



# Report of an Independent Inquiry into Historical Child Abuse

Findings of investigations into  
allegations of sexual abuse by  
JMM and the handling of  
these events by the Focolare  
Movement

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# CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>BACKGROUND TO THE INQUIRY</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>VOICES OF THE VICTIMS</b>	<b>16</b>
DEFINITION OF VICTIMS	16
CREDIBILITY OF VICTIMS	18
PSYCHOLOGICAL HOLD	18
STORIES ABOUT ABUSES AND INDIVIDUAL IMPACT	19
<b>SYSTEMIC MANIPULATION</b>	<b>28</b>
GROOMING PROCESS AND MANIPULATION	28
OTHER ABUSIVE SITUATIONS WITHIN THE MOVEMENT (NOT RELATED TO JMM)	30
<b>INQUIRY PROCESS</b>	<b>39</b>
TERMS OF REFERENCE, SCOPE, APPROACH	39
INQUIRY METHODOLOGY	39
GATHERING TESTIMONIES AND CONFIDENTIALITY	41
CONSTRAINTS AND CHALLENGES	43
STANDARD OF PROOF	43
STANDARD OF CONDUCT	44
<b>FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>ALLEGATION A – SEXUAL ABUSE BY JMM</b>	<b>46</b>
PERIOD 1958 - 1967	47
PERIOD 1967 – 1970	47
PERIOD 1970 – 1980	47
PERIOD 1980 – 1982	48
PERIOD FROM 1982 – 1990	49
PERIOD 1990 – 1995	49
PERIOD 1995 – 2000	50
<b>LEGAL PROCEDURES OF 1994, 1997 AND 2017</b>	<b>50</b>
1994/1995	50
1996 / 1997	51
2017	52
CONCLUSION	52

<b>ALLEGATION B – HANDLING OF THE ALLEGED EVENTS BY THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT</b>	<b>54</b>
TESTIMONY FROM PEOPLE IN CHARGE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS AND DIFFERENT TIMES	57
STATEMENTS FROM WITNESSES WHO KNEW JMM AT THE TIME OF ABUSES	58
CONCLUSION	61
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>62</b>
HISTORY OF SAFEGUARDING IN THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT	62
ASSESSMENT AND GENERAL SAFEGUARDING RECOMMENDATIONS	64
CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP	64
PREVENTION MEASURES - POLICY AND PROCEDURES, LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT	66
RESPONSE MEASURES - REPORTING AND RESPONDING	67
MONITORING AND REVIEW	71
<b>OTHER CONSIDERATIONS</b>	<b>71</b>
APOLOGIES	71
REDRESS/COMPENSATION SCHEME	72
OTHER VICTIMS	73
APPENDIX I TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE REVIEW	75
APPENDIX II TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE INDEPENDENT OVERSIGHT FUNCTION	79
APPENDIX III DOCUMENTS AND SOURCES	81
APPENDIX IV TIMELINE / CHRONOLOGY OF JMM	83
APPENDIX V TIMELINE OF RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN FOCOLARE FRANCE & EUROPE LINKED TO REPORTED INCIDENTS WITH REGARDS TO JMM	85
APPENDIX VI CHRONOLOGY OF INCIDENTS	86
APPENDIX VII CHRONOLOGY OF OFFICIAL ACTIONS AND DIFFERENT COMMUNICATIONS REGARDING JMM	89
APPENDIX VIII DEFINITIONS & TERMINOLOGY	92
APPENDIX IX SAFEGUARDING DOCUMENTS REVIEWED	94

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **Background to the Inquiry**

In light of ongoing concerns regarding cases of sexual violence against minors by JMM, a former consecrated member of the Focolare, resident in France, the Focolare Movement decided to entrust to an independent Body the task to set off and bring ahead an extraordinary inquiry.

The task of this Independent Inquiry was to listen to the victims and to gather further testimonies, as well as investigating whether there were any omissions, cover ups or silences on the part of those responsible for the Movement. At the end of the investigation, the independent body makes its final report public.

### **Voices of the victims**

The profound and cruel indifference demonstrated towards many victims of child sexual abuse, whether within religious Movements, Churches, other institutions and sectors or in Society as a whole, is a constant reminder of the difficult journey any victim undertakes when sharing their stories of sexual violence and abuse. Society is quick to try and silence these voices as they confront us with a difficult and often unacceptable truth. There is a time of legal proceedings and definitions, there is also a time for organisations and society to stand up and acknowledge stories of situations which are against internal standards of behaviour and organisational rules. For this reason, the inquiry dedicates a short chapter on the definition of a victim and how this report has been using the term. For the purpose for this report, the team has decided to use the term 'victim' as it better corresponds to most of the situations encountered but also as its translation into other languages is less problematic.

### **Credibility of victims**

The Independent Inquiry found that all victims it was in contact with had no apparent links to each other and no knowledge of their respective stories (with the exception of the witnesses who told their stories through French Media '*Le Quotidien*' and '*Les Jours*'). It was evident all had undergone a process of serious personal reflection. Although some of them are still deeply affected by the events of the past, they were humble and without any specific hatred or desire for revenge against the perpetrator. They explained they had come forward to tell their stories as a way of confronting their own past, but also to help others in a similar situation to come forward with their own stories, seeking support and resilience in so doing.

### **Psychological hold**

In addition to the victims who initially came forward publicly in the French Media, the Independent Inquiry reached out and invited other victims who had either come forward already during past discussions with the former team of the people in charge of France, or who had contacted the Independent Inquiry by their own initiative. All of them described

their relationships with JMM using similar words, telling similar events, giving a coherent description of events as they happened when they were children or adolescents.

All of the reported abuses took place under conditions the Independent Inquiry labels as 'psychological hold'. JMM did not only groom the children but also their parents as well as members of the Movement at large. JMM was highly regarded by other members, as an intellectual, an engineer, a journalist; somebody who was successful in his job, committed to the Movement, a consecrated member having dedicated his life to serve the Movement of Chiara Lubich, of whom he was seen as being a close friend. In some cases, JMM seemed to have linked his behaviour to spirituality, praying for forgiveness after the abuse took place. Such behaviour added emotional abuse to the sexual abuse. Such relationships are characterised by significant imbalances of power, whereby the alleged victims feel deprived of their free will or does not fully apprehend events.

### **Stories about abuses and individual impact**

This section is specifically dedicated to the victims of JMM, former consecrated lay member of the Movement. Even though many years have passed since some of the stories were told to the Inquiry, those stories are often painful, powerful and can never leave the listener untouched or unconcerned. Respecting the wishes of most of the individuals concerned, this section contains a mix of stories shared by victims about the abuse they suffered and the continuing impact these events had on their lives, decisions they took, possibilities they missed, opportunities they created. The Inquiry wishes to recognise and acknowledge all the suffering which was reported, independently of the origin of the abuse, recognising all victims in a similar way, **as they are not only victims of different individuals but most of the time also victims of systemic failures within the Movement. For a majority of them, recognition of their suffering is a core expectation.**

The Inquiry team received testimony from 26 victims of JMM, either through direct contact and verbal testimony or through documented third parties. An additional 11 victims were suspected and subsequently reported through different means and triangulation but with no further contact or confirmation.

*The report presents extracts from victim testimony received during the course of the inquiry. This content has been reviewed by victims and we are grateful to them for agreeing to include their stories.*

### **Grooming process and manipulation**

When children, adolescents and vulnerable adults are abused, this is very often preceded by sophisticated manipulative processes. Events told by different victims as well as the profile emerging from different witness statements demonstrate, as so often in similar cases, a clear grooming process. Targets of JMM seemed often to have been children from poorer backgrounds, living in the countryside or in decentralised regions, coming from families with a number of children and less able to dedicate individual time to each of them. He provided

them with exceptional memories which were not necessarily open to them without invitations from him. JMM, consciously or not, incited some adolescents to some sort of competition, to be the selected one, the favourite child. In addition to the grooming and manipulation of the children, JMM created a conducive environment in which to approach the children and adolescents by also grooming their parents. He committed a number of abuses under the roof of parents who trusted him, who had invited him, who were convinced of his superior morals given his status as a consecrated lay person who had committed his entire life to the Movement, to poverty, chastity and celibacy.

In addition to the above, JMM was also successful in grooming his own organisational management which for years had partially knowledge about the situation. The Focolare Movement, as with similar situations in the Catholic Church, has spent years using legal concerns and resolutions as a defence, making the excuse that because an abusive situation has not been proven via a legal process, it can somehow be ignored and managed without acknowledging the victims. Again, like the Catholic Church and other institutions, the Movement for a long time was more concerned with protecting the perpetrators, and thereby its own reputation, rather than supporting the victims. In this way, JMM benefitted for years from a system protecting him; at the same time, the Focolare Movement systemically failed the victims.

For a long time, victims of such situations felt guilty for not having pushed back, for not having been brave or strong enough to prevent the abuse. The Movement itself contributed to the guilt felt by victims, considering that once the legal responsibility was not confirmed, it was not their responsibility either to protect future other victims from JMM or to actively trace back other victims who had not come forward with their stories. JMM for years was left in the same position of authority and potential abuse of power. A victim remembers that when he told his story to the people in charge at the International Centre, they seemed to be so bewildered by his story he felt strongly that what had happened must have been his own fault.

### **Other abusive situations within the Movement (not related to JMM)**

The Independent Inquiry is aware of the trust it has received from many people to listen and use their experience to contribute to a more complete picture of the situation. In telling their stories some succeeded in overcoming their psychological difficulties, some are still struggling with past events and trying to find some meaning. Witnesses are both former and current Members of the Movement.

***The Independent Inquiry, whilst ensuring that all voices are heard, wants to point out that the following reported cases of abuse including sexual, emotional, spiritual, and financial, were not investigated in detail by the Inquiry.***

However, these stories describe similar situations to those of JMM and his victims adding weight to the testimonies received by the Inquiry. Profiles of perpetrators reported by the different individuals are often similar to JMM - charismatic people idolised by others, seen as central, untouchable, morally irreproachable, and trustworthy. The different situations described follow similar patterns of abuse of power, psychological dependence and adoration. This leads to a worrying snapshot image of the Movement and points to systemic situations of abuse which were and are known about by those in positions of leadership and responsibility since the early days of the Movement, but not addressed and therefore are likely to still continue.

### **Allegations of sexual abuse**

During the Independent Inquiry, a number of other stories of sexual abuse were reported to the team. Some were new, others were already partially known by the Movement and well documented. What is persistently shared by many of the witnesses is the feeling that not much is done to acknowledge some of the very difficult situations the victims continue to face. Victims described how the abuse therefore contributed to situations of weakness or vulnerability leading to other abuse. Also, even though there have been some statements and letters acknowledging publicly that the Movement had issues of inappropriate behaviour, sexual abuse and other difficult situations, victims and witnesses described how these declarations did not seem to be followed by actions and effective change.

Most of the victims or witnesses reporting other cases of sexual abuse within the movement are concerned about the lack of diligence, reporting to national authorities when appropriate and necessary as well as a level of opacity when cases were dealt with and perpetrators expelled.

Witnesses who spoke to the Inquiry team about past experiences of sexual abuse within the Movement very often also spoke about subsequent or prior situations of abuse of power, emotional or spiritual and sometimes financial abuse. It appears that negative experiences which were reportedly lived inside the Movement, contributed in some cases to further weakening the self-confidence of those concerned and allowed further abuse through different forms.

### **Allegations of spiritual, emotional, financial abuse and abuse of authority**

The case JMM describes a major breach of trust within the Movement but in many cases the breaches go further than just the sexual abuse cases. This section contains detail of testimony from people who described being victims of behaviour which for them generated long term negative impact on their lives, sometimes in a very dramatic manner and who feel that so far they have not been fully heard by the Movement's leadership.

The scope of the Independent Inquiry was to look into abuses committed by JMM and the context in which they occurred, while at the same time receiving reports with regards to other abusive situations. As with the sexual abuse cases reported in the previous section, the



following reported situations have not been fully investigated by the Inquiry. However, the Independent Inquiry has received during the last 10 months a large number of reports from many different locations, regarding other situations perceived as being abusive, not necessarily sexually abusive, but involving emotional abuse, financial abuse, or spiritual abuse.

## **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

### ***Allegation A – Sexual Abuse by JMM***

The Independent Inquiry received credible and corroborating accounts, including JMM's own admission of parts of the allegations, covering a period of more than 30 years (1963 – 1998), from various alleged victims, all males as well as other witnesses, both male and females. They originated from all parts of France, were coherent with JMM's own locations, travels and responsibilities. Dates provided and details of other events were coherent and triangulated through different sources of information. All witnesses described similar events, providing sufficient evidence that JMM engaged in manipulative and inappropriate sexual activities with children and young adults under his supervision and influence.

The Independent Inquiry received direct oral or written testimony from 26 victims. The team also received trustworthy information mentioning at least 11 other victims of JMM. At the same time, the Independent Inquiry also received testimony of at least 3 young people subjected to a grooming process, without any subsequent abuse. These additional reports on grooming concern incidents up to 2017, reported to the Independent Inquiry. No reports of inappropriate behaviour were received since then. The identified numbers do not presume there were no other victims, especially given the different challenges encountered and allegations of sexual abuse during travels and Chaplaincy work which could not be followed up by the Independent Inquiry.

For the Independent Inquiry, given the age of the children as well as the very special grooming environment including his own position of authority and trust towards the families and the children, the many allegations received by the inquiry of inappropriate behaviour, sexual misconduct and sexual abuse are substantiated based on testimony and documentary evidence.

### **Conclusion**

**Based on the allegations of sexual abuse against 26 victims and 11 other victims reported through third parties to the inquiry, the Independent Inquiry concludes JMM was a prolific, serial child abuser responsible for multiple cases of child sexual abuse and attempted child sexual abuse including those we have information on and most likely many others beside.**

## ***Allegation B – Handling of the alleged events by the Focolare Movement***

The Independent Inquiry is conscious of the difficulties in identifying individual responsibilities over the last 55 years. The pyramidal structure of the Movement, its mantra of obedience and unity has certainly contributed to the systemic failure to deal with not only the case against JMM but also other cases. Many layers of people including at the highest governing level<sup>1</sup> were informed about the fact that ‘something was wrong’ with JMM and he needed to be kept under surveillance. However, the people most in charge, both in France and internationally, at the time the case of one victim came into public view via the court cases in 1994/5, remained satisfied there had been a legal process that resulted in a non-lieu and did not take any further formal action.

