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# **Prelature Global Safeguarding Guidelines**

Following the publication of Pope Francis' *Motu Proprio Vos estis lux mundi* (2019), Opus Dei's Prelate, Mgr. Fernando Ocariz, issued guidelines for the whole Prelature regarding Safeguarding: Prelature Guidelines for Safeguarding Minors and Vulnerable Persons (2020).

22/12/2022

In this document the Prelate of Opus Dei applies to the Prelature the guiding principles for the protection of minors and vulnerable persons enunciated by the Holy Father in the norms given for Vatican City on 26 March 2019. It contains general principles, safeguarding standards, a code of behaviour and general guidelines for the handling of complaints about the abuse of minors and vulnerable persons in the apostolic activities of the Prelature. Each Region of the Prelature needs to adopt a local Safeguarding Policy based on these Guidelines and the Safeguarding Policy of the Bishops' Conference in each country.

In 2015, the Prelature in Great Britain approved its *Norms for the Investigation of Complaints against Faithful of the Prelature relating to the Sexual Abuse of Minors*. In 2022 following a re-organisation within

the Prelature the Region of Great Britain became part of the Region of North-West Europe. Following this re-organisation and implementing the Prelate's world-wide guidelines, a Regional Safeguarding Policy has been adopted (12 September 2022) for the investigation of allegations of abuse of minors or vulnerable adults in the activities of the Prelature of Opus Dei in North-West Europe.

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## **Prelature of Opus Dei**

### **PRELATURE SAFEGUARDING GUIDELINES**

issued by the Prelate of Opus Dei to Safeguard Minors and Vulnerable Persons from abuse or misconduct in activities of the Prelature

# **Version 1.0**

**22 February 2020**

English translation, Region of North-  
West Europe

12th September 2022

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

PSG – Prelature Safeguarding  
Guidelines

Prelature – Prelature of the Holy  
Cross and Opus Dei

*Statuta* – Statutes of the Prelature

Faithful (of the Prelature) – The  
clergy incardinated in it and the lay  
people incorporated in it. (cf. *Statuta*,  
No. 1 §1, §2; No. 6; No. 125 §3)

Coordinator – Regional Safeguarding Coordinator for the protection of minors and vulnerable persons or an Assistant Coordinator acting as his or her deputy in a particular case

Investigator – Person appointed by the Vicar to conduct a preliminary investigation

DDF – Dicastery [formerly, Congregation] for the Doctrine of the Faith

VELM – *Motu Proprio Vos estis lux mundi*

CIC – *Codex Iuris Canonici* [Code of Canon Law] 1983, as amended by the Apostolic Constitution *Pascite gregem Dei*, May 23, 2021

SST – *Motu Proprio Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*, April 30, 2001, amended May 21, 2010, and again on 7 December 2021 with the *Norms on the Delicts Reserved to the*

*Congregation (now, Dicastery) for the Doctrine of the Faith*

*Notitia [de delicto] – Can. 1717 §1 CIC – “information, which has at least the semblance of truth, about an offence” received by the Ordinary*

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## **PREAMBLE**

Since 2013, the Vicars of the various Regions of the Prelature have approved procedures for the investigation of allegations of sexual abuse of minors made against faithful of the Prelature of Opus Dei, in accordance with the guidelines of the Congregation (now, Dicastery) for the Doctrine of the Faith (hereinafter “DDF”) contained in the Letter of 3 May 2011, the indications of the various Episcopal Conferences, and the laws of each State.

The Supreme Pontiff, Pope Francis, has recently issued the Motu Proprio *On the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Persons*, of 26 March 2019, together with Law No. CCXCVII of Vatican City State, *On the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Persons*, of 26 March 2019 and the *Directives for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Persons for the Vicariate of Vatican City*, of 26 March 2019, and the Motu Proprio *Vos estis lux mundi* of 7 May 2019 (hereinafter “VELM”), in order to further strengthen the institutional and regulatory framework of the Church and to prevent and combat abuses against children and vulnerable persons.

