site. I invite anybody who has a concern regarding sexual abuse of children by a Spiritan, either currently or in the past, to contact Liam or Jane.
- Established a Safeguarding Committee whose role includes advising our Leadership Team on creating, maintaining and monitoring a safe environment for children in all aspects of Spiritan life and activity, and exploring safe ways of reaching out to survivors
- Agreed a Vetting policy for all who work in our Congregation
- Appointed a new Advisory Panel to advise our Leadership Team on the handling of cases to ensure that the safety of the child is remains paramount and that survivors interests are protected
- Consulted survivors on how best to reach out to people who may have suffered sexual abuse as children and have not yet come forward
- Consulted organisations and individuals working in the area of child abuse for advice on how to reach out to survivors in a safe way
- Offered pastoral support, appropriate to their needs, to people who have sought help
- Maintained a close working relationship with our Monitoring Committee and the External Supervisor to ensure that members of our Congregation whose ministry is restricted abide by those restrictions

It is my prayer that everybody who has been hurt in the past will find healing and hope, and that we as a Congregation can continue to serve those who wish to engage with us in our various ministries in a safe environment where the safety of the child is paramount.

Marc Whelan C.S.Sp

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