It is highly unlikely that the highest level of Leadership was not informed about the legal issues JMM encountered in 1994 – 1998, then again in 2017. JMM had been in police custody in 1994 and members of the Movement had been called upon to testify. In addition, as already established, JMM needed the Movement’s help to pay the financial reparation he was condemned to pay to the victim in 1998. As the amount was very significant, such a payment must have been authorised at the highest level of the Movement. The Independent Inquiry has established that Leadership at the Centre authorised this payment in 1998 and therefore, must have been informed about the facts.

The people initially responsible for JMM many years ago are now deceased. Others, in charge later, have consistently failed to act on information based on a mistaken or misguided belief that the court case verdict meant they could not move against JMM or out of fear of the consequences or self-preservation and an avoidance of reputational damage.

### **Conclusion**

**The Independent Inquiry finds systemic failures in the handling of the JMM case and establishes that a chain of people in charge over many years, both in France and in Rome, failed to act on the situation of JMM in a way that would have protected victims and prevented other incidents of abuse or attempted abuse.**

### **Recommendations**

As well as considering the findings of the Inquiry and review of documentation, the Independent Inquiry team met with several prominent members of the Focolare international leadership including the former and current leadership representatives in France, the current President, Co-President and a previous President. Key members of the CO.BE.TU were also interviewed to gather information on the way in which safeguarding has developed in Focolare, the prevention measures in place to protect children and adults, how safeguarding

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<sup>1</sup> Names known to the inquiry team, both deceased, confirmed by JMM

cases are dealt with and current and future plans for ensuring the safety and protection of everyone in the Movement, especially children.

There is no doubt the Focolare Movement has taken significant steps to change the situation in relation to the protection of minors and further developments are planned. There is also a strong commitment from leaders to ensuring the Movement is a safe place, although as indicated already, there are a significant number of people in the Movement who do not feel safe and in spite of the encouragement to do so, have not reported their concerns. Victims also do not feel Focolare are meeting their commitments to them.

There is also a commitment to learn from this Inquiry and to improve in the future. The investment to date in developing good practice, delivering training and creating an infrastructure for safeguarding via the designated staff and the safeguarding commissions, is important to sustain ongoing development in this critical area. The Inquiry team acknowledges the work to date and the efforts and intentions of those in leadership positions to continue to improve. The report proposes actions and developments that are strongly recommended as part of the continuing safeguarding journey in the following areas:

- Culture and leadership
- Prevention measures - policy and procedures, learning and development
- Response measures - reporting and responding
- Monitoring and review

### **Other considerations**

#### **Apologies**

The Independent Inquiry found systemic failings in matters relating to JMM and therefore recommends the Focolare Movement makes a genuine, profound and unconditional public apology to his victims that recognises the Movement failed to protect them and others from abuse that could and should have been prevented or detected.

#### **Redress/Compensation scheme**

It is recommended the compensation mechanism is independent of Focolare, operated in a transparent and efficient way by a third party organisation or body made up of suitably experienced individuals independent of Focolare. The panel should include individuals from a mix of professional backgrounds, for example legal/judicial members and non-judicial members from e.g. psychologists, social workers. Settlements should be offered as quickly as possible and applicants should have the right to appeal.

#### **Other victims**

The case of JMM has received public scrutiny, so will this report. However, it will be important for the movement not to forget other victims and other pending issues and develop a strategy

for how to follow up on all the other cases and also include these victims in their follow-up actions and support procedures.

## INTRODUCTION

Please note: the Independent Inquiry and much of this report focuses on cases of sexual violence against minors by JMM, a former consecrated member of the Focolare, resident in France. The Focolare Movement commissioned this Inquiry, and whilst it is mainly a review of what happened in Focolare France, it considers implications, broader concerns and lessons for the Movement as a whole.

The Independent Inquiry team would like to begin by acknowledging that any inquiry into historical sexual abuse is most probably never wholly satisfying for any of the involved parties. It finds its limits in memories of witnesses, lack of archives and documents, assessing the past having in mind current measurements and expectations. It also very often uncovers new situations and additional reports of abuse - sexual, emotional, financial. Listening to the same stories, seen through different perspectives as an independent and neutral body has led to what we hope is a balanced and triangulated vision of the past and current situation. However, the Independent Inquiry is also conscious that findings might be seen as too weak or too harsh. This report presents the snapshot picture we were able to obtain through many, many hours of listening to different voices and analysing hundreds of pages of different documents, articles, reports, and emails.

The Independent Inquiry also wants to start this report with a recognition of all the victims and witnesses who have contributed to the review through sharing their stories, stories of broken lives, victimisation, feelings of culpability, but also stories of resilience, independence, releasing their truth and escaping from silence. One can never get used to the injuries nor measure the long-lasting impact for any victim of sexual violence, but we want to acknowledge the courage of all who came forward with their stories, taking the initiative to break the silence and contribute to reforming systems and changing cultural approaches to systemic abuse. We also want to acknowledge all the victims who chose not to share their stories with us, accepting their own choices to remain silent for their own reasons; nevertheless, we still recognise their past suffering as for all the others. During this process, we have tried to listen to everybody, exposing and assuming our common humanity, contributing to what we hope will be a positive healing process as well as a path to improved practice.

Given the closeness of the publication of the report commissioned by the French Catholic Church to the Independent Commission on Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church (CIASE)<sup>2</sup>, we have integrated some of their learnings without this being a copy of their report. However, whenever learnings from the CIASE were relevant, they have been integrated into the body of this report, including the relevant references. Although this inquiry cannot be compared

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<sup>2</sup> Commission indépendante sur les abus sexuels dans l'Église

to the one finalized by the CIASE<sup>3</sup> in terms of its scope, it is clear some of the content mirrors each other; the Focolare Movement being recognised by the Catholic Church and part of the same puzzle. Abuse stories are very similar, finding their origin in pyramidal structures, systemic failures and an internal functioning based on obedience and authority. This inquiry, as with the CIASE, has encountered some challenges identifying all the victims and has not always been able to talk to all of those who were identified. Nevertheless, the results, triangulated through different sources, remains valid and demonstrates how the addition of structures, failures, manipulation, devotion and obedience have led to wide sexual abuse.

The CIASE report was able to access a wide range of societal information and figures and demonstrated that most sexual abuse happens inside the family, closely followed by the Church itself, schools, holiday camps and sporting events. The Focolare Movement represents a combination of all these sectors, mixing families, Church, youth activities and teachings within their different activities, specifically during the Mariapolis<sup>4</sup>. Looking back at the early days of the Movement, those activities lacked strong structural controls to avoid grooming situations potentially leading to abuse. These times also closely echo the situation within civil society at large as different recent cases unfortunately remind us, reaching back to the 1970's with a very different understanding of sexual consent, grooming, and responsibilities of adults to the ones we have today.

Although the main scope of this Inquiry concerned reported sexual abuses committed by an identified consecrated member of the Focolare Movement, other cases of abuse including sexual abuse, concerning different perpetrators have been signalled to the Inquiry team in the course of the different research and discussions with witnesses. This report, while mainly speaking about JMM and related victims, wishes to acknowledge all individuals who have shared their painful stories on systemic as well as individual abuse they encountered during their interactions with the Movement. Stories shared include as many stories of attempts of sexual touching, sexual assault, sexual violence as those relating to spiritual, emotional and financial abuse. While the focus of the report remains with JMM, the team will cover other stories of abuse in a specific section.

When sexual abuse happens repeatedly within an organisation, a Movement, a family, a Church, it needs to be seen not only as an act of misconduct and an individual breach of trust but as most likely embedded in systemic failures with regards to organisational structures. Therefore, this report will also look at the environment which allowed JMM to abuse trust and confidence over a significant number of years, with the knowledge of a number of people at different levels of responsibility within the Movement. Cases of abuse reported to the Independent Inquiry are not only the centre of their own stories, but can also be seen as symptomatic of a malaise within the Focolare Movement itself.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ciase.fr/medias/Ciase-Final-Report-5-october-2021-english-version.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> The Mariapolis (City of Mary) = since the early years of the Focolare, people have gathered together for a few days in summer to live its spirit together and to give witness to how society would be if everyone lived the Gospel law of love.

## BACKGROUND TO THE INQUIRY

In light of ongoing concerns regarding cases of sexual violence against minors by JMM, a former consecrated member of the Focolare, resident in France, the Focolare Movement decided to entrust to an independent Body the task to set off and bring ahead an extraordinary inquiry.

The task of this Independent Inquiry was to listen to the victims and to gather further testimonies, as well as investigating whether there were any omissions, cover ups or silences on the part of those responsible for the Movement. At the end of the investigation, the independent body makes its final report public.

### Summary of key events

JMM, born on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1940 joined the Movement of the Focolare in 1961/62. He took his perpetual vows in December 1976.

Testimonies and reports seem to indicate that the first abuse case dates from 1963. Thirty-seven victims are reported for a period between 1963 and 1998. Grooming incidents are reported beyond this period, up to as recent as 2017.

It was only in 1994 that a victim decided to file a legal criminal case against JMM. The Independent Inquiry has information today that there were already at least 24 minor victims of sexual abuse (not known at that time). The criminal case ended with a non-lieu decision but was later, in 1997/98 followed by a civil case where JMM was condemned to pay financial reparation to the victim.

No sanctions were taken against him at that time within the Movement.

In 2002, JMM was reported to the Archevêché of Paris of paedophilic acts by one of his victims. Cardinal Lustiger asked the representatives of the Movement in France and in Europe for an explanation. The President of the Movement (at that time Chiara Lubich) requested AB<sup>5</sup> (now deceased) to have a follow-up discussion with the victim. However, there were no other consequences and the Inquiry has seen no record of the discussion between AB and the victim nor of what information was passed on to the President, although the fact this exchange happened clearly indicates the Movement at the highest level was aware of the concerns relating to JMM at that time. In 2009, the new President (Maria Voce) was informed about the facts concerning JMM.

It is only then in 2014 that another member of the Movement met by chance the family of a victim of JMM. This family informed him that there are other victims. A year later, he met JMM at a Mariapolis and realized that despite all these past events, JMM was still in contact with minors and remained a public figure within the Movement. JMM continued to

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<sup>5</sup> At that time, responsible of the Zone – AB was not convinced of the usefulness of following up on old cases and executed the request reluctantly.

contribute articles (last written in 2015) and kept high influence as a respected figure of authority within the Movement.

These events triggered different meetings organised between one of the victims and JMM in the presence of other witnesses. Seeing that the Movement was not ready to inform the Dioceses of Paris about the past events surrounding JMM, a group of people decided to inform Monseigneur Pansard<sup>6</sup> and Cardinal Stanislav Rilko<sup>7</sup> in April 2016 with the effect that their intervention contributed JMM being liberated from his vows and required to leave the Focolare, on the specific demand of the Vatican. This information is communicated in June 2016 to the members of the Movement in France, although with a very restricted distribution and not in a proactive way - some of those in charge of the different Focolare within France decided, against official guidance from the representatives in France, to keep the communication amongst a limited number of persons, with no wider distribution to volunteers and other interested parties.

In 2017, Mediapart released the book, 'La Mécanique du Silence' speaking amongst other scandals, about JMM and the sexual abuse case. The same year, one of the victims again reported JMM's case to the French Authorities<sup>8</sup>, declaring that there was admission of JMM about other victims and wishing to contribute to identifying others. However, none of the other victims at this time came forward and the case was again closed.

A group of witnesses pushed for an official meeting in September 2020 in Nantes where four victims were represented. The Co-President, the President as well as the persons in charge of Movement in France, and representatives of the French Commission were also invited. The President was unable to attend and asked one of the CO.BE.TU.<sup>9</sup> Representatives to attend the meeting. During this meeting a number of decisions were taken, amongst them the commitment to initiate an official inquiry through an independent commission. Other commitments taken during this meeting were:

- To inform all victims that JMM was condemned in 1998
- To initiate an active search on ALL victims, not only victims of JMM but all other cases as well
- To support the national commission in France through an external commission
- To recognise officially what happened
- To proceed to financial reparations for victims, not only of sexual abuse, abut also of emotional or spiritual and other kind of abuses

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<sup>6</sup> Msg Pansard, Bishop of Evry, was in 2016 Bishop of Chartres but also, within the French Episcopal Conference, President of the Council for movements and associations of the faithful.

<sup>7</sup> Cardinal Rylko, Archpriest of the Basilique Sainte-Marie Majeure, was in 2016 President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity.

<sup>8</sup> Reported to the public Prosecutor of the Tribunal de Grande Instance de Nantes

<sup>9</sup> CO.BE.TU. stands for Commissione Centrale per la Promozione del Benessere e la Tutela dei minori del Movimento dei Focolari or Commission for the Protection of Minors



Currently, not all of these commitments have been fulfilled although the commitment to establish an external commission was met through this Independent Inquiry and the report and its publication addresses the other points to a large extent. The Terms of Reference and other details relating to the conduct of the inquiry are detailed below in the annexes.

## VOICES OF THE VICTIMS

The profound and cruel indifference demonstrated towards many victims of child sexual abuse, whether within religious Movements, Churches, other institutions and sectors or in Society as a whole, is a constant reminder of the difficult journey any victim undertakes when sharing their stories of sexual violence and abuse. Society is quick to try and silence these voices as they confront us with a difficult and often unacceptable truth. There is a time of legal proceedings and definitions, there is also a time for organisations and society to stand up and acknowledge stories of situations which are against internal standards of behaviour and organisational rules. For this reason, the inquiry is dedicating a short chapter on the definition of a victim and how this report has been using the term.

