

**Activities of the Church in Poland
in terms of prevention and protection of children and youth
2005-2019 (summary)**

Since 2005, the Catholic Church has been particularly involved in efforts to protect children and young people against sexual abuse by clerics. At the initiative of the Church, the Child Protection Center was established, about 3,000 priests were trained in prevention, and in each diocese there is a delegate dealing with the protection of children and youth.

1. Activities at the national level

The issue of sexual abuse of minors by clerics - prevention and assistance to victims - has been repeatedly discussed during the plenary assemblies of the Polish Bishops' Conference (PBC), the Permanent Council and individual statutory bodies of the PBC, especially in 2005-2019 (cfr. 331. plenary assembly 8-9.03.2005).

The result of these activities was the adoption of a number of documents and initiatives - both at the national and diocesan level - in the field of Church legislation, structures as well as training and scientific activities in the field of prevention.

The activities of the Church in Poland are coordinated by a delegate of the Polish Bishops' Conference for the protection of minors - since June 2013 Fr. Adam Żak, through the *Child Protection Center*, established at his initiative.

Structures

April 22 - May 5, 2013 - study trip to the United States of Fr. Adam Żak SJ, the future coordinator of the PBC for the protection of minors.

The purpose of the trip was to get acquainted with the history of the crisis in this country and with the conclusions that the Church drew from it. It included meetings and talks with the most important persons responsible for the protection of children and youth in the American Church and visits to the

institutions and centers implementing the policy of the US Episcopate outlined in the “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” of 2002.

June 2013 - establishment by the Polish Bishops’ Conference of the coordinator for the protection of children and youth – Fr. Adam Żak SJ.

The level of his responsibilities is very wide. These include two basic tasks. The first of these is the creation of basic structures enabling the realization of the response of the Church in Poland to cases of sexual abuse of minors, compliant with the standards contained in the standards of the Holy See and in the Guidelines of the PBC. The second of these tasks is to build the prevention system delineated in the framework document on the prevention of sexual abuse of children and young people and people with disabilities in the pastoral and educational work of the Church in Poland.

The realization of these tasks includes training for persons designated to receive reports of crimes of sexual abuse and to help victims and their families as well as to support the creation of a prevention system in the pastoral, catechetical, educational and care activities conducted by dioceses and religious orders. Ensuring quality standards in the field of prevention requires their dissemination through nationwide training programs.

4 March 2014 - the Senate of the Ignatianum Academy established the Child Protection Center at the initiative of the coordinator for the protection of children and youth of the PBC.

The basic tasks of the Child Protection Center include training and educational activities in the psychological, pedagogical and spiritual fields related to the sexual abuse of minors and the preparation and development of prevention programs and examples of good practice for various pastoral, formative and educational environments in order to help them create safe environments for children and adolescents.

Documents

2007 – the beginning of preparation of the first guidelines of PBC

September 21, 2009 - the first guidelines of the Polish Bishops' Conference on prevention.

October 2014 - publication by the Polish Bishops' Conference of the "Guidelines for the preliminary canonical investigation in the case of accusations against a cleric for the transgression of the Decalogue's sixth commandment with a minor under age eighteen". Approved by the Vatican in 2015.

October 2014 - publication by the Polish Bishops' Conference of the "Prevention of sexual abuse against children and young people and people with disabilities in the pastoral and educational work of the Church in Poland". Approved by the Vatican in 2015.

2017 - the latest update of the Guidelines of the Polish Bishops' Conference.

September 4, 2017 - the letter of the President of the Polish Bishops' Conference to the dioceses in Poland regarding the implementation of the Child Protection Center's proposal on prevention.

November 19, 2018 - publication by the Polish Bishops' Conference of the "Position of the Polish Bishops' Conference regarding the sexual abuse of minors by some clerics".

January 2019 - the letter of the President of the Polish Bishops' Conference to the dioceses and the announcement of meetings with all victims of abuses by clerics, in whose cases the canonical verdict was passed and in cases of which canonical examination was impossible.

February 19, 2019 - the letter of the President of the Polish Bishops' Conference to the dioceses after the first round of meetings.

Activities (scientific, training, media, pastoral)

2013 - meetings of the Child Protection Center's representatives with religious superiors, deans and the Conference of Seminary Rectors as well as lectures on issues related to the prevention of sexual abuse of minors in the Church.

December 2014 – appointment by bishops and male and female religious superiors of 60 people to participate in the academic e-learning course organized by the Ignatianum Academy in cooperation with the Center for Child Protection of the Gregorian University in Rome.

June 2014 - international conference: “How to understand and adequately respond to the sexual abuse of minors in the Church”.

June 20, 2014 - the first penitential liturgy in Poland for sins and crimes of sexual abuse in the Church (Cracow, Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus).

Training for seminar educators with the participation of prof. Janina Beisert, organized on behalf of the Conference of Seminary Rectors. (January 2019 - the fourth edition of training).

2014 – organization of training and lectures for diocesan and religious clerics. The training activity includes conferences, sessions of various types and lengths and the participation of the Child Protection Center within the framework of training organized by other entities.

The Child Protection Center's training offer is focused on shaping awareness that fosters the purification of the Church and building safe environments for young people. It is used not only by dioceses and male orders, diocesan and religious seminaries, but also by female congregations.