Having regard to the content of these measures and with full commitment to their high purpose, I address to all the faithful of the Prelature the following directives, in which the indications given by the Roman

Pontiff are gathered together and adapted to the specific pastoral activities of the Prelature.

## **TITLE I – GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

### **Article 1**

The measures and procedures in these Prelature Safeguarding Guidelines (hereinafter “PSG”) have as their objective to foster and maintain an ethos that is respectful of and sensitive to the rights and needs of minors and vulnerable persons, and excludes the risk of exploitation, sexual abuse or ill-treatment occurring in the course of activities carried out under the auspices of the Prelature.

### **Article 2**

Accordingly, these guidelines are addressed not only to all the faithful

of the Prelature, but also to those who in one way or another collaborate in their initiatives of apostolic and Christian formation.

### **Article 3**

In these guidelines, unless the context excludes it, vulnerable persons are to be taken as equivalent to minors, even if they are not expressly mentioned.

a) “Minor” means any person under the age of eighteen years. A person with an habitually imperfect use of reason is equivalent to a minor (cf. *Motu Proprio Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*, – as revised – Article 6, 1°).

b) “Vulnerable person” means, for the purposes of these directives, any adult in a state of infirmity, physical or psychological deficiency or deprivation of personal liberty, which in fact limits his or her ability,

albeit occasionally, to understand or want or otherwise resist an offence (cf. VELM Art.1 §2 a-b).

## **Article 4**

The following objectives and principles inform every standard and procedure aimed at preventing and combating abuses against minors and vulnerable persons in activities under the auspices of the Prelature:

### a) Objectives:

- to promote awareness of and respect for the rights and needs of minors and vulnerable persons and to provide suitable training in safeguarding them;
- to prevent any form of violence, physical or psychological abuse, negligence, neglect, ill-treatment, or exploitation;
- to raise awareness of the obligation to report abuses to

- the competent authorities and to cooperate with them in measures aimed at preventing and combating abuses;
- to effectively address any instance of abuse or ill-treatment of minors or vulnerable persons;
  - to offer victims and their families suitable pastoral care, as well as, where relevant, appropriate medical, psychological, and legal support.

b) General principles of response:

- to respect the rights of those who disclose that they have been victims, and of their families, to be welcomed, listened to and accompanied, and to have their reports or complaints dealt with through the appropriate channels;

- to guarantee to all concerned a complaints procedure in accordance with the rule of law (cf. *Codex Iuris Canonici*, hereinafter “CIC”, Can. 221 §3), which respects both the presumption of innocence and the principles of legality and proportionality in criminal procedures;
- to offer, in the case of someone found guilty of abusing a minor or vulnerable adult and consequently removed from their position, appropriate support for their psychological and spiritual rehabilitation, with a view to their social reintegration;
- to do everything possible to restore the good name of anyone unjustly accused.

## **Article 5**

The authorities of the Prelature commit themselves to treating those affected and their families with dignity and respect. In particular, they will offer:

a) to welcome, listen to and accompany them, using specialist services where appropriate;

b) to provide spiritual care;

c) to provide medical, therapeutic and psychological care, as the case may require.

## **Article 6**

The good name, privacy and confidentiality of the personal data of those involved must be protected.

## **TITLE II – SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS**

### **Article 7**

Apostolic initiatives which receive pastoral support from the Prelature (cf. *Statuta*, No. 121) and in which minors or vulnerable persons take part, should have in place adequate safeguarding policies and standards of good practice.