### **Definition of victims**

One of the aims of this inquiry was to identify the number of victims of JMM. Facts about a certain number of victims had already been admitted by JMM and documented by the Movement in the past through verbal statements as well as letters to victims and their parents acknowledging the facts. However, through this identification process, the question of the definition of the status of a victim was a key issue. Who is a victim? Is this status defined by the legal situation of a recognized crime? Is it about the fact that an alleged perpetrator recognizes having abused the situation of a given individual and turned the person into a victim? Or is it about the definition and identification of each single person, identifying themselves as victims? Or is it about the normative rule governing a situation such as a Protection Guideline, a Code of Conduct, a moral commitment?

For the purpose of this work, the Independent Inquiry considers that a person is recognised as a victim as soon as the normative rule applicable to the situation is breached and when religious and moral boundaries and commitments have been crossed by the perpetrator, even in cases where the person themselves do not identify as victims or do not wish to be associated to this status. Therefore, and throughout this report, the Independent Inquiry has defined and uses the term of victims each time when a legal or moral limit is alleged to have been crossed including by the own definition of such victims. We believe that this acknowledgment is important to enable the movement and its members to improve safeguarding within its activities and create an environment where abusive situations become the exception and not the norm.

This report, while focusing on victims of JMM, has also received other reports and stories of abuses allegedly committed within the movement. When trying to address the extent of abusive actions committed by a perpetrator or a system, it is key to define and identify who

is a victim. We therefore link this definition to both the official definition as explained above as well as to the impact and personal resentment of anybody who has been affected by inappropriate behaviour. The CIASE in its report speaks about individuals moving from the status of a victim to one of a witness to acknowledge the capacity of any individual to overcome the passivity of a victim and become a witness of their own situation.

For the same reason, we often speak about *survivors* of sexual violence, as opposed to using the term 'victim'. In both cases, when using the term victim or survivor, we speak about the person who has been harmed (sexually or otherwise exploited or abused). The term 'victim' is more often used in the legal and medical sector, while the term 'survivor' is generally preferred in the psychological and social support sector to a person who has experienced sexual violence because it implies resilience. It is, however, always an individual's choice to identify themselves as victims or survivors. For the purpose for this report, the team has decided to consequently use the term 'victim' as it better corresponds to most of the situations encountered but also as its translation into other languages is less problematic.

In the course of this inquiry, some of the victims underlined they do not consider themselves as victims in the traditional sense of the definition. It is important to remember that when identifying an individual as a victim of inappropriate behaviour including sexual touching, sexual approaches, sexual abuse, this identification is not measured by the impact or the gravity of the impact the behaviour had on the individual. The identification is also not measured by the victim's own assessment of their situation. The only measurement remains the fact that a certain behaviour is against the law or against internally defined standards of behaviour. Thus, some of the reported victims do not consider themselves as victims of abusive behaviour, whereas others demonstrate a high impact and significant suffering throughout the years of their life even though the individual event might be seen by others as a minor offence.

The standards of behaviour for this inquiry are based on French Criminal Law as well as on the Focolare's own internal standards (Guidelines of the Focolare Movement for the Promotion of the Wellbeing and Protection of minors April 2014, revised June 2019). It is noted also that JMM was subject to religious and spiritual commitments as part of his faith in general, his sacred vows and the guidance of Catholic Social Teaching.

The Movement drafted its first guidelines on expected behaviour within its activities in 2011 which were then published in 2013. These Guidelines have been revised subsequently, most recently in June 2020. However, even without specific rules and guidelines, the team has considered in its approach, that ethical standards on child abuse and sexual approaches towards minors have always been the basis of social interaction, even more important when working with young children and adolescents, considering as well the specific relationship between children/adolescents and adults in a position of authority towards the young person. This is even more the case when the adult in a position of authority is also a consecrated lay person, having vowed their lives to chastity, poverty and celibacy. Even when reported

situations did not fit the legal definition (or were reported outside of legal deadlines), the breach of trust and confidence is enormous, not only towards the victims but also towards their parents and other members of this community. It is this breach of trust and confidence which might have been the highest negative impact for all the affected individuals, victims and families.

### **Credibility of victims**

The Independent Inquiry found that all victims it was in contact with had no apparent links to each other and no knowledge of their respective stories (with the exception of the witnesses who told their stories through French Media '*Le Quotidien*' and '*Les Jours*'). It was evident all had undergone a process of serious personal reflection. Although some of them are still deeply affected by the events of the past, they were humble and without any specific hatred or desire for revenge against the perpetrator. They explained they had come forward to tell their stories as a way of confronting their own past, but also to help others in a similar situation to come forward with their own stories, seeking support and resilience in so doing. Many remain faithful to the Movement and its spiritual experience and wanted to contribute so the Focolare Movement can acknowledge difficult moments of their own history and avoid similar events in the future. With regards to other witnesses, some of them were victims of other forms of abuse or victims of sexual abuse committed by other perpetrators and were mostly motivated to contribute to the process of truth searching as a way of resolving other issues linked to the Focolare Movement.

### **Psychological hold**

In addition to the victims who initially came forward publicly in the French Media, the Independent Inquiry reached out and invited other victims who had either come forward already during past discussions with the former team of the people in charge of France, or who had contacted the Independent Inquiry by their own initiative. All of them described their relationships with JMM using similar words, telling similar events, giving a coherent description of events as they happened when they were children or adolescents. Many spoke of their initial admiration, fascination, feeling special because of being invited to an event, to a weekend in Paris, to the restaurant. They all described abusive behaviour at one moment, whereby they had placed their trust in JMM and he had used his power and authority over them to take advantage of them through different kinds of inappropriate behaviour, sexual touching, sexual abuse.

The Independent Inquiry received a number of allegations against JMM, all from men, most of them being minors at the time of the event, some at the very limit between adolescence and adulthood. Most of them described an upbringing with strict approaches around sexuality; some of them being still very naive in terms of sexual behaviour, homosexuality, sexuality as an individual behaviour and connected to a traditional moralistic view on sexual relationships. All of this contributed to an environment in which sexual abuse was facilitated or made easy; it was not just the case that there was little resistance but very often the lack

of knowledge contributed in that some of the victims did not fully realise the purpose of JMM's approaches. All of the reported abuses took place under conditions the Independent Inquiry labels as 'psychological hold'. JMM did not only groom the children but also their parents as well as members of the Movement at large. JMM was highly regarded by other members, as an intellectual, an engineer, a journalist; somebody who was successful in his job, committed to the Movement, a consecrated member having dedicated his life to serve the Movement of Chiara Lubich, of whom he was seen as being a close friend. Parents invited JMM to their houses, he invited their children to Châtillon and Paris, often sharing rooms with them as there was not sufficient space available. At that time, none of them seemed to be aware of the manipulation they were subjected to. It was seen as a favour when JMM was close to these boys, teaching them, opening an attractive and interesting world for them. In some cases, JMM seemed to have linked his behaviour to spirituality, praying for forgiveness after the abuse took place. Such behaviour added emotional abuse to the sexual abuse. Such relationships are characterised by significant imbalances of power, whereby the alleged victims feel deprived of their free will or does not fully apprehend events.

### **Stories about abuses and individual impact**

This section is specifically dedicated to the victims of JMM, former consecrated lay member of the Movement. Even though many years have passed since some of the stories were told to the Inquiry, those stories are often painful, powerful and can never leave the listener untouched or unconcerned. Respecting the wishes of most of the individuals concerned, this section contains a mix of stories shared by victims about the abuse they suffered and the continuing impact these events had on their lives, decisions they took, possibilities they missed, opportunities they created. What is missing in these transcriptions are the silences, the silent tears, the emotion and regrets about lost opportunities. The impact on each individual's life does not depend on the level or frequency of the abuse, but on the victim's own perception. Some consider the abuse has impacted the rest of their lives, others feel more detached about passed events, seeing themselves as spectators or survivors. The Inquiry has spoken to as many of the victims as possible, without any obligation on their part to share their stories. Some chose not to contact the team, others have been volunteering their stories in a very detailed way. For some, the events are part of their past and they reported for documentary purposes only, for some the impact continues to be significant and painful.

During any discussion around status and individual situations of alleged victims and how to identify or confirm their status, it is key to keep in mind how a person feels when identifying themselves as a victim of any kind of abuse, including sexual. Whoever is the predator, whoever is the victim or identifies as such, feelings and reactions of the affected individuals are most of the time very similar, often very painful. Through this paragraph, the Inquiry wishes to recognise and acknowledge all the suffering which was reported, independently of the origin of the abuse, recognising all victims in a similar way, **as they are not only victims**

**of different individuals but most of the time also victims of systemic failures within the Movement. For a majority of them, recognition of their suffering is a core expectation.**

The Inquiry team received testimony from 26 victims of JMM, either through direct contact and verbal testimony or through documented third parties. An additional 11 victims were suspected and subsequently reported through different means and triangulation but with no further contact or confirmation.

Communicating final number of victims seems to be an impossible task given the duration of JMM's activities within the movement, extended travel to a number of faraway destinations through his work responsibilities as well as his other activities within secondary school chaplaincy. In addition, a number of estimates have been made by both Focolare and victims themselves, although these differ as does the estimate made by the Independent Inquiry (see section A below). The Independent Inquiry is also aware that there was a level of interaction between different countries, with young people visiting the French chapter and potential interaction with JMM. Final numbers might also not be the ultimate aim of this inquiry; any victim is one victim too many but certainly after JMM's inappropriate behaviour became known to the Movement at its highest level and certainly at the latest after JMM was condemned by a Civil French Court, any subsequent victimisations could and should have been prevented. But let us leave space for all the men who have endured sexual abuse and shared their stories to listen to them<sup>10</sup>:

*The following are extracts from victim testimony received during the course of the inquiry. This content has been reviewed by victims and we are grateful to them for agreeing to include their stories:*

(...)

*Il rôdait dans ces rassemblements de jeunes, donc j'ai été convaincu que je n'étais pas le seul (à avoir subi des attouchements).*

He was lurking around these youth gatherings, so I was convinced that I wasn't the only one (who had been abused).

(...)

*Son approche c'est de séduire les parents et de leur dire que les garçons, à la puberté c'est difficile. Donc il profite pour dire aux parents que quelques fois (il est important pour les enfants de) parler à d'autres adultes. Il a donc proposé de m'amener visiter une communauté. On est allé chez un couple, bien sûr il s'est arrangé pour dormir dans la même pièce que moi.*

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<sup>10</sup> The original statements were made in French (blue), translated into English by the Inquiry team

*Et à partir de ce moment, il commet des approches, il profite (de la proximité). Il dit : 'Comment ça va ? Tu peux me parler.' Et il gagne la confiance (de l'enfant). Ensuite il disait qu'il ne fallait pas garder le caleçon, cela a toujours été des attouchements et des tentatives d'embrasser. De toucher mon sexe en demandant comment cela me faisait me sentir. Il n'a jamais tenté de me pénétrer autrement qu'en essayant de m'embrasser. (Ces agissements) cela c'est donc passé une fois, c'était très désagréable, une contrainte morale, sans aucun mot.*

His approach is to seduce the parents and tell them that boys at puberty are difficult. At the same time, he says to the parents that (sometimes, it is important for the children) to talk to other adults. He offered to take me to visit a community. We went for overnighing to a couple's house, of course he arranged to sleep in the same room as me. He then started approaching me; he took advantage (of the proximity). He said, 'How are you? You can talk to me.' And he gains the trust (of the child). Then he would say 'Don't keep your boxers on!' It was always about touching (intimately) and trying to kiss. Or touching my penis asking how it made me feel. He never tried to penetrate me other than by trying to kiss me. (These actions) it happened once, it was very unpleasant, morally constraining, without any word (spoken between us).

(...)

*J'ai été victime au début des années XXXX, JMM a fait une tentative, il a fait des attouchements que j'ai tout de suite interrompu, et cela s'est terminé dans un quart d'heure. C'était dans le cadre d'une rencontre dans un refuge de montagne, avec plusieurs jeunes, il s'est débrouillé pour dormir à côté de moi. Je lui ai tapé dessus et l'affaire s'est terminée. J'étais mineur, à peine 18 ans.*

I was a victim at the beginning of the XXXXs, JMM made an attempt, he touched me, I immediately interrupted his attempt, and it was over within fifteen minutes. It was in the context of a meeting in a mountain refuge, with several young people, he managed to sleep next to me. I hit him and the matter ended. I was a minor, barely 18 years old.

(...)

*J'ai demandé à mon frère (s'il avait vécu des incidents avec JMM). Il m'a dit que JMM avait essayé (de l'approcher de manière inappropriée) quand il avait 10 ans, lors d'une rencontre. JMM lui a demandé de venir avec lui dans une chambre. Il l'a enfermé à clé avec lui. Mon frère s'est révolté de suite, donc il l'a laissé repartir (sans rien tenter de plus). C'est une histoire de manipulation.*

I asked my brother (if he had experienced any incidents with JMM). He told me that JMM had tried (to approach him inappropriately) when he was 10 years old, during a meeting. JMM asked him to come with him to a room. He locked him up with him. My brother rebelled immediately, so he let him go back (without trying anything more). This is a story of manipulation.

(...)



*En 1974, j'avais 16 ans et demi. (.....) JMM me propose d'aller avec lui à XYZ. Là dans une famille, je dormais dans une chambre, sur le ventre et j'ai senti quelqu'un sur moi. Est-ce un rêve ? Puis JMM a continué, et essayé de me violer. Je me suis réveillé, je l'ai bousculé et suis sorti. Je suis rentré en pleine nuit en XXXX. Je ne l'ai jamais revu et j'ai lâché tout contact avec les Focolari. J'ai vécu avec cela depuis 74.*

In 1974, I was 16 and a half years old. (.....) JMM suggested I accompany him to go to XYZ. We were with a family; I was sleeping in a room, on my stomach and I felt someone on top of me. Was it a dream? Then JMM continued, and tried to rape me. I woke up, shoved him away and went outside the room. I went back to XXXX in the middle of the night. I never saw him again and I let go of all contact with the Focolare. I have lived with this since '74.

(...)

