

Guidelines for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults

(Approved by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan on February 17, 2021)

Excerpt

Introduction

In a statement addressed to the cardinals and representatives of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on April 23, 2002, Pope John Paul II declared that sexual abuse of children is “an evil by any standard, a crime rightly condemned by society, and an abomination in the eyes of God.”^[1] Protecting minors and vulnerable adults (hereafter included in the term “minors”) is an essential part of the Church's mission. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan has sincerely embraced this mission and has worked in various ways^[2] since 2002. We have created these Guidelines to further strengthen this commitment and to fulfill the mission entrusted to the Church in Japan to protect the lives of minors.

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5. Awareness Raising

(1) Efforts must be made to implement community education within dioceses and schools to uphold the human rights and dignity of minors, raise awareness for abuse prevention, and create safe spaces.

(2) Dioceses, religious orders, and missionary societies must work toward preventing abuse, particularly through the Masses and related events held on the “Day of Prayer and Reparation for Victims of Sexual Abuse by Clergy” designated by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan.

6. Requirements for Pastoral Activities

(1) In pastoral activities involving minors, the protection of minors takes priority. Therefore, in such activities, pastoral workers must adhere to the following:

- Interact with caution and respect.
- Be a role model for minors.
- When with minors, always remain visible to a third party.
- Report any potentially dangerous behavior, even if only potential, to the designated person^[3].
- Respect the privacy of minors.
- Notify parents in advance regarding the content and arrangements of activities.
- Exercise appropriate caution when communicating with minors via telephone, social networks, or other means.

(2) Pastoral workers are strictly prohibited from doing the following to minors:

- Inflicting corporal punishment.
- Forming a preferential relationship with a specific minor.
- Placing minors in situations that could pose a mental or physical risk.

- Exhibiting unpleasant attitudes or behavior that is inappropriate or sexually suggestive.
- Discriminating against specific individuals or groups.
- Compelling minors to keep secrets.
- Differentiating within the group, such as by giving gifts to specific individuals.
- Taking photographs or videos of minors for personal purposes.
- Publishing or distributing images that identify minors on the web or social networks without parental consent[4].

(3) Pastoral activities must be conducted in settings appropriate to the minor's age and developmental stage. Pastoral workers must pay special attention to prevent minors from entering or remaining in unmonitored or dangerous areas[5].

(4) Inappropriate behavior or bullying among minors must be addressed fairly and carefully, even if it does not constitute a crime.

7. Parental Informed Consent[6]

(1) Parental consent is mandatory for minors participating in activities. Parents must also be informed of the activity details, the name of the responsible person, and their contact information.

(2) Parental consent is required for photographing or videotaping minors, publishing photos or videos featuring minors, and direct contact with minors via telephone or social networks.

(3) Consent forms containing important personal information must be stored carefully and securely[7].

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[1] John Paul II, Address to the Cardinals of the United States (23 April 2002), 1. http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2002/april/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20020423_usa-cardinals.html (Retrieved on 8 December 2020)

[2] Promotes surveys, awareness campaigns, training, and the establishment of systems in each diocese regarding sexual abuse and sexual violence by clergy. For details, see the “Desk for the Protection of the Rights of Children and Women” website (<http://catholic-cwd.jp/>).

[3] See the main text, “3. Designated Contact Person for the Protection of Minors.”

[4] If economic damage or mental distress occurs due to infringement of portrait rights or privacy rights, it may be subject to a claim for damages based on tort liability under Article 709 of the Civil Code.

[5] See the “Accident Prevention Handbook: Protecting Children from Accidents” (published by the Consumer Affairs Agency, revised October 2019).

[6] Consent given after receiving sufficient explanation. See <https://www2.ninjal.ac.jp/byoin/teian/ruikeibetu/teiangou/teiangou-ruikei-c/informedconsent.html> (December 8, 2020).

[7] Article 20 of the Act on the Protection of Personal Information.