## **Article 8**

In accordance with VELM Art.2, the Office of Coordinator for the safeguarding of minors has been established in the Prelature, with the following functions and obligations:

1. To receive every kind of complaint or report – whether directly from the person affected or from third parties – regarding conduct to which these guidelines apply. Receipt of every such report will be acknowledged to the complainant and – if different from the complainant – also to the offended person;

2. To gather whatever data may be necessary for the purpose of identifying the person accused and the possible victims, as well as any subsequent data relating to the facts asserted and the persons affected;
3. To inform the complainant and, where appropriate, the offended person about the procedural steps, whether in canon or in civil law;
4. To provide initial assistance to victims, with attentive personal support;
5. In considering an oral complaint, to prepare an authenticated statement – which should be signed by the complainant – noting everything that has been affirmed and also the steps that have been taken – which will need to be certified by a canonical notary;
6. To send to the Regional Vicar, with speed and discretion, the

authenticated statement of the complaint and of the steps taken, making a written note of having sent it and of the date of same, and notifying the complainant to this effect;

7. To ensure the security, integrity and confidentiality of information in accordance with Can. 1455 §3 CIC;

8. To inform the Regional Vicar periodically of the work carried out.

## **Article 9**

Each Regional Vicar shall designate, within the ambit of his region, a Coordinator of safeguarding of minors and vulnerable persons (hereinafter, “Safeguarding Coordinator”), at least one Deputy Coordinator, who will assist the Coordinator in the implementation of these guidelines and substitute for the Coordinator when necessary, and an Advisory Committee composed of

at least five persons. The Safeguarding Coordinator will arrange training activities in safeguarding practice for those involved with minors and vulnerable persons. He or she will also be especially responsible for welcoming and accompanying persons who have suffered exploitation, sexual abuse or ill-treatment, as well as their families.

## **Article 10**

Before designating persons who will work with minors or vulnerable persons in apostolic initiatives which receive pastoral support from the Prelature, even for an occasional involvement:

a) the suitability of the candidates to interact with such persons should be ascertained through appropriate inquiry and by establishing, in accordance with current legislation, the absence of a criminal record;

b) the candidates are to be provided with adequate training, using the most appropriate means, to help them to understand, identify and prevent risks of sexual exploitation and abuse.

## **TITLE III – CODE OF BEHAVIOUR**

### **Article 11**

In apostolic initiatives that include minors, priority should be given to safeguarding them. Accordingly, in the course of such activities, the faithful of the Prelature and their collaborators must:

- be prudent and respectful in dealing with minors;
- be positive role models for them;
- always be visible to other adults when in the presence of minors;

- report to those in charge any potentially dangerous behaviour they might notice;
- respect the sphere of privacy of minors;
- inform parents or guardians about the activities they intend to carry out and the procedures to be adopted;
- exercise the necessary prudence in communicating with minors, including by telephone and on social media;
- carry out activities in rooms suited to the age and stage of development of the minors, taking special care to ensure, as far possible, that minors do not enter or remain in places hidden from view or without supervision;
- avoid any inappropriate, ambiguous or unnecessary physical or verbal contact, such as signs of affection, kisses or hugs which are imprudent,

unjustified or capable of misinterpretation.

## **Article 12**

Faithful of the Prelature – and those admitted as collaborators in apostolic initiatives of the Prelature in which minors or vulnerable adults take part – are strictly forbidden:

- to inflict corporal punishment of any kind;
- to establish a preferential relationship with any of the persons covered by these guidelines;
- to leave any such person in a situation which is potentially dangerous to his or her physical or mental safety;
- to address them in an offensive manner;
- to conduct themselves in a manner or participate in behaviour which is

inappropriate or sexually suggestive;

- to discriminate against any individual or group of persons covered by these guidelines;
- to ask any such person to keep a secret;
- to make gifts directly to any person covered by these guidelines which discriminates against the rest of the group;
- to transport any such person in a vehicle, except in the company of others;
- to photograph or film any of the persons covered by these guidelines without the written consent of their parents or guardians, where applicable;
- to publish or disseminate via the internet or on social networks, without the consent of the parents – or guardians where applicable – images in which any of the persons

covered by these guidelines can be recognized;

- to contact any such person, including by phone or social media, without the consent of the parents or guardians.