*Je suis revenu dans le mouvement à 14 ans, à l'occasion du SuperCongrès Gen3 à Rome. Pour être là, au départ du car, tôt le matin, j'ai dû dormir sur Paris. J'ai passé ma première nuit au Focolare de Clamart, le soir j'étais un peu intimidé seul dans cette grande maison, uniquement avec des adultes. (.....) JMM m'avait retrouvé dans le salon. J'étais donc seul avec lui. Immédiatement, il essayait de créer un contact physique avec moi notamment à travers des chatouilles, ou jouer à "la petite bête qui monte", en répétant en continue "toi je t'aime bien" et "tu es trop timide, d'ailleurs moi aussi je suis timide" et en gros "tu vois bien je fais un effort pour la dépasser". Et puis il avait bien rappelé qu'on lui avait demandé de bien m'accueillir, de bien s'occuper de moi. Il me faisait peur, j'avais beau le repousser, il continuait et s'excusait avec le fait qu'il soit timide (et qu'il dépassait sa timidité). J'étais sur la défensive – je me reculais, il insistait. J'ai 14 ans, je colle l'étiquette de normalité à cet environnement.*

I came back to the movement when I was 14, for the Gen3 SuperCongress in Rome. In order to be on time and as the bus left early in the morning, I had to sleep in Paris. I spent my first night at the Focolare in Clamart. In the evening I was a bit intimidated alone in this big house, only with adults. (.....). JMM joined me in the living room. I was alone with him. Immediately, he tried to create physical contact with me, notably through tickling, or playing "the little beast that rises", repeating continuously "I like you" and "You are too shy, by the way I am shy too" and basically "you see well I am making an effort to overcome it". And then he reminded me that he had been asked to welcome me, to take care of me. He was scaring me, no matter how much I pushed him away, he continued and apologised with the fact that he was shy (and that he was overcoming his shyness). I was on the defensive - I would back off, he would insist. I was only 14 years old labelled his behaviour as normal within this environment.

(...)

*J'ai fréquenté le mouvement des Focolari de la seconde à la terminale, c'est ainsi que j'ai rencontré JMM. J'habitais dans l'ouest de la France, à XXX, ville qui faisait partie de «son terrain de jeu» fourni par sa Direction. Il était basé au Focolare de Châtillon, communauté d'hommes consacrés. Chaque Focolari était responsable d'une région. JMM c'était l'Ouest,*

*alors une fois, il venait au Mans, une fois à Quimper, une autre fois à Nantes etc. La première fois ou il s'en est pris à moi c'était à YYY lors d'une manifestation GEN. Nous dormions dans des lits de camp. En venant me dire bonne nuit il m'a sauté sur le zizi, je me suis défendu, alors il a continué sa tournée et est passé au lit de camp suivant.*

I was in the Focolare Movement from the second grade to the last, which is how I met JMM. I lived in the West of France, which was part of his 'playground' provided by his Direction. He was based at the Focolare of Châtillon, a community of consecrated men. Each Focolare was responsible for a region. JMM was in charge of the West, so one time he came to Le Mans, another to Quimper, another to Nantes, etc. The first time he attacked me was in YYY during a GEN musical manifestation. We were sleeping in a camp. When he came to say good night he jumped on my willy, I defended myself, so he continued his rounds and moved to the next bed.

(...)

*En ce qui me concerne, les abus – par attouchements – ont eu lieu entre 1977 et 1981, par trois fois à ma souvenance. C'était au milieu de la nuit, au Focolare de Chatillon-sous-Bagneux, près de Paris. Les jeunes qui venaient aux rencontres organisées au Focolare étaient répartis dans les différentes chambres des Focolarini et l'on m'attribua de partager la chambre de ce Focolarino. Ce fut l'horreur ! A chaque fois, je ne m'y attendais pas. (...) Cela se produisit une autre fois chez mes parents. Il vint là aussi me rejoindre dans mon lit. L'horreur des horreurs ! Je ne pouvais même pas m'avertir moi-même du danger. J'étais amnésique sur ces faits. C'était impensable, informulable à moi-même ! Le matin, JMM se présentait comme si de rien n'était. J'étais détruit. (...) La dernière fois eut lieu au cours d'un séjour de vacances, dans un chalet de montagne. Quand il partit, après son agression, je décidai de lui parler le plus tôt possible. Ce que je fis le lendemain. Et j'appris la phrase par cœur pour être sûr de pouvoir la lui dire : 'Si tu recommences, je vais devenir fou !' Ce fut la dernière fois. (...) En XXXX, le responsable de la zone de France (entretemps décédé), m'envoya en Italie faire l'école de Loppiano. Au cours des entretiens de fin d'école où se décidaient les orientations de chacun, je partageai uniquement aux responsables venus de Rome avec les mots que j'ai pu trouver et dans une grande confusion, ces faits si douloureux pour moi. Je me souviens de l'effarement de deux, puis de deux autres hauts responsables du Centre Mondial des Focolari quand j'évoquais le nom et les agissements de JMM. (...) Je partis sans aucune parole de leur part. Pour moi, s'ils avaient réagi ainsi en manifestant leur ahurissement, ça devait certainement être de ma faute ! Douloureux quiproquo!*

As far as I can remember, the abuses - by touching - took place between 1977 and 1981, three times to my recollection. It was in the middle of the night, at the Focolare in Chatillon-sous-Bagneux, near Paris. The young people who came to the meetings organised at the Focolare were distributed among the different rooms of the Focolarini to spend the night, and I was assigned to share the room of this Focolarino. It was horrible! Each time I didn't expect it.



It happened again at my parents' house. There he came to join me in my bed too. The horror of horrors! I couldn't even warn myself of the danger. I had amnesia about these facts. It was unthinkable, unthinkable to myself! In the morning, JMM presented himself as if nothing had happened. I was destroyed. (...) The last time was during a holiday in a mountain chalet. When he left, after his attack, I decided to talk to him as soon as possible. Which I did the next day. And I memorised the phrase to make sure I could say it to him: 'If you do that again, I'll go mad! That was the last time. (...) In XXX, the Head of the French zone (now deceased) sent me to Italy to attend the school in Loppiano. During the interviews at the end of the school where the orientation of each person was decided, I shared solely with the people in charge who came from Rome, with the words I could find and in great confusion, these facts which were so painful for me. I remember the shock of two, then two other high officials of the World Centre of the Focolare when I mentioned the name and the actions of JMM. (...) I left without a word from them. I thought that if they had reacted in this way, showing their bewilderment, it must surely have been my fault! A painful misunderstanding!

(...)

*C'est là qu'il y a eu la tentative d'attouchement, relativement soft. Je couchais dans les couloirs, en sac de couchage. Il est venu en soirée, pour faire des caresses, j'ai fait semblant de dormir.*

That's when the relatively soft touching took place. I was sleeping in the corridors, in a sleeping bag. He came in the evening, to caress me, I pretended to be asleep.

(...)

*On était dans le salon, mes parents étaient à l'étage. Je descendais chercher mes affaires pour l'école. Quand j'étais dans l'escalier, il m'a arrêté, il m'a caressé le sexe. C'est la première fois que je me sentais bander, c'était avec lui en face de moi. Et vous savez qu'elle était ma peur ? Que mes parents sortent de la chambre, et qu'ils me voient. (.....) C'était juste horrible. (.....) Vous imaginez combien des fois j'ai pris cet escalier, après, pendant des années, et à chaque fois j'ai sauté cette marche. A chaque fois ! Aujourd'hui c'est con mais je compte les marches et je saute cette marche, pour chaque escalier. A chaque fois. Et n'importe quel escalier, encore aujourd'hui. (.....) Encore aujourd'hui, quand une situation ne me convient pas, je suis incapable de le dire, de dire non, cela ne me convient pas. (...) Cela a une grande influence sur ma vie personnelle et professionnelle. Je ne sais pas négocier avec les figures d'autorités, (.....). Souvent, je subis, et ensuite je ne vais pas être bien, je vais me fâcher. Je me tais, je rumine et j'explose ailleurs. Je développe des comportements inappropriés et incompréhensibles. Cela m'a conduit quatre fois déjà à quitter un emploi qui me convenait pourtant, devant changer de métier même. Une crise, un burn out, une rupture conventionnelle, des semaines au lit avant de petit à petit remonter la pente. Et aujourd'hui encore cela est à la veille de se reproduire, mettant en danger l'équilibre de ma famille, y compris financièrement, et ma vie aussi. Et celà, je le relie directement à ces événements indicibles et en même temps insupportables. (...)*

We were in the living room, my parents were upstairs. I was going downstairs to get my things for school. When I was on the stairs, he stopped me, he caressed my penis. It was the first time, I felt hard, it was with him in front of me. And you know what my fear was? That my parents would come out of the room, and they would see me. (.....). It was just horrible. (.....). Can you imagine how many times I took that staircase, afterwards, for years, and every time I skipped that step. Every time! Today it's stupid but I count the steps and I skip that step, for every stair. Every time. And any staircase, even today. (.....). And, even today, when a situation does not suit me, I am unable to say this, to say no, it does not suit me (....). This has a great influence on my personal and professional life. I don't know how to negotiate with authority figures (....). I often suffer, and then I will not be well, I will get very angry. I keep quiet, I brood and then I explode elsewhere. I develop inappropriate and incomprehensible behaviour. This has already led me to leave employment that suited me, four times; I even needed to change profession. A crisis, a burn out, a termination of contract, weeks in bed before gradually getting back on track. And even today, this is about to happen again, endangering the balance of my family, including financially, and my life too. I am relating this directly to these unspeakable and at the same time unbearable events. (...)

(...)

*Entre XXXX et YYYY, j'ai été à plusieurs reprises victime d'attouchements de la part de JMM. Cela s'est passé lors de mes séjours à Paris, mais aussi durant les visites de JMM au domicile de mes parents.*

Between XXXX and YYYY, I was repeatedly molested by JMM during my stays in Paris, but also during JMM's visits to my parents' home.

(...)

*Les faits avec JMM qui me préoccupe, j'avais environ 8 ans. J'étais prêt à me coucher en slip, il était à la porte de la chambre, j'attendais qu'il ferme la porte, mais il avait un regard louche (on le sent même à 7/8 ans). Donc je lui disais que je dormais en slip. Je sentais qu'il attendait que je me mette tout nu). (.....) Après, je ne sais plus trop (.....) J'ai quelques doutes qu'il ne soit revenu dans la chambre après..... Ma Maman avait beaucoup d'enfants et donc peu de temps à consacrer à chacun ; je trouvais donc chez JMM le contact corporel que je me refusais dans la famille. Les contacts de JMM n'étaient pas forcément ajustés, mais je n'avais pas le recul nécessaire pour le comprendre.*

The facts with JMM that concern me, I was about 8 years old. I was ready to go to bed in my underwear, he was at the bedroom door, I was waiting for him to close the door, but he had a shady look in his eyes (you can feel it even when you're only 7/8). So I told him that I was sleeping in my underwear, I could feel him waiting for me to get naked). (.....). Afterwards, I don't really know anymore (.....). I have some doubts if later, he returned to my bedroom..... My Mum had many children and therefore little time to devote to each one; I therefore found

in JMM the bodily contact I denied myself in the family. JMM's contacts were not necessarily adjusted, but I did not have the necessary distance to understand this.

(...)

*Cela s'est passé dès le premier soir de mon arrivée. Il me caressait sur tout le corps, Il m'embrassait sur la bouche. Il me déshabillait et lui-même le faisait aussi. Il voulait que je lui fasse des fellations de façon insidieuse sans jamais me le demander vraiment. Il le faisait en prenant ma tête et en l'approchant de son sexe.*

This happened on the first night I arrived. He caressed me all over my body, he kissed me on the mouth. He undressed me and he also undressed himself. He wanted me to perform oral sex on him in an insidious way without ever really asking me. He did it by taking my head and bringing it close to his penis.

(...)

*Quand il dormait chez nous, le matin au réveil, il venait me voir et il essayait de m'embrasser. Cela me répugnait – c'était tout, il ne se passait rien d'autre mais c'était bizarre. Nous étions à la campagne, sans connaissance sur la sexualité ; je ne savais même pas qu'il existait des pédophiles, J'avais 17 ans. Je me réveillais avec sa main qui touchait mon corps, qui caressait mon sexe ; j'étais effrayé, je me suis retourné et il a arrêté. Il ne s'est rien passé de plus. Je ne suis plus jamais retourné à Clamart ou avec JMM. Plus tard, un Focolarino, le frère d'un de mes amis, nous a amené chez un prêtre à Strasbourg qui s'occupait de homosexuels et c'est lui qui nous a éclairé sur ces mœurs. C'est à ce moment-là que j'ai réalisé ce qui s'était passé.*

When he slept at my parent's home, in the morning when he woke up he would come to me and try to kiss me. I was repulsed by it - that was it, nothing else was happening but it was weird. We were in the countryside, with no knowledge of sexuality; I didn't even know there were paedophiles, I was 17. I woke up with his hand touching my body, caressing my sex; I was scared, I turned around and he stopped. Nothing more happened. I never went back to Clamart or to JMM. Later, a Focolarino, the brother of a friend of mine, took us to a priest in Strasbourg who worked with homosexuals and it was he who enlightened us about these customs. That's when I realised what had happened.

(...)

*Un été, je devais avoir entre 10 et 14 ans, JMM s'occupait de moi durant l'absence de mes parents. Le soir, alors que j'étais couché, JMM venait me voir pour parler de la journée et pour faire la prière. Il se mettait assis sur le lit et, alors que nous parlions, il glissait sa main sous mon pyjama jusqu'aux parties génitales sur lesquelles il maintenait sa main jusqu'à la fin de la prière. Enfin, il partait se coucher après m'avoir souhaité une bonne nuit. Ceci c'est passé 2 ou 3 soirs consécutifs.*

One summer, when I was between 10 and 14, JMM looked after me while my parents were away. In the evening, while I was in bed, JMM came to me to talk about the day and to pray.

He sat on the bed and, as we talked, he slid his hand down my pyjamas to my genitals, where he would keep his hand until the prayer was over. Finally, he went to bed after wishing me good night. This happened two or three nights in a row.

(...)