In total, more than 3,000 diocesan and religious priests have participated in the training of various types authorized by the Child Protection Center since 2014.

2016 - development of protection rules by the Child Protection Center during WYD in Cracow in 2016.

October 2016 - the inauguration of the first three-semester postgraduate studies in the field of prevention of sexual abuse of children and youth at the Ignatianum Academy in Cracow.

The studies are directed to the laity as well as to clergy working as responsible for care, education and resocialization institutions; to educators, pedagogues and school psychologists; to catechists; to psychologists and psychotherapists working with children and youth; to social workers.

Participants of postgraduate studies at the Ignatianum acquire knowledge and skills regarding the recognition of signs of sexual violence, as well as creation of assistance activities for children and youth at risk or affected by violence.

They learn preventive programs covering this subject and acquire knowledge, skills and competences regarding the rules, procedures and good intervention, therapeutic and assistance practices applied to victims of sexual violence in childhood or youth. They also learn the rules of conversation with children and youth at risk or victims of sexual violence and with their families.

The program of the studies is to provide to the personnel of educational and care institutions, run by the dioceses and religious provinces, appropriate qualifications and competences to build safe environments for children and young people.

Training for chaplains and pastors of scouting organizations, organized by the Military Ordinariate in cooperation with the Child Protection Center.

Training for the Alliance of Families and the Association of Catholic Families.

Training for lay male and female volunteers from Salesian Missionary Voluntary Service.

November 2017 - conference organized by the Child Protection Center in cooperation with the Małopolska Board of Education for psychologists and pedagogues on "Protection of a child from violence". 100 teachers and pedagogues from schools in the Małopolska region participated in the workshops.

January 2017 - specialized training for canonists (from bishop's and religious courts).

2018 - workshops for journalists of Catholic media.

March 2018 - under the auspices of the Clergy Commission of the PBC, a two-day training session led by Fr. Prof. Stephen J. Rossetti PhD DMin took place (62 participants), under the collective title "Learning from mistakes". The first day of the session was devoted to conclusions for initial and permanent formation, while the second to the profiles of the perpetrators and strategies for working with them.

February 2019 - the first round of meetings of the President of the Polish Bishops' Conference.

2. Activities at the diocesan level

Structures

First half of 2015 - appointment of 80 diocesan and religious delegates for the protection of children and youth by all Polish dioceses and some religious provinces.

These are persons responsible for receiving reports of sexual abuse of minors by a cleric and for indicating psychological, legal and pastoral help. Names and contact details appear on most diocesan websites, while the full list and contact database can be found on the Child Protection Center website.

Appointment in the dioceses and orders of 69 pastors ready for spiritual and pastoral help to the victims and their families.

Documents

August 25, 2018 - the decision of diocesan bishops to develop a prevention program for every Polish diocese against crimes of sexual abuse of children and youth.

Activities (scientific, training, media)

2015 - 3 series of four-day, professional training for diocesan and religious delegates and 3 series of four-day training for pastors.

Their goal was to prepare delegates and pastors so that, in accordance with the Guidelines of the Bishops' Conference, they would be able to help Church superiors secure the protection of children and young people by adopting a proper attitude towards cases of sexual abuse committed by clerics to the detriment of minors.

The activities of delegates should cover every participant of the drama of abuse, starting from the victims and their loved ones, through communities hurt with crime to a perpetrator, taking into account reliable canonical, criminal and psychological knowledge as well as research results on the scale and forms of abuse. These actions - as it was emphasized - should also be expressed in a reliable search for truth and justice.

May 2017 - two-day workshops for delegates.

Their main purpose was to exchange experiences and prepare for the entry into force of the amendment to art. 240 of the Code of Criminal Law regarding i.a. the obligation to report sexual crimes to the detriment of minors under penalty.

From the autumn of 2018 - the Child Protection Center began systematic training of prevention teams appointed by the Ordinaries in all dioceses.

Teams from dioceses belonging to particular metropolises participate in the training. Their task is to create a prevention program for every diocese covering all sectors of work with children and young people with their various educational and caring activities.

Training for catechists and pastors organized by individual dioceses.

Systematic training sessions for diocesan delegates.

2. International activities of the Child Protection Center

From the beginning of its activity, the Child Protection Center maintains regular contact with the office of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors in the Vatican. From October 2014, every year, the US Bishops' Conference sponsors a workshop on "crisis management" for bishops from Central and Eastern Europe.

July 2015 - study trip to Ireland of Fr. Adam Żak SJ and Ewa Kusz (Child Protection Center), to learn about the response of the Church in this country to the abuse of minors.

From 2013 - a representative of the Child Protection Center participates in the annual "Anglophone Conference" in Rome.

October 16, 2017 – Child Protection Center director trained the directors of Catholic schools in Albania.

October 2018 - a full-day training conducted by Fr. Adam Żak for the staff of the Diocese of Novosibirsk.

November 29, 2018 - Catholic conferences of bishops in Lviv listened to the conference of Fr. Żak, devoted to the current phase of the crisis after recent reports from Australia, Germany and Pennsylvania.

December 17-19, 2018 – the Child Protection Center organized in Kyiv a three-day joint training for representatives of Catholic dioceses in Ukraine and for psychologists of the Municipal Center for Assistance to Children, Youth and Family in Kiev.

The activities aimed at the protection of children and young people are still being continued.