### **Article 13**

Any inappropriate or bullying behaviour that might take place between persons covered by these guidelines – even if it does not have particularly serious characteristics – should be acted on promptly, in a measured way, and with prudence and tact, immediately informing the parents or guardians concerned.

### **Article 14**

The written consent of parents or guardians is indispensable for the participation of minors or vulnerable adults in activities which come within the pastoral responsibility of the Prelature. Parents or guardians

must receive information about the proposed activity, as well as the names and contact details of those responsible. Parental consent forms which contain confidential details are to be kept on file with appropriate safeguards.

## **TITLE IV – RECEPTION OF COMPLAINTS**

### **Article 15**

Those who disclose that they have suffered abuses covered by these guidelines, as well as their families, have the right to be welcomed, listened to and supported. The Regional Vicar, directly or through the Safeguarding Coordinator, will

- listen to them;
- assure them that their complaints will be addressed in accordance with civil and canon law;

- ensure that they are offered appropriate spiritual assistance; and
- protect their good name and the confidentiality of their personal data.

The Regional Vicar may entrust the spiritual accompaniment of offended persons and their families to a qualified priest.

### **Article 16**

Medical, psychological and social support, as appropriate, will also be made available to such persons, as well as information of a legal nature.

### **Article 17**

Without prejudice to the sacramental seal, any faithful of the Prelature or collaborator who may have information or a grounded suspicion that a minor or vulnerable person may be suffering any of the abuses

addressed in these guidelines, shall inform the Regional Vicar, directly or through the Safeguarding Coordinator.

## **Article 18**

When the complaints or reports are not manifestly unfounded, the Regional Vicar shall remove the person accused of having perpetrated the acts from involvement in the apostolic activities of the Prelature for the duration of the proceedings in the case, the outcome of which will determine his or her final situation vis-à-vis the Prelature.

## **Article 19**

The civil authorities must be informed of an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor, in accordance with the current civil and canonical legislation, unless it is manifestly unfounded, would involve a

violation of the sacramental seal or of the confidentiality of spiritual guidance, or in the other circumstances foreseen in Can. 1548 §2 CIC.

- This right and duty will always be respected. No attempt shall be made, for any motive, to dissuade the alleged victim or his or her family from reporting the matter to the civil authorities. The Coordinator shall rather inform them of this right and duty and encourage them to exercise it.
- If the victim or the victim's legal representative, in writing or otherwise, were to oppose the making of a civil report, the Regional Vicar should act in accordance with the applicable civil norms. In any case, if the Regional Vicar, having consulted the Advisory Committee, considers it

necessary for the safeguarding of the person concerned or of other minors, he shall inform the civil authorities about the allegation or the information received.

## **TITLE V – PROCESSING OF COMPLAINTS**

### **Article 20**

In cases within his competence and without prejudicing any investigation under way in a civil process, the Regional Vicar shall entrust a preliminary investigation in accordance with Can. 1717 CIC with the greatest diligence, to the Promoter of Justice of his Region or to a delegate (hereinafter, “the Investigator”), or if this is not possible, he shall carry it out personally.

### **Article 21**

During the preliminary investigation, among other things that might be relevant, as much as possible should be ascertained about the conduct which is being investigated and its circumstances, the personal details and ages of the persons concerned, the harm caused and the possible involvement of the sacramental forum. Documents, evidence and testimonies may be gathered from the various contexts and environments in which the person under investigation would have acted. The Investigator may also make use of statements, testimonies, documents and reports of experts collected in the civil sphere, to which they may have access, as well as any judgment or decision of the courts of the State concerning the matters under investigation.