*Et à la Mariapolis, quand il s'allongeait sur moi, il a mis sa main dans mon pyjama, il a vu que j'avais un slip dessous. Et il était surpris. Et moi je me suis dit : Mais je ne devais pas en avoir ? Je ne savais pas s'il m'engueulait, mais je savais que je n'aurais pas dû en mettre. Cela j'ai bien compris. Et il me serrait contre lui et moi, je pensais : j'aurais dû en mettre ou pas ?*

And at the Mariapolis, when he was lying on top of me, he put his hand in my pyjamas, he saw that I had underwear on. And he was surprised. And I said to myself: "But wasn't I supposed to have any? I didn't know if he was yelling at me, but I knew I shouldn't have had any on. That I understood. And he held me close to him and I thought: should I have put it on or not?

(...)

*Je pense qu'il m'aura fallu plus d'années pour me libérer des attaques de JMM que pour me libérer de (.....) mes problèmes psychologiques contracté dans ma propre famille. Au début de mon analyse, j'étais dans le déni, je disais que ce n'était pas grave. Je suis convaincu qu'une personne attaquée dans son intégrité si elle est prise en charge par un professionnel dès que les faits sont établis (...) permet à la personne de se libérer beaucoup plus rapidement et de ne pas avoir à vivre avec des séquelles graves pendant des années. Mais pour cela il convient qu'un signalement soit effectué. Les responsables successifs de la section masculine du mouvement des Focolari porte une lourde responsabilité, celle d'avoir fait «des victimes à la chaîne».*

I think it took me more years to free myself from JMM's attacks than it did to free myself from (.....) the psychological problems I had in my own family. At the beginning of my analysis, I was in denial, I said it wasn't serious. I am convinced that a person whose integrity has been attacked, if he or she is taken care of by a professional as soon as the facts are established (,,,), this allows the person to free themselves much quicker and not to have to live with serious after-effects for years. But for this to happen, a report must be made. The successive leaders of the men's section of the Focolare Movement bear a heavy responsibility, that of having made 'victims in a chain'.

(....)

*Récemment, une personne qui m'est proche a voulu se rattraper en parlant à tout le monde de cette affaire d'abus sexuel de JMM. Après 50 ans j'y pense toujours.*

Recently, someone close to me wanted to make up for it by telling everyone about JMM's sexual abuse case. After 50 years, I still think about it.

(...)

*(J'ai confronté JMM avec les faits et mes souvenirs). Une fois que je lui ai dit, j'avais tellement peur qu'il me dise de ne pas s'en souvenir, qu'il me demande de quoi je lui parlais. Mais il l'a admis, c'était un tel soulagement pour moi ! Du coup j'en ai parlé à mes parents. Ils savaient que j'avais été abusé mais pas par qui. Pour moi c'était indicible, je ne pouvais pas leur dire (avant de m'assurer que mes souvenirs correspondait à la réalité).*

(I confronted JMM with the facts and my memories). Once I told him, I was so afraid that he would tell me that he did not remember, that he would ask me what I was talking about. But he admitted it, it was such a relief for me! So, I told my parents. They knew I had been abused but not by whom. For me it was unspeakable, I couldn't tell them (until I was sure my memories matched the reality).

## Systemic Manipulation

### **Grooming process and manipulation**

When children, adolescents and vulnerable adults are abused, this is very often preceded by sophisticated manipulative processes. Events told by different victims as well as the profile emerging from different witness statements demonstrate, as so often in similar cases, a clear grooming process.

JMM's activities within the movement span more than 50 years. A brilliant intellectual, engineer and working first for a renowned and fascinating company in Toulouse, he then moved into working for an editing company, Nouvelle Cité. For many of the young adolescents and children he was in contact with through his activities with the Focolare Movement, these activities represented a very attractive and new world. Targets of JMM seemed often to have been children from poorer backgrounds, living in the countryside or in decentralised regions, coming from families with a number of children and less able to dedicate individual time to each of them. For these children, being singled out by JMM, being even invited by him to Paris, to Châtillons, sometimes to the house he had inherited in the environments of Paris (Veneux les Sablons), was exceptional, offering an unknown world and opening possibilities in capital cities.

Witnesses, including witnesses who contacted the Independent Inquiry about other situations and concerns but having known and met JMM in the past, described him as often being surrounded by young people, being the centre of attraction for many of them. They universally describe a very friendly, a very cultured man. He provided them with exceptional memories which were not necessarily open to them without invitations from him. JMM, consciously or not, incited some adolescents to some sort of competition, to be the selected one, the favourite child. One witness describes JMM:

*'He was there, in the camp. There is this instinctive feeling: I see a man who is there, but without any precise function. We all know that he is an authority, a moral guarantor, but what I am left with is a deceitful man, who is prowling. His eyes spoke for him, he knew what he was doing. He represented his own caricature'.* Another one speaks about JMM, memorizing

how youngsters were competing for his attention: *'I saw him with another adolescent boy, they discussed together and I felt some jealousy, telling myself that I was not anymore his favourite.'* Another witness describes him as a man *'who knew how to chase up boys, who always hung around young people with no clear function'*. Another one remembers that when he met JMM for the first time, there were plenty of other children around. However, JMM chose him, gave him his affection, with no specific reason. The witness felt strange about this, but also flattered about being special to JMM.

In addition to the grooming and manipulation of the children, JMM created a conducive environment in which to approach the children and adolescents by also grooming their parents. He committed a number of abuses under the roof of parents who trusted him, who had invited him, who were convinced of his superior morals given his status as a consecrated lay person who had committed his entire life to the Movement, to poverty, chastity and celibacy. This grooming process was supported over years by the system. Until relatively recently (2011), the Movement of the Focolare did not have any specific guidelines on working with children. There was no awareness raising with parents, children, consecrated persons, volunteers, or any other members about the additional risk of sexually exploitation and abuse of young people in this very specific context of activities organised by the Movement. The mix of family structures, search of unity and fraternity, religion and lack of supervision also contributed heavily to creating an environment where abuse could easily happen.

It is clear JMM unfortunately was not the only perpetrator of sexual abuse under these conditions. A witness remembers that *'JMM for me, he was a reference, a role model. We were 7 children at home, with financial problems; with JMM I participated in activities, he welcomed me in Montparnasse, we went to the restaurant and I was happy. He was a very generous man.'* Another witness remembers that he *'was seducing the parents, he was the family friend, the confidant, sometimes a sponsor'*. A mother describes JMM: *'He had the capacity to seduce people through his intellect, he was funny, not overly stern.'* A young woman who knew JMM many years ago describes him as *'person who was with his protégés who were attracted by life in Paris, the movies, JMM himself. They were all of a similar profile, vulnerable, young, not from Paris.'*

In addition to the above, JMM was also successful in grooming his own organisational management which for years had partially knowledge about the situation. The Focolare Movement, as with similar situations in the Catholic Church, has spent years using legal concerns and resolutions as a defence, making the excuse that because an abusive situation has not been proven via a legal process, it can somehow be ignored and managed without acknowledging the victims. Again, like the Catholic Church and other institutions, the Movement for a long time was more concerned with protecting the perpetrators, and thereby its own reputation, rather than supporting the victims<sup>11</sup>. In this way, JMM benefitted for years

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<sup>11</sup> Statement of Jesus Moran, Co-President of the Movement, in September 2020



from a system protecting him; at the same time, the Focolare Movement systemically failed the victims.

JMM represented to many a figure of trust; intelligent, charming, charismatic, affable. Whenever he felt resistance to the grooming process, from either families or victims, he immediately pulled away and ended his approaches. It was mentioned by the judge in the process against JMM in 1994 that he would have expected the victims to defend themselves. Fortunately, 25 years later our approach has changed. We recognise it is never the victim's responsibility to push back an aggressor or take an active part in the prevention of an abusive situation; it remains the responsibility of perpetrators and organisations to protect their most vulnerable members, and to adapt their own behaviour taking into account the authority and the responsibilities connected to their status. For a long time, victims of such situations felt guilty for not having pushed back, for not having been brave or strong enough to prevent the abuse. One of the victims reports that he asked for forgiveness to JMM for not having succeeded to report the facts to the different people in charge at the time of the abuse, in order to help the perpetrator to heal, and for not having protected others from being abused. This victimisation process increases the negative long term impact of abuse. The Movement itself contributed to the guilt felt by victims, considering that once the legal responsibility was not confirmed, it was not their responsibility either to protect future other victims from JMM or to actively trace back other victims who had not come forward with their stories. JMM for years was left in the same position of authority and potential abuse of power. A victim remembers that when he told his story to the people in charge at the International Centre, they seemed to be so bewildered by his story he felt strongly that what had happened must have been his own fault.

### **Other abusive situations within the Movement (not related to JMM)**

The Independent Inquiry is aware of the trust it has received from many people to listen and use their experience to contribute to a more complete picture of the situation; we have therefore been careful to use the following stories in a very general way so as to safeguard identities of all concerned. In telling their stories some succeeded in overcoming their psychological difficulties, some are still struggling with past events and trying to find some meaning. Witnesses are both former and current Members of the Movement.

***The Independent Inquiry, whilst ensuring that all voices are heard, wants to point out that the following reported cases of abuse including sexual, emotional, spiritual, and financial, were not investigated in detail by the Inquiry.***

However, these stories describe similar situations to those of JMM and his victims adding weight to the testimonies received by the Inquiry. Profiles of perpetrators reported by the different individuals are often similar to JMM - charismatic people idolised by others, seen as central, untouchable, morally irreproachable, and trustworthy. The different situations described follow similar patterns of abuse of power, psychological dependence and

adoration. The collected stories are triangulated by reports concerning the same situation but told by different sources and by the fact that different stories show identical patterns. This leads to a worrying snapshot image of the Movement and points to systemic situations of abuse which were and are known about by those in positions of leadership and responsibility since the early days of the Movement, but not addressed and therefore are likely to still continue. The Independent Inquiry was also concerned to hear stories of victim blaming which is suggested to be prevalent across the Movement; testimony indicates critical voices that speak up about issues of abuse, including victims who should be supported, have become viewed as part of the problem, when for some they could be part of the solution.

We want to start this section and demonstrate the impact sexual abuse has not only on child victims but also on vulnerable adults under psychological hold (*emprise*), often for a major part of their lives. The following quote is from a victim of multiple sexual assaults by another member of the Focolare Movement.

*Je rêve de frères chrétiens avec qui je pourrais avoir une relation dans une humanité vraie et sincère, qui ne fassent fi de nos souffrances, qui acceptent la réalité telle qu'elle est, qui nous soutiennent concrètement, c'est-à-dire aussi financièrement, et avec qui je pourrais participer à la construction d'un monde plus humain où nous nous respecterions les uns les autres, et où chacun trouvera sa place dans notre Église. Je rêve de chrétiens qui osent dire stop aux 'beaux discours'. Je rêve que toutes les souffrances que nous vivons puissent trouver leur sens dans une vie de foi sincère, qui en l'occurrence m'est impossible actuellement tellement les blessures que j'ai subi au sein de l'Église sont profondes. Mais peut-être est-ce trop demander, puisque ces informations terrifiantes choquent tant de personnes..... Peut-être faudrait-il que ces personnes qui ont l'impression de vivre actuellement un séisme dans l'Église, se rendent compte que, comme victime, je vis un Tsunami, et ce jusqu'à la fin de mes jours, malgré toutes les séances de psychothérapie que je pourrais faire.....*

*I dream of Christian brothers with whom I could have a relationship in true and sincere humanity, who do not ignore our sufferings, who accept reality as it is, who support us concretely, that is to say also financially, and with whom I could participate in the construction of a more human world where we would respect each other, and where each one would find his or her place in our Church. I dream of Christian brothers who dare to say stop to nice words without meaning. I dream that all the sufferings we are going through could find their meaning in a sincere life of faith, which in this case is impossible for me at the moment, so deep are the wounds I have suffered within the Church. But perhaps it is too much to ask, since this terrifying information shocks so many people..... Perhaps these people who have the impression that they are currently experiencing an earthquake in the Church should realise that, as a victim, I am experiencing a Tsunami for the rest of my life, in spite of all the psychotherapy sessions that I could do.....*

### **Allegations of sexual abuse**

During the Independent Inquiry, a number of other stories of sexual abuse were reported to the team. Some were new, others were already partially known by the Movement and well



documented. What is persistently shared by many of the witnesses is the feeling that not much is done to acknowledge some of the very difficult situations the victims continue to face. One incident of sexual abuse might not necessarily in itself contribute to a life filled with different difficult events; however, it certainly influences decisions which were taken and led to other encounters. Victims described how the abuse therefore contributed to situations of weakness or vulnerability leading to other abuse. Also, even though there have been some statements and letters acknowledging publicly that the Movement had issues of inappropriate behaviour, sexual abuse and other difficult situations, victims and witnesses described how these declarations did not seem to be followed by actions and effective change.

Most of the victims or witnesses reporting other cases of sexual abuse within the movement are concerned about the lack of diligence, reporting to national authorities when appropriate and necessary as well as a level of opacity when cases were dealt with and perpetrators expelled. As within the Church, some of the perpetrators were sanctioned internally or asked to leave the movement with no further reporting or safeguarding measures. This might pose future risks to others. Therefore, victims remain defiant about the real will of the leaders of the Movement to bring about long-awaited effective change and reparations. More recent cases led to learning and setting up new structures; however, the perception is that there remain difficulties to sharing information within the Movement in a public way when cases are dealt with through legal structures but not confirmed (as has been the case with JMM). Sharing of full details on such a case can contradict data protection rules and the presumption of innocence<sup>12</sup>.

Witnesses who spoke to the Inquiry team about past experiences of sexual abuse within the Movement very often also spoke about subsequent or prior situations of abuse of power, emotional or spiritual and sometimes financial abuse. It appears that negative experiences which were reportedly lived inside the Movement, contributed in some cases to further weakening the self-confidence of those concerned and allowed further abuse through different forms. A form of additional emotional abuse might also have been experienced in that the belief in Chiara Lubich's teaching was so strong for many of them, that despite their negative experiences they remained within the Movement for many years or are still part of it today. Therefore, when, as reported in some cases, they were asked to leave or made to feel that they should do so after a number of years, the experience and negative impact were even stronger, leading to more negative impact for these individuals.

