



## Looking through a different lens

Tina Campbell

This month, the Church's Centre for Child Protection adopted a new name: 'Institute of Anthropology, Interdisciplinary Studies on Human Dignity and Care'. Tina Campbell explains how the institute's vision of 'a world where all humans can live in freedom and without fear of violation of their dignity and receive the care they need and deserve' is one that also informs her own work on the Society of Jesus's global safeguarding project.

### *When woundedness is named*

A Church with wounds can understand the wounds of today's world and make them her own, suffering with them, accompanying them and seeking to heal them. A wounded Church does not make herself the centre of things, does not believe that she is perfect, but puts at the centre the one who can heal those wounds, whose name is Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

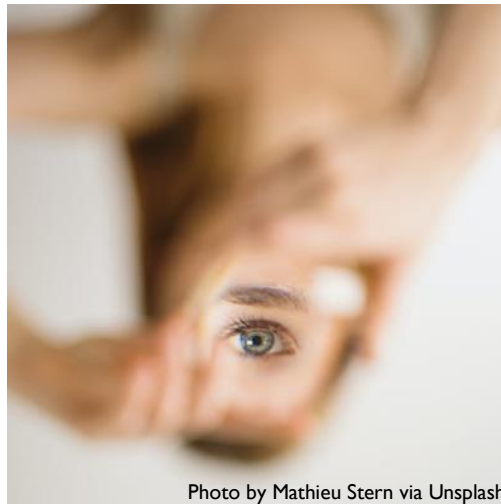


Photo by Mathieu Stern via Unsplash

### *More like an expedition than a journey*

I started working in safeguarding in 2000, initially in a diocesan context, then in 2013 for the Bishops' Conference of Scotland. That journey has often felt like an expedition with a sense of purpose and genuine desire to bring about change. At the same time there have been a fair share of hurdles and moments of desolation

The words of Pope Francis, addressing clergy, religious and seminarians in Chile in 2018, offer an invitation for the Church, now more than ever before, to look at the wounds of the world through a different lens. His words embrace the woundedness of victims of abuse in particular. That embrace reaches out respectfully to acknowledge the bravery of victims who continue to find the courage to disclose what happened to them. The emotional cost for any victim in talking about such wounds must never be underestimated. The greatest appreciation which can be offered to victims is that as a Church we listen not only with our ears but with our hearts. It is a privilege to be invited to listen in this way. That privilege, however, brings with it a great responsibility not only to accompany victims on what is often a complex and painful journey, searching for healing and justice, but in doing so to become instruments of change in the Church.

when I have felt overwhelmed by the scale of abuse across the Church. However, I also find real moments of grace in the companionship of like-minded friends and colleagues who continue to sustain and inspire me.

Since January this year I have been working for the Society of Jesus in a global safeguarding post as the Assistant Coordinator of the Promotion of a Consistent Culture of Protection (PCCP) project, which is part of the Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat at the Jesuit Curia in Rome. Placing a safeguarding project within a social justice setting (rather than, perhaps, education) was a deliberate decision by Father General Arturo Sosa SJ, and indicates very clearly that this is indeed a justice issue.

The international nature of this work provides opportunities for me to reflect upon how culture often informs approaches to safeguarding

and how policies are implemented. Those working in safeguarding might set the lens through which they predominantly view their role according to their cultural and socio-economic context. In some contexts, that might be a narrow lens which focuses on responding to victims or case management (both of which are important of course), but that does not necessarily take in the view of the whole canvas of safeguarding.

### *A potentially narrow lens*

When I started working in this field twenty years ago, the lens was focused on child protection. That of course was, and remains, an important priority. Children deserve to be loved, respected and protected from all forms of harm. At that time, the word ‘safeguarding’ was rarely used; in time, however, perhaps even that term might come to suggest too narrow a lens, through which complacency is allowed to lurk in the shadows. Such complacency exists in the delusion that if there are few or preferably no current allegations of sexual abuse against children, then the Church is doing well. And in order to bolster this false perception, some might seek to minimise the priority of safeguarding in the Church by quoting statistics of familial abuse. The reality, of course, is that children are at risk in many contexts and perpetrators relentlessly seek new ways to harm them. However, this should not diminish the urgency with which the Church must respond. Further ways in which the lens through which we look at safeguarding can be dangerously narrowed include the minimalisation of other (non-sexual) forms of abuse, conflicting views on what vulnerability means, and an inadequate understanding of the impact upon victims.

