

CENTRE FOR SAFEGUARGING MINORS AND VULNERABLE PERSONS

Call for papers

Vulnerability to Sexual, Emotional and Spiritual Abuse and the Catholic Church

Conference May 25-28, 2022

Pope Francis published on 7 May 2019 the Motu Proprio *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* (VELM). In this document, he defined “Vulnerable Persons” in the context of sexual abuse as “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.”

Many appreciate the broadness of this definition since it seems to include a completely new category of possible victims of abuse, including seminarians and religious sisters.

Others deem the definition much too broad. They argue that, according to this definition, everyone seems to be vulnerable, since the concept of “deprivation of personal liberty” is too vague to exclude people from the status of victim.

Situated in this ongoing discussion, we would like to formulate a two-fold aim for the conference:

1. To discuss and clarify our understanding of the term “vulnerable persons” within the context of abuse in the Catholic Church;
2. To discuss how, in practice and in which situations, one could become a vulnerable person in the Catholic Church, and how to address and prevent those persons from abuse.

While the text of Pope Francis is formulated within the context of sexual abuse, as a delict against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue, we would like to broaden the context to include physical, emotional and spiritual abuse. Indeed, we know that sexual abuse seldom occurs as the only form of abuse and that other forms of abuse precede or follow sexual abuse. As such, and in no way excluding other proposals, we particularly welcome contributions that address the following themes:

- Vulnerability to abuse in ministry formation, including seminarians and novices
- Vulnerability to abuse in pastoral care or in spiritual accompaniment
- Vulnerability to abuse in the internal sacramental forum
- Vulnerability to abuse between religious superiors and members of the religious communities
- Vulnerability to sexual abuse in the residential schools
- Ministry to vulnerable groups, such as children and adolescents, the elderly, refugees and migrants

Contact us at:
CPCS@ustpaul.ca



Saint Paul University
223 Main Street
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada
K1S 1C4

1 800 637-6859

ustpaul.ca



Submission Guidelines

Presenters will be allocated maximum 45 minutes for their presentations, followed by a Q&A of 15 minutes with participants. Presenters can use PowerPoint and other audio/visual aids, including handouts.

Please submit an abstract (500 words excluding references) indicating clearly how your paper addresses the themes of the conference outlined above.

Submission Deadline

Email your proposal to CPCS@ustpaul.ca by December 15, 2021. Please include “Vulnerability Conference” in the subject line of your email. We will confirm acceptance or otherwise by January 15, 2022.

Conference Organizers

The conference is organized by the Centre for Safeguarding Minors and Vulnerable Persons, Saint Paul University. The mission of the Centre is to help eliminate the threat and trauma of sexual abuse in society and in the Church by:

- Promoting prevention through formation
- Offering healing assistance to victims/survivors, their families, and their communities
- Striving for justice
- Contributing to reconciliation.

For more information, please visit the Centre’s [webpage](#) or send an Email to CPCS@ustpaul.ca

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