The Independent Inquiry wants to share some of the stories told to them. Different stories show a similar pattern of situations based on a hierarchical vision of power and total obedience to the teachings and representatives of the Movement that were a feature of the context in which JMM was able to abuse for so long.

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<sup>12</sup> Work is currently ongoing within Focolare to develop a protocol to facilitate sharing of information relating to cases

One story is that of a young man, who described already being subject to inappropriate sexual behaviour from a consecrated Member of the Movement, who described suffering additional emotional abuse following attempted sexual abuse by another Member, now deceased. At the time of the attempted abuse, there were many rumours with regards to the alleged perpetrator; however, as was often the case historically in the Church and its institutions, rather than dealing with the misconduct robustly, the person was simply transferred to other locations; what remains is the ongoing concern of this victim, today close to retirement, who wonders about the number of potential victims of this individual. He was only able to escape from the attempted sexual abuse because he was strong enough to resist and not consent. What remains today is a feeling of guilt for not having reported the case officially.

Another story was shared by a woman who spoke about having been sent to Loppiano in Italy when she was only 15 years old, after her parents were guided by a local priest to have their very young daughters join the Movement. While in Loppiano, she was under the surveillance of the women Focolarine. During her stay, she was raped by a male Member of the Movement. None of the women responsible realised her distress and she never reported the case. The rape led to psychological destruction, she did not finish her studies and therefore did not contribute via her salary to the Movement's financial situation, leading to yet other abusive situations in terms of emotional and spiritual abuse as she was made to feel worthless to the community.

Another story involves another rape, alleged to have been committed by yet another Member of the Movement on a vulnerable adult. A rape the victim described as being committed repeatedly under the eyes of a whole community that she feels chose to not see anything. This witness speaks about her enormous distress ever since, about other situations of sexual violence she experienced repeatedly since the first rape committed during a Mariapoli. She shares the difficulty of finding acknowledgment, understanding within the Movement to which she has given a lot.

A young man told his story of sexual abuse allegedly committed by another Member of the Movement. A story of sexual abuse which has been painful and detrimental, not only to him but also to his family. He writes about the fact that after he reported his case, the different Commissions in charge did not take sufficient action and so he worries the alleged perpetrator might be still in a position of abusing other adolescents or young adults<sup>13</sup>.

Other young men tell similar stories, implicating different alleged abusers, with similar patterns. Relationships of trust, mentoring, traveling, emotions leading to sexual abuse or attempts of sexual abuse. The young men describe a Movement that rather than use its own rules and regulations based on moral commitments and ethical responsibilities, uses legal limitations and definitions to undertake (or not) steps to protect the victims as well as future victims. As has been seen in other religious communities and the wider Church, the notion of

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<sup>13</sup> The case was initially reported to the French Commission and halted by them. Central COBETU directed the case to re-open but this did not happen, and later it was reported through the Independent Inquiry and subsequently to CO.BE.TU.

forgiveness is sometimes an enemy of acknowledging morally reprehensible situations, whereby faith teachings may lead to prayer and forgiveness at the expense of basic expectations of justice on the part of victims. Not that prayer and forgiveness are not important, but they should never simply replace actions and consequences for those responsible of abuse.

Many of the stories told implicated not only the victim, not only the alleged perpetrator but often whole families who were impacted and suffered. They appear to have suffered as these grave incidents were not acknowledged, not followed up, not always taken for what they were – important failures of a system and the way the Movement organised activities and watched over the security of adolescents and young people. Adult women tell with a lot of emotions how difficult it was to be in a Mariapoli, where as children they were totally separated from their parents, left alone within a world where they knew nobody, and where they did not feel safe. Some, men and women, speak about traumatic memories which they cannot fully identify, leaving them wondering if they were sexually abused during these times. For these potential victims finding closure is very difficult.

This section is not about numbers as clearly the Independent Inquiry does not pretend to have a full picture and information on all situations of sexual abuse encountered over the years. The Independent Inquiry has also not proactively been looking for victims of other perpetrators but deems it important to include these voices in its report for future reference, follow-up and even more importantly, awareness raising and learning. It is key the Focolare Movement understands the unsafe environments that have developed at times and in different locations, recognises the harmful experiences, and realises the huge impact such abusive behaviour has had on different individuals and families, leading to a lot of distress and difficulties.

### **Allegations of spiritual, emotional, financial abuse and abuse of authority**

The case JMM describes a major breach of trust within the Movement but in many cases the breaches go further than just the sexual abuse cases. This section contains detail of testimony from people who described being victims of behaviour which for them generated long term negative impact on their lives, sometimes in a very dramatic manner and who feel that so far they have not been fully heard by the Movement's leadership.

The scope of the Independent Inquiry was to look into abuses committed by JMM and the context in which they occurred, while at the same time receiving reports with regards to other abusive situations. As with the sexual abuse cases reported in the previous section, the following reported situations have not been fully investigated by the Inquiry. However, the Independent Inquiry has received during the last 10 months a large number of reports from many different locations, regarding other situations perceived as being abusive, not

necessarily sexually abusive, but involving emotional abuse, financial abuse, or spiritual abuse<sup>14</sup>.

Different testimonies and writings covering aspects of the Focolare Movement have also been published over recent years<sup>15</sup>. It was not part of the scope of this Inquiry to assess the veracity of these publications or to comment on the thoroughness of their inquiry processes, although the Movement has responded publicly and acknowledged past failings<sup>16</sup>.

The testimonies in this report describe individual experiences that have led to concerns, reports, feelings, perceptions, and indicate a continuing level of mistrust and dissatisfaction with the Movement on their part, both in general and in relation to how issues of harm to people are dealt with. The accounts span many decades, and some relate to recent or even current times, but their significance is in providing further contextual information on the environment in which JMM was operating – the environment that allowed him to abuse and continue to abuse.

The Independent Inquiry received and listened to many women and men telling their own stories in a very candid and humble way; stories of the perception of having been abused by a Member of the Movement or by the Movement itself in various ways through its past and current leadership structures. It appears with some individuals, the higher the levels of trust and commitment to the Focolare Movement and Chiara Lubich's teachings, the more dramatic were the disappointments and long-term psychological impact and suffering for them.

## Testimonies

*The Independent Inquiry wants to thank all the people who came forward with their stories of distrust, disappointment, damage, vulnerabilities and overall personal stories about the Movement in which some of them still believe, but feel is in great danger of self-destruction.*

Evaristo<sup>17</sup> told the team how distressed he was when a Focolarino whom he turned to for reassurance and support, simply told him to obey. The question he had brought forward to the Focolarino was one of a very personal matter, asking for spiritual directions with regards to a strong disagreement with his family about the person with whom he chose to spend his entire life. The Focolarino told him that God's will prevailed over everything else and that he was to do as he was told by the Movement, without any explanation, any understanding, any questioning. This perceived pressure was also described by another witness who told the inquiry about the harassment she was victim of when she wanted to marry a person of whom the other members of the Movement did not approve. She expressed having been victim of

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<sup>14</sup> Definitions available at Appendix VIII

<sup>15</sup> Io e il movimento dei Focolari, storia di un inganno e una liberazione, 2019 Renata Patti  
La setta divina, 2021, Ferruccio Pinotti

Les chambres secrètes des Focolari, 2020, Miguel Perlado

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.focolare.org/en/news/2021/11/09/statement-by-the-focolare-movement-on-the-publication-of-the-book-la-setta-divina/>

<sup>17</sup> Name changed

emotional manipulation, being rejected by all when she made personal choices which were not approved by the Movement. This victim describes a very violent process with a long-lasting impact on her.

Antonella and Maria<sup>18</sup> told of their memories of being little girls and how they were brought into the Movement at a very young age, their parents being influenced by the local priest vouching for their integration into the Movement's activities. They speak about negative memories of assisting at Mariapoli at very young ages, separated from their parents and feeling abandoned in a strange world. One of them shared her feeling of a world where the focus is on the Founder rather than on religious teachings, a world where she was manipulated when still very young and vulnerable. When she left the Movement, she realized that she had also lived in a vacuum, with all her friends and relationships being within the Movement. Leaving the Movement for her meant losing all relationships, being treated like somebody with no value by people who were like her family for many years. Similar stories were told by other women who left the Movement or took some distance from it.

Many speak about the financial situation and the 'Communion of Goods' model, which concerns free sharing of goods among members of the Movement according to the spirit of the first Christian communities, and involves sharing of one's own resources and income (there is also a model termed the 'Economy of Communion' that encourages whole enterprises, to support the poorest). However, contributing to the financial situation of the Movement by dedicating their own resources, inheritances and salaries meant for many that when they left the Movement to follow a different direction or lifestyle, they also left their financial stability and found themselves in very dire situations. The situation appears even more dramatic when the separation did not happen on the initiative of the Member but when they were, for some rather brutally, asked to live the Movement. The Inquiry team received testimonies explaining that some, after a lifetime of engagement with the movement, when they were expelled or discarded, found themselves in similar situations to women in the 1970's, before obtaining contractual rights to the economies of the household. This has also been an obstacle for some to even considering leaving the Focolare; at the same time, this dependency is a serious barrier for reporting abuse of any kind.

Others also report the way the Movement in France is constructed<sup>19</sup> leads to a non-transparent financial situation which needs to be addressed. Follow-up journalistic investigations into the situation of the Church in France after the publication of the CIASE report have shown similar worrying patterns<sup>20</sup>.

Some speak about patterns of sectarian drift and refer to the writings of Sister Chantal Soerlin<sup>21</sup>. Lucie<sup>22</sup> speaks about meetings she attended in 1976 when she was a young girl. 'The

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<sup>18</sup> Names changed

<sup>19</sup> Through a number of associations, loi 1901

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/secrets-d-info/secrets-d-info-du-samedi-27-novembre-2021>

<sup>21</sup> Dérives sectaires, à l'intérieur même d'institutions d'église' / Soeur Chantal-Marie Sorlin

<sup>22</sup> Name changed

room was filled with very young girls, worshipping Chiara Lubich. When Chiara arrived, often accompanied by Igino Giordani<sup>23</sup>, it felt like a concert, they were welcomed by the crowd like rock stars.’ She recalls memories of being told at such occasions that it was necessary to die to oneself such as Jesus on the Cross, in order to be able to be born again. She remembers how she was tortured by these teachings, difficult to understand when still a young child. Others mention that they felt in those occasions a very strong cult of personality towards the leading and very charismatic figures of the Movement. As they were young, this left a significant impression on them, influencing choices they made subsequently. As they put it, being in Loppiano and being part of the Movement equalled Paradise, leaving both meant Hell. In this context, some mention also JMM who was one of these charismatic personalities who were not to be criticised, creating an unhealthy culture of adoration and faultlessness.

Maureen<sup>24</sup> shared her story, the feeling of giving everything to the Movement without knowing the final objectives; a feeling of being a small piece of a puzzle where the full image is only available to the elite and the ones in the know, and a sense of huge disappointment in being asked for her benevolent contribution and to be excluded at the final stage.

Irene<sup>25</sup> shared a story of emotional abuse remembering as a child being told that money given to the Movement would be distributed to the poorest, and realising as an adult that extreme poverty cohabitated with great luxury within the Movement. She felt an important divide between the members who contribute as much as they can and the elite living very comfortably.

Some of the women share stories of having been asked to leave the Focolarine, sometimes in a very abusive way. There are stories of finding themselves literally on the street with no access to the Focolare anymore, with no financial resources, with former friends being asked to ignore them and not speak to them anymore. Some underline the contradiction of a Movement speaking of unity and sharing while ignoring former Members as soon as they leave the institution. A witness says that *‘it feels being treated like a Kleenex, once you have used it, you throw it away. To remain within, one needs to renounce what one thinks and feels, be identical to all the others’*. This can be a painful experience and some of the women testifying to the Independent Inquiry stated they had been subjected to controls of their private correspondence, their writings, their relationships, and that their own personality had been dissolved into the Movement. Similar statements to the ones received by the Independent Inquiry are not uncommon and have been documented elsewhere<sup>26</sup>.

Some people report the fact that through looking for support within the structures of the Movement, they were guided towards other organisations which they felt were very abusive and sectarian in nature. They also described how they felt left with no further support from

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<sup>23</sup> Italian Senator, writer and one of Chiara Lubich’s first companion

<sup>24</sup> Name changed

<sup>25</sup> Name changed

<sup>26</sup> Association d’aide aux victimes des dérives de mouvements religieux en Europe et à leurs familles AVREF  
<https://avref.fr/les-focolari.html>

the Movement to help them extricate themselves from the hold these alternative structures had over them. There are also multiple testimonies of witnesses explaining the pyramidal structure of the Movement, consequently leading to positions of adoration, obedience and potential emotional abuse.

There are also stories where reported and admitted inappropriate behaviour has led to retaliation and victim-blaming to family members, 'punishing' not only the responsible individual but others who are close to the fact.

And there are stories of people who share their feeling of having failed to redress the situation, of having been a whistle-blower without anybody listening, of being unable to help the Movement correct financial and other misconduct. They share their frustration and deception. Others remember their emotional and financial dependence toward the Movement which prevented them from leaving a Movement although it had been hurting them over many years.

It is important to remember that some parents, knowing more about the stories of sexual abuse, specifically with regards to JMM and taking into account the limited information they had, suffered some form of emotional abuse because of the suspicion that their own children might have been victims to JMM or another alleged and known perpetrator. Witnesses reported their discussions with their adult children to ensure that they were not former victims; some former victims wondered about their own children part of the movement, once they came to know that they were not the only victim.

And finally, there are the stories of people who described suffering as a result of a system that did not listen extensively and which was not proactive in supporting individuals who were negatively impacted through inappropriate processes to investigate, through insufficient ways to deal with important and serious issues, through a lack of transparent and evidence-based decision making. Witnesses described what they feel was a systemic violation of individual rights, a charismatic Movement for the last 65 years which lacks rules and regulations able to guarantee justice, appropriate functioning of the institution and respecting all involved. The testimonies also depict a movement lacking clear structures and procedures which led to mixing different stories and dealing with them in an identical way, leaving concerned individuals with a feeling of incomprehension and injustice. These unclear structures were also seen as leading in some cases to dealing with concerns on an ad-hoc basis, without a clear and structured investigative approach. As a result, it was felt that some decisions were based on resentment, feelings, overreactions, quick mitigation measures rather than an individual and detailed approach, leading to evidence-based results and outcomes. The lack of a systematic approach when dealing with cases has led some of those testifying to report very difficult individual emotional situation as a consequence, including feelings of deep sorrow, unfounded public blaming and being the subject of unhealthy rumours.



