

THE AUGUSTINIANS IN IRELAND

Office of the Provincial

SAINT AUGUSTINE'S Taylor's Lane, Ballyboden, Dublin 16
Telephone: Provincial Office: (01) 4241027



7 July 2020

Dear Priors/PPs & Local Safeguarding Reps,

I imagine the re-opening of your individual churches has not been without its excitement and worries, even with the best and most thorough of planning.

Those who return will, no doubt, be happy to do so having had to withdraw from a safe and welcoming place for good reasons over the past 4 months or so. How individuals and families got through the lockdown will vary. Heartfelt, funny, and sad stories will be told. There may be some sad tales of personal loss. Some unfortunately may relate to a child and/or an adult being hurt or harmed in some way.

If, by any chance, you do hear of a child or vulnerable adult, regardless of age, having been physically, emotionally, and/or sexually abused, then please contact me as soon as possible.



Friars and the DLP, as Mandated Persons, are legally bound to report child abuse, in whatever form, to TUSLA and the Gardaí. If the abuse involves a priest or religious, then we also inform the National Board for Safeguarding Children.

In the first instance, we can seek advice from the Duty Social Worker in the TUSLA Area Office (details on your Child Safeguarding Poster displayed in various location within the church & on the insider cover of the OSA Safeguarding Summary Policy document). The information shared may require a detailed report being filed on the Tusla website. We can do this together - <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/mandated-persons/how-do-i-report-a-concern-about-a-child/>

Where vulnerable adults are concerned the HSE has designated teams throughout the country who can be contacted for advice (see link below).

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<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/olderpeople/elderabuse/protect-yourself/safeguardteams.html>

Leaving the procedural stuff aside, it takes extreme courage for anyone to speak of being abused or of being an abuser. If you are by any chance approached, please respond sensitively taking the following into account: *remain calm; listen carefully; allow the person to tell the story at his or her own pace; check only for clarity; avoid expressing judgements about any person referred to in the story; make a note of what you have heard as soon as possible and then contact me.*

Ultimately, the person needs to be reassured that help is available. Where a present danger continues for a minor (i.e. 18 yrs. or under), either TUSLA or the Gardaí will need to devise an immediate or short-term care plan. A parent or guardian will be involved unless this were to put the child at further risk.

The above is by way of saying to you that both external and OSA supports are available in the coming weeks and months, should it be needed, as the rich liturgical calendar unfolds upon a new road of hope.

Please share this email with other confreres and volunteers, as you see fit.

Kind regards,

Tony.

Designated Liaison Person



(Photo: Bonnie Kittle)

*"Hope" is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul
- And sings the tune without the words
- And never stops - at all.
EMILY DICKINSON*