## **Article 22**

In the course of the preliminary investigation, the following objectives shall be pursued:

a) to try to achieve the spiritual and psychological recovery of each person involved;

b) to obtain, without delay and in whatever manner may be appropriate to the case, the testimony of the injured party;

c) to inform the victim or his or her representatives as to the rights of the injured party and how to enforce them, including the possibility of presenting evidence and requesting to be heard, directly or through an intermediary;

d) to inform the same persons, if they so request, of the outcome of the investigation and of the course of subsequent events in the process;

e) to advise the injured person to make use of the services of civil and canonical advisers;

f) to safeguard the injured person and his or her family from any intimidation or retaliation;

g) to protect the good name, privacy, and confidentiality of personal data of the parties involved.

## **Article 23**

The presumption of innocence must always be guaranteed, and calling into question the good name of the person under investigation (hereinafter, “the respondent”) is to be avoided. Unless there are serious reasons to the contrary, the respondent must be promptly informed of the opening of the investigation and of what has occasioned it. The respondent should be encouraged to make use of the services of civil and canonical

advisors and should also be offered spiritual and psychological support.

## **Article 24**

Where there is reason to believe that the offences might be repeated, the appropriate precautionary measures should be taken without delay, in accordance with the law.

## **Article 25**

If the preliminary investigation establishes at least the plausibility of the *notitia* that gave rise to it, the Regional Vicar shall act in accordance with the procedures required by canon law and shall inform the competent civil authorities. Otherwise, the Regional Vicar shall issue a decree dismissing the case and setting out his reasons for doing so, retaining documentation in his confidential archive which certifies the steps taken and the reasons for the

decision made. Nevertheless, when the accused is a cleric, the DDF shall be informed (cf. SST, Articles 6 and 16) – even when it has been decided to dismiss the case – for which purpose the Regional Vicar shall send an authenticated copy of the minutes of the investigation and the corresponding decree to the Curia of the Prelature as soon as possible.

## **Article 26**

Any person who is found guilty of committing a crime of abuse against a child or vulnerable person shall be dismissed from his or her apostolic or pastoral tasks or responsibilities in the Prelature. Nevertheless, such a person shall be offered appropriate support for their psychological and spiritual rehabilitation, as well as for their social reintegration.

## **Article 27**

For the local application of these directives, each Regional Vicar shall revise the safeguarding procedures for minors in his region, having regard to the model procedures issued with these guidelines, the indications given by the relevant Episcopal Conference and the civil legislation in force.

Rome, 22 February 2020

## **ARTICLES OF VELM CITED IN THESE GUIDELINES**

Art. 1 §2 a-b

For the purposes of these norms,

a. “minor” means: any person under the age of eighteen, or who is considered by law to be the equivalent of a minor;

b. “vulnerable person” means: any person in a state of infirmity, physical or mental deficiency, or

deprivation of personal liberty which, in fact, even occasionally, limits their ability to understand or to want or otherwise resist the offence.

## Art. 2

§1. Taking into account the provisions that may be adopted by the respective Episcopal Conferences, by the Synods of the Bishops of the Patriarchal Churches and the Major Archiepiscopal Churches, or by the Councils of Hierarchs of the Metropolitan Churches *sui iuris*, the Dioceses or the Eparchies, individually or together, must establish within a year from the entry into force of these norms, one or more public, stable and easily accessible systems for submission of reports, even through the institution of a specific ecclesiastical office. The Dioceses and the Eparchies shall inform the Pontifical Representative

of the establishment of the systems referred to in this paragraph.

§2. The information referred to in this article is protected and treated in such a way as to guarantee its safety, integrity and confidentiality pursuant to Can. 471, 2° CIC and Can. 244 §2, 2° CCEO.

§3. Except as provided for by article 3 §3, the Ordinary who received the report shall transmit it without delay to the Ordinary of the place where the events are said to have occurred, as well as to the Ordinary of the person reported, who proceed according to the law provided for the specific case.

§4. For the purposes of this title, Eparchies are equated with Dioceses and the Hierarch is equated with the Ordinary.