Systems often fail; what is important to be aware of this potential and improve supervision, structures, procedures so that systemic failures can be avoided. The stories told to the Independent Inquiry follow similar patterns around charismatic figures, unshared power, adoration and creating a divide within the movement itself between the powerful elite and the other members. Such patterns of psychological hold are identical to patterns leading from charisma to abuse, including sexual abuse.

## INQUIRY PROCESS

### **Terms of Reference, Scope, Approach**

As outlined in the background section, the object of the mandate given by the Focolare Movement to GCPS was to achieve the following general objectives:

1. To carry out an investigation into the sexual abuses committed by JMM, reviewing the details of known offences, the context in which they occurred, and highlighting others that may come to light.
2. To establish, as far as possible, the degree of knowledge of these events by the persons responsible at the time and subsequently, and assess how they were dealt with by the persons responsible, in the light of the historical periods concerned.
3. To provide recommendations on current child protection arrangements - for the Focolare in France and more generally for the whole Focolare Movement - including reporting and response systems and, in particular, case management.
4. To draw up within a year a public report detailing the findings and recommendations of the commission of enquiry.

The full Terms of Reference are at Appendix I

### **Inquiry methodology**

#### **Team**

The Independent Inquiry was composed of two team members from GCPS Consulting, the Founding Director and one of its most senior and experienced Senior Associates who had special responsibility for interviewing victims, with flexibility to expand the team depending on the final scope of the work.

### **Independent Supervisory Function**



An independent oversight function (see Terms of Reference at [Appendix II](#)) was integrated after the start of the inquiry. This was in response to a specific requirement of the victims consulted as part of the establishing the inquiry, a requirement fully shared and instituted by the Focolare Movement, with the aim of guaranteeing the full independence and accountability of the investigation. The independent oversight function also offered a third party avenue for raising concerns with regards to the Independent Inquiry.

### **Victim-centredness and presumption of innocence**

The Independent Inquiry adhered to the key commitment of victim-centredness. This principle must be at the core of any investigation into sensitive incidents. One of the key element of this approach is the active listening to all victims, without any judgment, with no prior assumption and guaranteeing full anonymity to all. It also means that the inquiry is not pro-actively looking for statements, but leaves the choice of making contact (or not) entirely to the victim, free to decide if they want to participate in the inquiry and what details they are willing to share. This approach is not contradictory, but based on the triangulation of facts reported by several sources.

Another key principle the Independent Inquiry adhered to is the presumption of innocence. Even in a victim-centred approach where the words of the victim are important and considered truthful, it is still important to presume that alleged perpetrators are innocent when there is insufficient evidence to substantiate an allegation.

The Independent Inquiry has been able to speak to many of the witnesses including victims and the subject of complaint, without any obligation or time limits. This approach has also enabled additional witnesses to come forward with their own stories of sexual abuse or other forms of abuse they encountered within the Movement. The Independent Inquiry, although never questioning the accurateness of stories which were told, but keeping assumption of innocence central, is convinced that it has been able to triangulate most of the stories which were told through other information, documents, third party statement and feels confident that this approach has contributed to substantiate findings based on the balance of probabilities and which are shared through this report, without violating the rights of all people to be heard including the subject of complaint.

### **Initial steps**

Early stages of the process involved establishing the inquiry structure, systems and processes and reviewing background documents. In relation to making contact with known and potential other victims, the team disposed of an initial complaints and incident register where some witness and victim statements had already been collected by a specifically contracted person as well as through the two responsible persons in charge in France. It was decided to respect individual wishes in not reaching out to the Independent Inquiry. Therefore, the victims on this initial list were not proactively contacted but received information that an Independent Inquiry had been tasked to take their statements if they wished to do so. Other witnesses had also been pro-active in contacting their own contacts to facilitate potential

victims in contacting the Independent Inquiry. Some victims did initiate contact, some chose not to speak any further about events concerning them directly. The Independent Inquiry respected their choice and esteems that they had received sufficient direct and indirect testimony from victims and witnesses as well as related documentary information to enable them to reach a conclusion with regards to the different allegations.

The Independent Inquiry initiated their work in February 2021 with the aim of finalising the report by the end of the year. However, the process has been more time-consuming than expected for various reasons but especially in allowing enough time to reach out widely to victims and witnesses and leave sufficient time for them to contact the team. The breadth of testimony and documentary information, the need for translation, the establishment of the oversight function as well as delays in necessary decisions on available victim support all led to pushing back the finalisation and publication of the report until the first quarter of 2022.

### **Document review and sources of information**

The Independent Inquiry has received documents in French, English and Italian from a very diverse range of interlocutors. The CO.BE.TU. and the Movement of the Focolare facilitated a number of official documents, registers, policies, archives and background documents. Current and former members of the Movement provided the bulk of additional documents with regards to the structure and history of the Movement. The Independent Inquiry received written testimony of some of the reported abusive situations linked to JMM, but also to other perpetrators or situations and was in contact with some of the French Media who had worked on the Focolare File. The Independent Inquiry had access to the TV archives from 'Le Quotidien' as well as to the series of articles published in 'Les Jours'. The Independent Inquiry also received books which were published around the Movement<sup>27</sup> and reviewed information on sectarian drift<sup>28</sup>. The team received and reviewed information provided to them on the criminal procedure (1994) and the civil procedure (1997/98). In total, the team has reviewed a substantial number of documents, both private and official, representing approx. 130 hours of research and analysis.

### **Gathering testimonies and confidentiality**

The Independent Inquiry created its own website to enable witnesses a safe portal for contacting the inquiry team and to communicate information on the progress of the work. Reported victims were not proactively contacted but informed about the contact details of the team so they could reach out themselves.

Ninety-nine interviews took place so far with seventy-four witnesses and victims, representing 170 hours of listening and interviewing. Given the constraints with COVID-19,

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<sup>27</sup> La mécanique du Silence, 2017, Daphné Gastaldi (MEDIAPART)  
Io e il movimento dei Focolari, storia di un inganno e una liberazione, 2019 Renata Patti  
La setta divina, 2021, Ferruccio Pinotti  
Les chambres secrètes des Focolari, 2020, Miguel Perlado

<sup>28</sup> Observatoire des Nouvelles Croyances, Dérives sectaires à l'intérieur d'institutions d'église, Soeur Chantal-Marie Sorlin, Responsable du bureau des dérives sectaires, Juin 2014

the majority of interviews took place either by Zoom or by mobile phone. Notes were taken of all the interviews. However, these notes are not shared outside of the Independent Inquiry as all interlocutors were guaranteed full anonymity in their interactions with the Independent Inquiry.

More than 1500 emails were exchanged with witnesses, victims and third parties during the inquiry.

Interviews were conducted until the end of February 2022, including with senior representatives and the presidency of the Movement. Identifying details are not shared outside of the Independent Inquiry and most of the names remain with the interviewer to avoid any risk of disclosing identities.

This focus on confidentiality is always important and especially as the Focolare Movement can be compared to a big family, but sufficiently small for many people to know each other. It is an environment prone to rumours. A lot of people seemed to have known that there was an issue around JMM without knowing exactly what the issue was. The same happens with other cases and allegations of abuse of power. Information is circulating through different unofficial channels. There seems to be a habit of multiple copies when issues are raised. This is usually not helpful and often leads to misunderstanding, false information and to exaggerations.

As an example, during this inquiry, a rumour circulated that JMM was responsible for 'only' 30 victims (a figure based on initially wrong information). Other information brought to the attention of the Independent Inquiry was that many people would be jailed once the report was published; information with no basis at all. The fact that the male and female representatives of Focolare France who had occupied those roles since 2015, were asked to resign after the first stories around JMM started to surface publicly in October 2020, led to a lot of speculation about their involvement and having covered up information for many years. However, the real reason for their resignation was how the case was handled since the Summer of 2020, i.e. their actions did not correspond to the expectations of the Leadership and were not compliant with the rules of the Movement as described in the safeguarding policy and guidelines. Ultimately, when it comes to dealing with abuse cases it is the president and co-president as well as the country delegates that are accountable for taking decisions and are overall responsible for what happens in the organisation.

For all these reasons, the work of the Independent Inquiry has not been easy and this underlines the need for strict confidentiality measures. However, it also needs to be emphasised that those most concerned, the victims, have maintained confidentiality well and entrusted the Independent Inquiry with lots of sensitive information. We hope that we have been able to merit their trust by maintaining the best possible confidentiality from our side.

## **Constraints and challenges**

Fully inclusive outreach can be challenging, and this was also the case for this Inquiry. The work of the team has been advertised mostly on the Focolare France website, given the main focus of the work was around allegations against a former French lay member of the Movement. This means that little information from other geographical locations has reached the Independent Inquiry. Some testimonies originated from Italy, others from Belgium and Holland, others from North Africa. This has obviously limited full disclosure and moving beyond European borders. The team was aware that JMM travelled extensively to a variety of locations, such as the Philippines, Cameroon, Brazil, Argentina, the United States of America, Japan, Korea, Thailand and Australia. Given the profile of potential victims under often harsh circumstances, the team was eager to explore potential grooming and abuse during these travels. However, this was not possible and no testimony from such places was received.

Nevertheless, the team was also reassured by the fact that JMM's grooming process appeared to be based on a familiar environment, seeking to create relationships of trust over a very long span of time, often several years. This scenario was less likely during JMM's travel, having spent approximately one year traveling backwards and forwards with average stays of a couple of weeks only, although it remains a possibility that he abused opportunistically during such visits.

The team was also aware of JMM's work within the Chaplaincy of a second degree school in France. Again, a Chaplaincy appears to be an environment where grooming is easily possible. Although there were some rumours and suspicions voiced by different witnesses, it has been impossible to explore this stream in more detail. No spontaneous witnesses or victims came forward from this background and none of the other witnesses was able to provide sufficiently precise information to enable further enquiries.

It quickly appeared there was limited documentary information on JMM available. Personal files seemed to be scarce and access to files linked to the International Centre with regards to financial information was not obtained. However, the requested information has been obtained through alternative channels and the team remains confident that it has been able to conclude the Inquiry with sufficient historical and documentary information.

## **Standard of proof**

Any conclusions of an administrative review of this kind are based on a 'balance of probabilities' and not 'beyond any doubt' standard of proof. Considering the available evidence, witness testimony and documents, and through triangulation of received information, the Independent Inquiry reached determinations based on the balance of probabilities i.e. whether events and allegations presented to it were 'more likely to have occurred than not'. The Independent Inquiry did not seek to establish whether or not any of the alleged incidents or events might still represent criminal breaches, was not required to do so by the TOR and took no view on this.

However, it is important to remember that whenever criminal acts are alleged, they should be reported to the public prosecutor. The Independent Inquiry will forward a separate file to the CO.BE.TU with regards to other reported cases for further investigation and potential reporting to authorities when appropriate. Too often, victims and organisations are convinced that the information is time-barred; however, and as explains Thibault Verny, Auxiliary Bishop of Paris and responsible of following up cases of sexual abuse within the Diocese of Paris, 'it is not up to us to decide if something is time-barred. This is the sole responsibility of the public prosecutor'.

## Standard of conduct

At the time of the alleged events, the Movement of the Focolare, as with most other organisations, enterprises, schools, churches, humanitarian organisations and other employers, did not have strict policies in place, including standards of behaviour regulating sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. Such policies started to be written towards the end of the 1990's when the public became more aware of the important power imbalances present within these set-ups. What governed behaviour, including sexual conduct, was principally the applicable law, in this specific case French legislation as well as the Italian legislation.

The external 'cultural' context in France was governed by the aftermath of 1968 and to some extent the liberalisation of sexual constraints. It was a time when there were movements defending the right of children to be initiated into sexual activities, including through incestuous relationships. It was a time of Gabriel Matzneff<sup>29</sup> and his very young 14-year-old lover, publicly known and accepted. It was also the time of politicians such as Daniel Cohn-Bendit<sup>30</sup>, public figures such as Frédéric Mitterrand<sup>31</sup> and Henri de Montherlant<sup>32</sup>, openly speaking about their sexual relationships with under-age girls<sup>33</sup> and boys in France and in foreign countries, sexual freedom and a wide acceptance of sexual harassment and sexism within the wider society<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> Gabriel Matzneff described his pedophile and sexual tourism activities in several of his books as well as on his official website, and discussed them on television appearances. Nonetheless, he remained sheltered from any criminal prosecution throughout his literary career and benefited from wide and enthusiastic support within the French literary world—all despite the fact that his books did not sell well among the general public

<sup>30</sup> The President of the German Constitutional Court (Bundesverfassungsgericht), Andreas Voßkuhle declined the invitation to deliver a speech in Mr. Cohn-Bendit's honour, saying that he did not want to create the impression that the Constitutional Court approved of Mr. Cohn-Bendit's utterances regarding paedophilia.

