



Dublin, 31 January 1997

Strictly confidential

Your Excellency,

The Congregation for the Clergy has attentively studied the complex question of sexual abuse of minors by clerics and the document entitled "Child Sexual Abuse : Framework for a Church Response", published by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Advisory Committee.

The Congregation wishes to emphasize the need for this document to conform to the canonical norms presently in force.

The text, however, contains "procedures and dispositions which appear contrary to canonical discipline and which, if applied, could invalidate the acts of the same Bishops who are attempting to put a stop to these problems. If such procedures were to be followed by the Bishops and there were cases of eventual hierarchical recourse lodged at the Holy See, the results could be highly embarrassing and detrimental to those same Diocesan authorities.

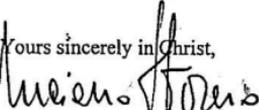
In particular, the situation of 'mandatory reporting' gives rise to serious reservations of both a moral and a canonical nature".

Since the policies on sexual abuse in the English speaking world exhibit many of the same characteristics and procedures, the Congregation is involved in a global study of them. At the appropriate time, with the collaboration of the interested Episcopal Conferences and in dialogue with them, the Congregation will not be remiss in establishing some concrete directives with regard to these Policies.

To: the Members of the Irish Episcopal Conference
- their Dioceses

For these reasons and because the abovementioned text is not an official document of the Episcopal Conference but merely a study document, I am directed to inform the individual Bishops of Ireland of the preoccupations of the Congregation in its regard, underlining that in the sad cases of accusations of sexual abuse by clerics, the procedures established by the Code of Canon Law must be meticulously followed under pain of invalidity of the acts involved if the priest so punished were to make hierarchical recourse against his Bishop.

Asking you to kindly let me know of the safe receipt of this letter and with the assurance of my cordial regard, I am

Yours sincerely in Christ,
+ 
+ Luciano Storero
Apostolic Nuncio