# **NORMS OF THE *STATUTA* CITED IN THE TEXT**

Below is the official Latin text (with an unofficial English translation) of the norms of the *Statuta* – the Code of the Particular Law (“Statutes”) approved by the Apostolic See for the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei – which are cited in these guidelines.

Official Latin text of the *Statuta*:  
<https://opusdei.org/en-uk/article/statutes-of-opus-dei/>

Unofficial English text: <https://opusdei.org/en/article/statutes-of-opus-dei-eng/>

## **No. 1**

§1 Opus Dei est

Praelatura personalis clericos et laicos simul complectens, ad peculiarem operam pastoralem

perficiendam sub regimine proprii Praelati (cfr. n. 125).

*Opus Dei is a personal Prelature consisting of both clerics and lay persons in order to carry out a specific pastoral task under the governance of its own Prelate (cf. n. 125).*

§2 Praelaturae presbyterium constituunt illi clerici qui ex eiusdem fidelibus laicis ad Ordines promoventur et eidem incardinantur; laicatus Praelaturae ab iis fidelibus efformatur qui, vocatione divina moti, vinculo iuridico incorporationis speciali ratione Praelaturae devinciuntur.

*The presbyterate of the Prelature consists of those clerics who have been promoted to Orders from among the lay faithful of the Prelature and are incardinated in it; the laity of the Prelature is formed of those faithful who, moved by a divine vocation, are*

*bound in a special way to the  
Prelature by means of a juridical bond  
of incorporation.*

## **No. 6**

Cuncti christifideles qui Praelaturae incorporantur, vinculo iuridico de quo in n. 27, hoc faciunt eadem divina vocatione moti: omnes eundem finem apostolicum prosequuntur, eundem spiritum eandemque praxim asceticam colunt, congruam recipient doctrinalem institutionem et curam sacerdotalem atque, ad finem Praelaturae quod attinet, subsunt potestati Praelati eiusque Consiliorum, iuxta normas iuris universalis et horum Statutorum.

*All the faithful who are incorporated into the Prelature by the juridical bond described in n. 27 are moved to do so by the same divine vocation. All pursue the same apostolic mission and live out the same spirit and*

*ascetical practices. They receive a suitable doctrinal instruction and priestly care. In all that pertains to the mission of the Prelature they are subject to the authority of the Prelate and his Councils, in accordance with the norms of universal law and these Statutes.*

## **No. 121**

§1 Praeter apostolatum personalem, quem Praelatura in suis fidelibus fovet cuique profecto locus praecipuus competit, Praelatura quae talis specificam assistentiam pastorem praestat laboribus et inceptis indolis civilis ac professionalis, non confessionalis, persequentibus fines educativos, assistentiales, etc.

*As well as the personal apostolate which the Prelature fosters in its faithful, and which truly holds the primary place, the Prelature as such lends specific pastoral assistance to*

*works and initiatives of a civil and professional, non-confessional, nature whose aims relate to education, social welfare, etc.*

§2 Praelaturae Ordinarius, necessitate ductus adimplendi suam specificam missionem utque peculiaris Praelaturae finis quam melius in praxim deducatur, maxima cura eos seliget qui cappellanorum atque religionis magistrorum munere fungentur, tum in inceptis ab Opere Dei qua tali promotis, tum in iis quae a Praelaturae fidelibus una cum aliis suscitantur et pro quibus adiutorium spirituale ab Opere Dei postulant. In nominandis vero his cappellanis et religionis magistris, Praelaturae Ordinarius suum Consilium audire numquam omittat, atque nominationes ita factas loci Ordinario opportune communicet.