For some years now, the uncovering of abuse both from the past and in the present has continued on a global scale. The admission that abuse is not only a ‘western problem’ or an historic issue is emerging very slowly. This has

brought enormous challenges for the Catholic Church. Individuals and organisations have been held to account, including those who are perpetrators of abuse. In more recent years senior clergy have been subject to public inquiries and criminal trials, in some instances accused of abuse and in others of a failure to act. There is still much more to come to light about the wounds inflicted by those who held positions of authority within the Church, including others who were complicit or assumed the role of inactive bystanders.

The abuse crisis has touched the lives of many within the Church. In the UK, both the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), which studied faith communities and institutions in England and Wales, and the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (SCAI), with a focus on investigating the abuse of children in care, continue to raise awareness of such wounds. August 2021 saw SCAI release a report on two former Benedictine schools in Scotland,<sup>2</sup> which details graphic accounts of children being sexually and physically abused. The report also describes the ways in which both members of the Benedictine community and lay staff misused their power and inflicted abuse and deep wounds on the minds and bodies of the children entrusted to their care. It reveals the many failures in the educational systems that contributed to the abuse continuing.

In September 2021, IICSA released a report on child protection in religious organisations and settings.<sup>3</sup> The previous year, the same inquiry published an extensive investigation into the Anglican Church in England and the Church of Wales.<sup>4</sup> This was followed in November 2020 by an equally comprehensive investigation into the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales.<sup>5</sup> The latest investigatory report augments the reports from 2020 and explores accountability in relation to safeguarding in many other faith settings.

Such inquiries are not new but what is evident now is the hideous extent of abuse that has often been denied or covered up by those in positions of power and responsibility. The further tragedy is the reality that there is yet more abuse to be disclosed.

### *The lens widens*

The gradual widening of the safeguarding lens to include vulnerable adults has signalled not only a more comprehensive understanding of abuse but an increased awareness of its scale. Legislation introduced in many European countries and elsewhere supported the progress being made in some parts of the Church towards a level of professionalism. The appointment of laity to leadership roles in safeguarding has provided opportunities for more transparency and a richness of skills available to episcopal conferences and religious congregations. However, we must also recognise that this brings a risk of lay clericalism potentially endorsing behaviours of the past: rigorous external professional supervision for lay safeguarding professionals is important in this regard.

Further initiatives from Rome include the formation of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors in 2014 and the papal summit on the protection of minors in the Church in February 2019. The *motu proprio*, [\*Vos estis lux mundi\*](#) in 2019 addressed the importance of reporting in relation to sexual abuse by clergy, members of institutes of consecrated life or societies of apostolic life. It also widened the scope to include the abuse of vulnerable persons.

### *Looking forward through the lens of dignity*

Fr Federico Lombardi SJ, writing recently for *Vatican News*,<sup>6</sup> identified the progress that has been made since the papal summit of 2019. His article is an insightful overview which captures the reality of abuse but also reflects the response from within the Church.

As Christians and as Catholics, we pride ourselves on recognizing the primacy of the dignity of the person who is the image of God. So, the abuse of a person, the lack of respect, considering others as objects, not being attentive to their sufferings, and so on, is a sign that something specific and fundamental is missing in our faith and in our vision of the world.<sup>7</sup>

Lombardi makes a pertinent point here about the primacy of dignity. To look upon humanity through a lens of dignity is to recognise the paramountcy of safeguarding as a ministry which can bring hope and healing to the many aspects of woundedness. This might contradict some of the more secular approaches to safeguarding which can be found in some areas of the Church, yet I believe this must happen. Unless a victim can be seen as someone whose dignity has been violated, who has not been respected as one made in the image and likeness of God, then the necessity to demonstrate *cura personalis*, to care for the spiritual healing of each person, will be neglected.

