



Safeguarding Development Newsletter



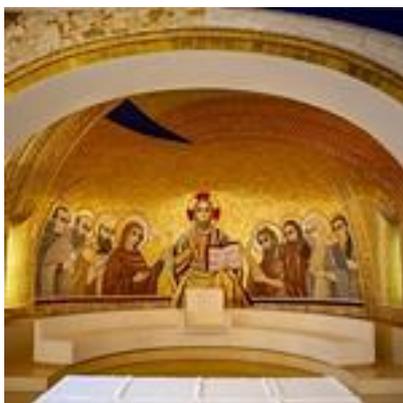
The Longest Journey: From Head to Heart

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Anglophone Conference 2019

This international Child Safeguarding and Protection Conference was held July 1st to 5th at The Pontifical Irish College, Rome.

A total of 81 delegates from 13 countries attended – Ireland, New Zealand, Scotland, England, Malta, Chile, Papua New Guinea, Australia, Canada, the United States, Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Malawi.



The theme of the Conference was *Formation* and the purpose was to explain and explore the concept of integrating *Child Safeguarding* and Catholic Christian formation at all levels of the Church. Here is a selection of the varied inputs.

Bishop Steve Lowe and Virginia Noonan, Director, National Office of Professional Standards of the Catholic Church in New Zealand spoke to the title 'A Journey of Conversion'. The Bishop introduced the metaphor of the potter and the clay, borrowed from Jeremiah (18: 1-6) to provide an understanding of formation – that is, the action of shaping. He went on to say that *Safeguarding Formation* should lead to the conversion of the whole person... and of every person in the parish.

They then introduced the Gospel description of the disciples on the road to Emmaus as a narrative on which to base



the formation of parish communities. The road to Emmaus was described as a journey of conversion that starts with failure, disillusionment and a sense of being betrayed; and they counselled that parishioners would be asked, 'How do you see the Church's failure?'; 'How are you disillusioned?'; and 'What sense of betrayal do you feel?'

Continuing to use the story of the road to Emmaus, they suggested that the formation task is one of listening, of getting alongside, of accompaniment, which is what Jesus did. They encouraged the delegates to think of creating a culture of safeguarding with parishioners, as opposed to just achieving compliance.

As the disciples on the road to Emmaus had a moment of recognition and enlightenment, an 'I get it!' moment, after which they pushed through their fear and became missionaries, Bishop Steve and Virginia invited the delegates and those they represented to become missionary disciples of *Safeguarding*.

Fr. Kevin Fay, Administrator of the cathedral parish of Urney and Annagelliff in Cavan (Kilmore Diocese) spoke enthusiastically about the *You shall be my Witness* Confirmation preparation programme that involves close to 200 children along with their parents each year. Fr. Kevin described the practical but

unobtrusive *Child Safeguarding* measures that are built into this programme. He illustrated with humour and charm how safeguarding is approached, by sharing stories of the learning through which everyone involved has come. He finished by referencing the second Review of the Kilmore Diocese by the NBSCCCI and what that Review Report says about the programme, and in particular about the very skilled and committed Pastoral Worker whose ‘...dedication in providing the children and young people in her care with friendship and faith direction shone through and resulted in the children remaining engaged into adulthood in faith formation in the diocese’.

Saoirse Fox, who is the Child Safeguarding Manager and DLP for the Irish Jesuit Province, defined the purpose of *Safeguarding Formation* for religious communities, as wanting those we are forming to:

- ✚ Understand how to keep children safe and why;
- ✚ Be able to respond with integrity to people who were hurt; and
- ✚ Prevent abusive practices in the Church today.

The challenge that Saoirse then posed was in the form of a question, ‘*Can Safeguarding training achieve all of this?*’ She explained why the answer to this question has to be ‘No’, as *Safeguarding Formation* is a much deeper change process than can be achieved through the provision of information-based training sessions.

Saoirse addressed the need to encounter, embrace and work creatively through *Shame*. Finally, Saoirse gave the delegated her ‘take-away’ messages:

∅ Effective *Safeguarding Formation* creates transformational change at the heart-level. ∅ Interventions need to pay as much attention to the system as the individuals in it. ∅ Those forming religious communities in *Safeguarding* need a strong awareness of the complexity of the domain, and a good capacity for discomfort!



Fr. Joe McGee MSC is the Formation Director of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Ireland who spoke of the need to move from the head to the heart, and from policy to practice. He believes that *Safeguarding* can also be addressed when other topics are dealt with, such as boundaries, self-care, power in relationships, forming and maintaining healthy relationships, maintaining a healthy life-work balance, spiritual life, and sexuality and sexual orientation.

Paul Flanagan works in the School of Education of the University of Waikato and as a counsellor / therapist in adult male sex offender programmes and in sexual abuse counselling with boys. Moving on to consider the formation of children, Paul reminded the participants that children are formed in and by family, in whatever form; in and by community, including parish, school etc., which may also be faith communities; and in and by the wider



society, including national policies about children and their welfare, and extending to global influences, including international children's policies.

The following Maori proverb based on the Harakeke plant over leaf was offered as a metaphor for reflecting on the place of *Safeguarding* in community.

Whakatauki Māori proverb

*Hutia te rito o te harakeke,
Kei whea te kōmako e kō?
Kī mai ki ahau;
He aha te mea nui o te Ao?
Māku e kī atu,
he tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata*

If the heart of the harakeke (flaxbush) was removed, where will the bellbird sing? If I was asked what was the most important thing in the world; I would be compelled to reply, It is people, it is people, it is people.

This proverb reflects the Maori reference to the harakeke (flax) plant as a whanau or family group. The outer leaves are the tupuna (ancestors); the inner leaves are the matua (parents); the most inner leaf is the rito (baby). Only the tupuna are cut as the matua are left to protect the child. Accordingly, the proverb reflects that without the sound of children in the world, the next generation will not survive.

Una Allen (Towards Peace) gave a very uplifting presentation on assisting those who have been abused within the Church who want to explore reconnecting with their Faith, and possibly with their Church. She began with a question that many victims ask – *God, where are You?* Answering this question is the journey that may lead back to Faith; and Una's agency, Towards Peace, Ireland provides accompaniment to those who want to take this path.

Una described the ministry of Towards Peace - it offers a pathway 'towards peace', while respecting that the journey of healing from spiritual injuries is painful, complex and unique for each person who takes that journey. Like her two New Zealand colleagues on Day 2, Una also employed the scriptural description of the disciples on the road to Emmaus and the change in them that resulted by being accompanied by Jesus.



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For a fuller report of the Conference see:
www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate_Publications/Report%20on%20The%20Anglophone%20Conference%20Rome%202019.pdf