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## The wounds of abuse and the best practices. First two sets of formative materials released by the Italian Bishops' Office for the Protection of Minors

"The Wounds of Abuse" and the "Best Practices", are the areas covered by the first two formative aids released by the National Department for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Persons of the Italian Episcopal Conference, downloadable free of charge from the institutional website <https://tutelaminori.chiesacattolica.it/>. The formative materials, specifically addressed to formators, educators and pastoral workers, will serve as tools for reference and in-depth study by those working within regional, diocesan or inter-diocesan agencies to prevent all forms of abuse within an ecclesial context. Msgr. **Lorenzo Ghizzoni**, archbishop of Ravenna-Cervia, President of the Italian Episcopal Conference's national Department for the Protection of Minors, said: "These first two documents are designed as resources for formation with clear examples for practical guidance addressed to diocesan leaders and ecclesial counselling centres. *Our goal is to foster the development of new mindsets and sensitivities, while promoting successful practices to be implemented in ecclesial environments.*" The documents, prepared by experts and Department board members, are the first in a series conceived as a collection of working papers that will complement the CEI Guidelines of May 2019. It's a work-in-progress which will be developed to encompass all related areas of protection through dedicated reflections. For this in-depth, meticulous effort, said Msgr. Ghizzoni, "We thank the authors who made - and will make - the effort to put their competence and expertise at our service." One of the authors of the document on the theme of suffering, **Anna Deodato**, diocesan assistant in Milan and member of the CEI National Department, highlights the contribution to formation and prevention: *"The materials have a pedagogical function, they give concreteness to the indications set out in the Guidelines for their implementation at local level addressed to groups, individuals, and those attending to the victims. The reality of abuse is presented in structured form, so as to provide an understanding of the issue at stake, the consequences of abuse and the best actions to prevent it from happening."* The purpose of its informative and preventive function is to provide insight into the receptiveness and understanding of those involved, Deodato clarified: "The materials will contribute to the understanding of a reality that we are regrettably part of, a key to interpret what is happening, to become aware that we are talking about people: those who have been hurt and those who caused the hurting, thereby entrusting all of them to the care of the entire Christian community, especially to those who are in positions of responsibility." It should be remembered that *"perpetrating an abuse forms part of a sequence of choices, of gestures: whether it is abuse of power, conscience or sexuality, it is not just a theory, it is an integrating part of a relationship and manipulation pattern."* Fr **Gottfried Ugolini**, director of the Service for the Prevention and Protection of Minors in the Diocese of Bolzano-Bressanone and member of the National Department, co-editor of the text on abuse with Anna Deodato and Father Amedeo Cencini, concurs and further clarifies: "The concern for children, women and men, victims of abuse by clerics within the structures of the Catholic Church is a first crucial step for the protection of minors. *Both at the individual and systemic level the Church is called to take action to be coherent with her mission.* This includes taking seriously what happened in our midst in the past and shouldering the responsibility today as a Church to do justice to the victims. This process involves facing a necessary step: "By drawing the consequences of past events - continues Ugolini - the scourge of abuse of power, of conscience and sexual abuse in all its manifestations must be tackled as a process of conversion for all. It requires a revision and reorientation in all theological disciplines against the backdrop of ecclesial pivotal points: proclamation, liturgy, diakonia and communion. *Measures aimed at preventing such abuses, in conjunction with the protection of minors and vulnerable persons, are a primary task of pastoral ministry as a mission of the Church.*" Protecting minors as a Church mission is also the goal of the quest for the most suitable and appropriate ways to do so whenever they are in a context related to

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an ecclesial activity. Fr **Gian Luca Marchetti**, chancellor of the diocese of Bergamo, member of the National Department and author - together with Fr Francesco Airoidi - of the Best Practices document, explained: *"The parish is a privileged place where the community of believers offers pastoral care to the youngest and most fragile amongst them: a place of reception, protection, growth, education in the faith and in human and Christian values.* Moreover, the parish in its multiple proposals - ranging from catechesis to liturgical celebrations, together with various animation and community activities - is also children's most attended ecclesial setting. Thus, as repeatedly mentioned in the same Guidelines, the major challenge is to translate the protection, care and guardianship of children into best practices, to do good deeds properly." The purpose of the materials, Marchetti points out, " prior to providing detailed analysis of each best practice is *to guide pastoral workers and all those involved in conducting parish activities addressed to children in a community-oriented, co-responsible and shared style of education, capable of 'speaking and doing what is good,* in the rich diversity of every single parish, adhering to the same Gospel Mandate: *whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.*" The President of the Department, Msgr. Lorenzo Ghizzoni, concludes: "Together with the additional instruments we are going to release *We continue our efforts for the prevention of abuse of children and vulnerable people: an urgent and imperative task for the protection of the children and adolescents entrusted to our care.* Information, formation, good practices in parishes, institutes, ecclesial educational centres, meeting places or sports activities, are to be developed and promoted for the creation of a culture of child protection, to protect their rights, their dignity, their human and Christian development."

Emanuela Vinai