

Centre for Child Protection



Anglophone Conference Child Protection – A Spiritual and Theological Approach

- 21-24 June 2015: The Anglophone Conference, where the representatives of English speaking Bishops Conferences share their best practices in the prevention of sexual abuse of minors, took place in Rome, at the Pontifical Gregorian University;
- The USCCB in collaboration with the *Centre for Child Protection (CCP)* hosted this year's Anglophone Conference;
- For the first time the topic of child sexual abuse has been addressed in a Conference from a systematictheological and spiritual perspective, asking how Sacred Scripture and the Tradition of the Church can help to act on the "wounds inflicted on Christ's body" for the good of those who are deeply wounded and for the People of God;
- The CCP continues its e-learning programme and announces the *Diploma in Safeguarding of Minors*. *An Interdisciplinary Approach.*

Rome, 21-24 June 2015 – The annual *Anglophone Conference on the Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults* took place at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. The Conference was initially established on the initiative of several English-speaking Bishops' Conferences to assist the Church in responding to the crisis caused by abuse of children and young people by representatives of the Church. As mentioned by Bishop Burns, Chairman of the Committee on Child and Youth Protection of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the USA (USCCB): "The Anglophone Conference is an ongoing dialogue with English-speaking Episcopal Conferences as well as of Conferences of Religious and Child Protection Officers from Dioceses and Catholic institutions have participated, coming from Canada, England and Wales, Ireland, Kenya, Malawi, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Scotland, South Africa, Sri Lanka, United States, Zimbabwe.

Bishop Burns points out: "The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in collaboration with the Pontifical University Gregorian are the host for this year's gathering. The theme for this year is: 'Child Protection: A Spiritual and Theological Approach".

For the first time the issue of child sexual abuse was addressed from a systematic-theological perspective. The aim is to understand how to speak with survivors about topics such as redemption, about reconciliation, about the Church's responsibility and mission, and the possibility to pray in the face of the sins and the crimes committed. "Many Catholics have left the Church in response to the sexual abuse crisis" observes Sr. Sara Butler MSBT, STL, PhD. "The Catholic faithful who stay, despite

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their disillusionment and anger, continue to love the Church as the mediator of God's grace and mercy". A theological and spiritual approach is needed to assist the victims, as Fr. James Corkery SJ, Professor of Systematic Theology at the Gregorian University, underlines because "an experience of God's unconditional love is vital for the full restoration and healing of a survivor. Such love comes by human pathways and if those close to the perpetrator, 'representative' of him in some way, walk in love with the survivor, then healing has a better chance and love a richer opportunity".

Fr. Hans Zollner SJ, President of the *Centre for Child Protection*, expresses his gratitude to the speakers "because they have paved the way for a theological reflection and for a grounded prayer. This allows us to develop a new vision, as Pope Benedict XVI wrote in his Letter to the Catholics of Ireland: 'A new vision is needed, to inspire present and future generations to treasure the gift of our common faith'."

"This conference also enables participants to learn together and from each other how to better respond to victims and to protect children in the future" says Bishop Burns. "It is our hope to demonstrate the seriousness of this topic and the resolve to bring about healing. Much pain and suffering has occurred in the lives of those who have been abused as well as their families and the leaders of the Anglophone conferences gather together each year to learn *best practices* and are committed to doing the best to create a safe environment within the Church".

From 2012 on, the *Centre for Child Protection* (CCP) of the Institute of Psychology of the Pontifical Gregorian University is part of a global initiative of the Catholic Church for the prevention of sexual abuse of minors. In addition to the e-learning training programme for the prevention of sexual abuse, implemented by several partner institutions on four continents, the CCP conducts interdisciplinary research and doctoral programmes and organises international conferences on abuse prevention and safeguarding. In February 2016 the CCP will start a *Diploma Course in Safeguarding of Minors*. For further information cf. <u>http://childprotection.unigre.it</u> and <u>http://ccpblog.unigre.it</u>.



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Press Conference, 24th June 2015, starting at 4:00 p.m.

Speakers:

Most Reverend Edward J. Burns, Bishop of Juneau, Alaska, Chairman of the Committee on Child and Youth Protection (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops - USCCB)

Sr. Sara Butler MSBT, STL, PhD, President of the Academy of Catholic Theology (Washington D.C.)

Fr. Hans Zollner SJ, President of the *Centre for Child Protection* of the Pontifical Gregorian University (Rome), member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors

Fr. James Corkery, SJ, Professor of Systematic Theology, Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical Gregorian University (Rome)

Moderator: Philippa Hitchen (Vatican Radio)