It is important to acknowledge the momentous contribution to the progress of safeguarding in the universal Church made by the former Centre for Child Protection (CCP), renamed on 1 September 2021 as the 'Institute of Anthropology. Interdisciplinary Studies on Human Dignity and Care' (IADC) and by Fr Hans Zollner SJ in particular. The CCP, founded in Munich in 2012, moved to the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome in 2015 and has resourced and trained many who are working in safeguarding roles across the world. The change of name reflects the new status as an institute of the university. The IADC will continue to offer blended learning programmes, the Diploma and Licentiate in Safeguarding, and a Doctorate in Anthropology. The IADC expresses its vision as follows: 'The IADC envisions a world where all humans can live in freedom and without fear of violation of their dignity and receive the care they need and deserve.'<sup>8</sup>

Fr Zollner has been extremely generous and tireless in his commitment to the mission of safeguarding, and is regarded as an international safeguarding expert. He has met with many victims and listened to them with compassion. His commitment to a 'victims first' approach to safeguarding continues to inform my own work and that of others working in safeguarding.

### What next?

The PCCP aligns itself with the second of the [Universal Apostolic Preferences](#) (UAPs) embraced by the Society of Jesus in February 2019: to walk with the excluded. The preference affirms the commitment of the Society of Jesus: 'to help eliminate abuses inside and outside the Church, seeking to ensure that victims are heard and properly helped, that justice is done, and that harm is healed.'<sup>9</sup>

My work with the PCCP continues to be a privilege and I work with members of the Society and laity who evidence each day their dedication to ensuring the dignity of those who are wounded. For some it is their own woundedness which motivates them. Of course, there is still much to do in the accompaniment of victims. As the Church seeks to prioritise even further the importance of healing and justice for victims, perhaps it is time for the whole concept of justice to be reimagined. The families and friends of victims also suffer and are not often considered in terms of their own dignity. In some countries there is much work still to be done to overcome barriers to reporting. The safeguarding agenda is not finite, and we can only make progress through a willingness to listen and act. My hope is that this new lens of dignity remains our focus and at the heart of the safeguarding mission.

I will give the last word to Fr Sosa SJ: 'Sent as companions in a mission of reconciliation and justice, we resolve to walk with individuals and communities that are vulnerable, excluded, marginalized and humanly impoverished.'<sup>10</sup>

*Tina Campbell is the Assistant Project Coordinator of the [Promotion of a Consistent Culture of Protection](#).*

---

<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, 'Address to meeting with priests, consecrated men and women and seminarians' (Santiago Cathedral, 16 January 2018):

[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2018/january/documents/papa-francesco\\_20180116\\_cile-santiago-religiosi.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2018/january/documents/papa-francesco_20180116_cile-santiago-religiosi.html)

<sup>2</sup> Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry, Case Study Findings:

<https://www.childabuseinquiry.scot/case-study-findings/case-study-findings-pdf-version>

<sup>3</sup> Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, Child protection in religious organisations and settings Investigation Report (September 2021):

[www.iicsa.org.uk/reports-recommendations/publications/investigation/cp-religious-organisations-settings](http://www.iicsa.org.uk/reports-recommendations/publications/investigation/cp-religious-organisations-settings)

<sup>4</sup> Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, The Anglican Church Investigation Report (October 2020):

<https://www.iicsa.org.uk/reports-recommendations/publications/investigation/anglican-church>

<sup>5</sup> Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, The Roman Catholic Church Investigation Report (November 2020):

<https://www.iicsa.org.uk/reports-recommendations/publications/investigation/roman-catholic-church>

<sup>6</sup> Federico Lombardi SJ, 'The challenge of sexual abuse: what has happened since the February 2019 Summit', *Vatican News*, 26 August 2021:

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2021-08/father-lombardi-the-challenge-of-sexual-abuse.html>

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> <https://iadc.unigre.it>

<sup>9</sup> Arturo Sosa SJ, Letter to the Society of Jesus (19 February 2019):

[https://www.jesuits.global/sj\\_files/2020/05/2019-06\\_19feb19\\_eng-1.pdf](https://www.jesuits.global/sj_files/2020/05/2019-06_19feb19_eng-1.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*