*The Ordinary of the Prelature, moved by the need to accomplish his specific mission, and so as to ensure the best possible fulfilment of the aim of the Prelature, will select with the greatest care the chaplains and religion teachers for initiatives promoted by Opus Dei as such, as well as for those organised by the faithful of the Prelature along with others, which request spiritual help from the Prelature. When appointing these chaplains and religion teachers the Ordinary of the Prelature should never fail to consult his Council, and once the appointments are made, he should communicate them opportunely to the local Ordinary.*

## **No. 125**

§1 Praelaturae regimen committitur Praelato, qui suis Vicariis et Consiliis adiuvatur iuxta normas iuris universalis et huius Codicis.

*The governance of the Prelature is entrusted to the Prelate, who is assisted by his Vicars and Councils in accordance with universal law and with this Code.*

§2 Potestas regiminis qua gaudet Praelatus est plena in foro tum externo tum interno in sacerdotes Praelaturae incardinatos; in laicos vero Praelaturae incorporatos haec potestas ea est tantum quae spectat finem peculiarem eiusdem Praelaturae.

*With respect to priests incardinated in the Prelature, the Prelate's power of governance is full in both the internal and the external forum; for lay persons incorporated in the Prelature, his power of governance extends only to what concerns the particular end of the Prelature.*

§3 Praelati potestas, sive in clericos sive in laicos, ad normam iuris

universalis et huius Codicis  
exercetur.

*The power of the Prelate, with respect to both clerics and lay persons, is exercised in accordance with universal law and with this Code.*

§4 Nomine Ordinarii Praelaturae iure intelleguntur et sunt Praelatus necnon qui in eadem generali gaudent potestate exsecutiva ordinaria, nempe Vicarii pro regimine tum generali cum regionali Praelaturae constituti.

*The Ordinaries of the Prelature are understood in law to be, and are, the Prelate and those who possess general, ordinary executive power in the Prelature, that is, the Vicars appointed for the Prelature's governance, both general and regional.*

## **CANONS OF CIC CITED IN TEXT**

Can. 221 §3

Christ's faithful have the right that no canonical penalties be inflicted upon them except in accordance with the law.

Can. 471, 2°

All who are admitted to an office in the curia must ... observe secrecy within the limits and according to the manner determined by law or by the Bishop.

Can. 1455 §3

Indeed, the judge can oblige witnesses, experts, and the parties and their advocates or procurators, to swear an oath to observe secrecy. This may be done if the nature of the case or of the evidence is such that revelation of the acts or evidence

would put at risk the reputation of others, or give rise to quarrels, or cause scandal or have any similar untoward consequence.

Can. 1548 §2

Without prejudice to the provisions of Can. 1550 §2-2°, the following are exempted from the obligation of replying to questions:

1° clerics, in those matters revealed to them by reason of their sacred ministry; civil officials, doctors, midwives, advocates, notaries and others who are bound by the secret of their office, even on the ground of having offered advice, in respect of matters subject to this secret;

2° those who fear that, as a result of giving evidence, a loss of reputation, dangerous harassment or some other grave evil will arise for themselves, their spouses, or those related to them by consanguinity or affinity.

Can. 1550 §2-2°

The following are deemed incapable of being witnesses: ...

2° priests, in respect of everything which has become known to them in sacramental confession, even if the penitent has asked that these things be made known. Moreover, anything that may in any way have been heard by anyone on the occasion of confession, cannot be accepted even as an indication of the truth.

Can. 1717

§1 Whenever the Ordinary receives information, which has at least the semblance of truth, about an offence, he is to enquire carefully, either personally or through some suitable person, about the facts and circumstances, and about the imputability of the offence, unless this enquiry would appear to be entirely superfluous.

§2 Care is to be taken that this investigation does not call into question anyone's good name.

§3 The one who performs this investigation has the same powers and obligations as an auditor in a process. If, later, a judicial process is initiated, this person may not take part in it as a judge.

Can. 1717 §1

Whenever the Ordinary receives information, which has at least the semblance of truth, about an offence, he is to enquire carefully, either personally or through some suitable person, about the facts and circumstances, and about the imputability of the offence, unless this enquiry would appear to be entirely superfluous.

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