<sup>31</sup> Mitterrand's autobiographical novel *The Bad Life* (French: *La mauvaise vie*) was a best seller in 2005. In the book he details his "delight" whilst visiting the male brothels of Bangkok, and writes, "I got into the habit of paying for boys ... The profusion of young, very attractive and immediately available boys put me in a state of desire I no longer needed to restrain or hide." At the time of its release Mitterrand was applauded for his honesty, but he had to defend his writings after he publicly defended Roman Polanski when Polanski was detained in Switzerland on an American request for extradition for raping a thirteen-year-old girl

<sup>32</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry\\_de\\_Montherlant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_de_Montherlant)

<sup>33</sup> „My flirtations with all children soon acquired a definitely erotic character. I could sense how young girls aged five had already learned how to get off with me. ...It happened several times that some children opened my codpiece and started caressing me. According to the circumstances of each case, I reacted differently, but the children's wishes posed problems for me... when they insisted, I caressed them in return. I was accused of being a pervert, and there were letters to the City Council, asking whether I was paid for by public funds. Fortunately I had concluded my contract directly with the parents' board, otherwise I would have been sacked... Daniel Cohn-Bendit

<sup>34</sup> Montherlant treated pederast themes in his work, including his play *La Ville dont le prince est un enfant* (1952) and novel *Les Garçons* (The Boys), published in 1969 but written four or five decades earlier. He maintained a private and coded correspondence

This historic context is often used as an excuse today when investigating and analysing historical abuse cases. However, given the very high public commitment of JMM, being a consecrated lay person and dedicating his life to celibacy, chastity and poverty, it is difficult to imagine that the tolerance towards sexually abusive situations in the society can be used as an explanation of the tolerance and acceptance of the Movement with regards to JMM's behaviour. His public commitment as a consecrated Focolarino also contributed to parents lowering their guards as he more than anybody else was not expected to engage in any kind of sexual activity.

Therefore, even without any specific organisational governing framework in place and acknowledging that the legal system has its own failure when defining sexual abuse, sexual violence and sexual offences, the Independent Inquiry considers that standards and rules in place governing JMM's behaviour were the religious, moral and spiritual environment he inhabited and the commitments he made when he took his vows as a consecrated Focolarino, vows of celibacy, chastity and poverty. JMM was a consecrated man in a Catholic community, fully aware of the teachings of Christ, the centrality of children in the Scriptures, the emphasis on 'right relationships' and human dignity in Catholic Social Teaching. Child protection policies are important but there cannot be any excuse that the uninformed, laissez-faire attitudes of wider society and the lack of a clear organisational framework for child protection somehow gave JMM permission to act in the way he did.

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with fellow pederast [Roger Peyrefitte](#) — author of *Les Amitiés particulières* (Special Friendships, 1943), also about relationships between boys at a [Roman Catholic](#) boarding school

### **Allegation A – Sexual Abuse by JMM**

#### **A. To carry out an investigation into the sexual abuses committed by JMM, reviewing the details of known offences, the context in which they occurred, and highlighting others that may come to light**

The Independent Inquiry received credible and corroborating accounts, including JMM's own admission of parts of the allegations, covering a period of more than 30 years (1963 – 1998), from various alleged victims, all males as well as other witnesses, both male and females. They originated from all parts of France, were coherent with JMM's own locations, travels and responsibilities. Dates provided and details of other events were coherent and triangulated through different sources of information. All witnesses described similar events, providing sufficient evidence that JMM engaged in manipulative and inappropriate sexual activities with children and young adults under his supervision and influence. The Independent Inquiry received direct oral or written testimony from 26 victims. The team also received trustworthy information mentioning at least 11 other victims of JMM. At the same time, the Independent Inquiry also received testimony of at least 3 young people subjected to a grooming process, without any subsequent abuse. These additional reports on grooming concern incidents up to 2017, reported to the Independent Inquiry. No reports of inappropriate behaviour were received since then. The identified numbers do not presume there were no other victims, especially given the different challenges encountered and allegations of sexual abuse during travels and Chaplaincy work which could not be followed up by the Independent Inquiry.

JMM, in his own testimony in front of the Court in 1994 and 1997, during some interaction with three of the victims as well as when confronted with the facts in 2021, partially admitted some of the abuses. However, at the time of the hearings he did not recognize the significant negative impact his behaviour had on some of the victims and even now he remains confident that these relationships were based on a mutual understanding with no violence involved and insists on the fact that there was a non-lieu during the criminal trial. He admits today that he did not attach much importance to the different incidents as he understood that they were based on consent; however, he also understands that these adolescents could have been hurt by his behaviour. He is willing to meet them, but cannot remember names, contacts or numbers.

For the Independent Inquiry, given the age of the children as well as the very special grooming environment including his own position of authority and trust towards the families and the children, the many allegations received by the inquiry of inappropriate behaviour, sexual

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<sup>35</sup> All names known to the Independent Inquiry's interviewer



misconduct and sexual abuse are substantiated based on testimony and documentary evidence showing that:

### **Period 1958 - 1967**

While attending EURATOM Superior School, JMM joins the Focolare movement and participates for his first Mariapoli in 1963, followed by his first year in the International Center in Loppiano and military service in France. In 1965 he is nominated zonal advisor for the Focolare Paris and joins SEREB (Aérospatiale). It is established that JMM was responsible for abusing five children. Some of the victims are part of a group with another 2 potential victims, some are deceased. JMM was abusing the children while visiting the region and being a trusted guest of the parents. One of the victims was sexually abused a number of times, between the age of 11 and 14 years. The other victim was 17 at the time of the events; JMM was also a guest at his parents' house while the first incident happened. This victim was then invited to Paris in the Focolare and sexually approached a second time.

### **Period 1967 – 1970**

JMM started his career with Nouvelle Cité, the Focolare's publishing house in Paris in 1967. He will remain with Nouvelle Cité until 1990. Another two victims are reported during this period (1 deceased, 1 admitted by JMM acknowledging the suffering he caused inadvertently<sup>36</sup>). The representatives in charge (one of them meanwhile deceased) were informed of four of the victims (confirmed by letter dated 24/11/2015 from the then representative of Western Europe).

### **Period 1970 – 1980**

JMM continues his career with Nouvelle Cité which gives him a special status, adding to the fascination he is exerting over young people. Although never exercising any specifically important or significant post within the Movement, he is a very active member, regularly visiting families and inviting their children to Paris, to visit the city, to visit the Publishing House. In addition to his social status, he is a charismatic, funny, open-minded character. The fact that he is a consecrated lay member adds to the trust his different interlocutors demonstrate towards him.

It is also during this period that different documents demonstrate a mentally difficult period for JMM. A former responsible of the Focolare where JMM lives writes in a letter that '*JMM spoke from time to time about a difficult period of depression, during the first years when he entered the focolare*<sup>37</sup>. One of the former responsible of France (now deceased), writes about a potential posting for JMM as person in charge of the zone Belgium: '*Si à quasi totalmente*

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<sup>36</sup> Letter from JMM to the victim, dated 16<sup>th</sup> September 2019

<sup>37</sup> Letter dated from 1971

*rimessa da una specie di esaurimento nervoso durato quattro anni, ma c'è ancora un equilibrio instabile*<sup>38</sup>

It is also during this period that JMM obtains his diploma as a Journalist<sup>39</sup>.

He pronounces his perpetual vows on the 8<sup>th</sup> December, 1976.

It is established that JMM was responsible for abusing another eight victims, with different degrees of severity. Another person was reported as a suspected victim by his parents. Accounts of these victims are similar to the others, circumstances allowing manipulation and sexual approaches. Some of these victims, while seeking psychosocial support have made other dramatic encounters and choices, pushing them and their families into different extreme and inextricable situations; one committed suicide many years ago, although the part played by his abuse in that is not known. Others have been able to find peace and resilience.

## **Period 1980 – 1982**

In 1980, JMM is attending a therapy weekend run by a representative of *The Family of Nazareth*. This Movement has attracted a number of former Members of the Focolare Movement. The Nazareth Movement appears in an official parliamentary report n° 2468<sup>40</sup> as suspected of 'sectarian drift'. Its practices, although marketed as psychotherapy sessions have been described as not based on any scientific foundations or teachings<sup>41</sup>. Considering JMM's problematic sexual behaviour, it is regrettable that he seemed to have been directed for psychological follow-up to a Movement associated with a distorted vision of sexuality and abuse<sup>42</sup>. Practices are reported not to respect fundamental rules of psychoanalysis, mixing individual sessions, partner sessions, group sessions, with the same patients. The Family of Nazareth Movement is not recognized by the Catholic Church. It is not within the scope of this Inquiry to look into practices linked to the Family of Nazareth; however, the Independent Inquiry considers this information is important with regards to psychological follow-up of JMM, which appears to have been inappropriate.

It is in this time span that a witness remembers JMM declared: *'Today, I would never be accepted as a Focolare.'*

From 1981 to 1985, JMM follows an internship at ASFORED.

The Independent Inquiry identified six other victims plus five potential victims (reported through other victims and third parties). The reported events are similar to all the prior

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<sup>38</sup> Letter dated from 13/10/1973 'He has almost completely recovered from a kind of nervous breakdown that lasted four years, but his balance is still unstable'.

<sup>39</sup> Center of Rue du Louvre, Paris

<sup>40</sup> Rapport parlementaire n° 2468 <https://www.gemppi.org/sectes-et-mouvances/les-sectes-en-france-1995-rapport-parlementaire-n-2468/>

<sup>41</sup> Sectes en sommeil, UNADFI Bulles n° 90, 2ème trimestre 2006

<sup>42</sup> La famille de Nazareth et l'atelier de psychanalyse existentielle <https://www.unadfi.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Famille-de-Nazareth.pdf>

victims and stories. Several of these victims reported abuse of their own family members and friends. At least four of these victims were not contested by JMM when he was confronted with these facts in a later criminal and civil trial (1994, 1997). JMM also wrote a letter to the parents of one of the victims<sup>43</sup> to explain his behaviour and own suffering.

## **Period from 1982 – 1990**

JMM continues his career, taking up the responsibility as the Treasurer of the Professional Association of Journalists from 1983 to 1987. He writes a book with Michel Dubost<sup>44</sup> ‘Il a fait de nous un peuple, une histoire vécue des jeunes au Congrès eucharistique de Lourdes.’ Victims of JMM underlined this fact to demonstrate that he was in a position of power, well regarded and trusted by highly respectable people which made reporting his inappropriate behaviour towards them even more unlikely. Despite this, one of the victims from the 70’s reports the abuse to several senior responsible. This report does not lead to any specific action besides the fact that a number of people start to be aware of JMM’s deviance and try to keep him apart from young people. However, no official and efficient action is taken to prevent further abuses and address reported cases.

JMM resigns from his work with Nouvelle Cité in 1990, officially because of funding issues.

Three more victims report sexually abusive situations during this time. An additional suspected victim was reported, but with no further information.

## **Period 1990 – 1995**

JMM lives in the Focolare in Rome and travels to different locations around the world on behalf of Città Nuova Edizioni (Italian Branch of the Publishing House of the Focolare Movement). He travels to Cameroon, Brazil, Argentina, USA, Japan, Korea, Philippines, Thailand and Australia. He returns to Clamart and then Châtillon in November 1991 and secures a new employment with the ‘*Secours Catholique*’ in February 1992.

Before his employment and subsequent travels with Città Nuova Edizioni, an additional adolescent is victim of at least a grooming process, followed by what might have been traumatic amnesia. This person, as well as others, mentions invitations to spend the weekend at the house in Veneux les Sablons JMM inherited<sup>45</sup> None of them has any clear memories on these events, which raises the question of whether they were in some way incapacitated. At least two victims reported to the inquiry their suspicion, when looking back, about having been potentially drugged on such occasions. Living with this suspicion has an important impact on some of the victims. However, when asked, JMM denied having ever drugged any of the youth he was in contact with, in order to enable them to be abused. Another former

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<sup>43</sup> Letter dated 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1994

<sup>44</sup> At that time priest and general secretary of the Federation of Social Communication Organisations (Secrétaire général de la Fédération des Organismes de communication sociale)

<sup>45</sup> Some witnesses mention these weekends as something very unusual; not a common practice for other consecrated Focolarini to invite young people for weekends, restaurants or other individual activities.

Member of the Movement has been condemned for sexual abuse through the use of drugs (GHB – gamma-Hydroxybutyric acid)<sup>46</sup>.

Some of the victims have also been victim of the (convicted) predator who abused his victims using the GHB drug referred to above.

## **Period 1995 – 2000**

Four other victims have been reported concerning this period. One of them has contacted the Independent Inquiry but did not wish to follow up more in detail, two others have been reported through third parties with no individual contact.

After JMM started his work with the *Secours Catholique*, another victim was sexually abused over a period of time when he was 14 years and older. This victim reports similar accounts to those of other victims - invitations to a restaurant in Montparnasse in the presence of an older man (according to testimony, JMM's godfather, prone to sexual jokes), invitations to the house in the South of Paris. This victim reports as well that he has no precise memories of what happened there, he remembers only vaguely the attic being used as sleeping rooms. Again, JMM denied any use of drugs towards any of the youth he was connected to.

## [Legal procedures of 1994, 1997 and 2017](#)

### **1994/1995**

In 1994, one of the victims raised a complaint at the Tribunal de Grande Instance de Paris, followed by proceedings against JMM. He was indicted for sexual assault of a minor of fifteen years of age by a person in authority<sup>47</sup> as well as attempted rape of a minor of fifteen years of age by a person of authority<sup>48</sup>. Information forwarded to the independent investigation by the victim described the following: The victim had met JMM in the context of a Catholic association for meetings between young people and adults; JMM had caressed his penis, kissed him on the mouth, and masturbated him during stays at his home during the school holidays in 1981 and 1982. He added that JMM had repeatedly tried to have him perform fellatio by bringing his penis close to his mouth and that sessions were followed by a prayer ritual to implore God's forgiveness. He stated that he knew of three other boys who had been victims of similar acts and that they had denounced and described the same kind of events before the Judicial Police.

JMM admitted during his custody at the Judicial Police that he had touched these teenagers at the time but denied having tried to force the complainant to perform oral sex on him. He stated that he was sexually attracted to young boys and admitted that he asked the complainant to pray with him after each act in order to be forgiven.

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<sup>46</sup> This case is widely known within the Movement in France and has been referred to by different witnesses, including victims.

<sup>47</sup> Agression sexuelle sur mineur de quinze ans par personne ayant autorité

<sup>48</sup> Tentative de viol sur mineur de quinze ans par personne ayant autorité

In 1995, the Tribunal concluded that the acts committed on the victim were covered by the three-year statute of limitations then in force for offenses that took place in 1981 and 1982. It also emerged from the various statements and confrontations that the constituent elements of attempted rape did not appear to be present, since the Tribunal concluded that attempted rape was not constituted (whilst acknowledging behaviour leading to potential rape). In his interview with the investigation team, JMM emphasizes that the case for attempted rape<sup>49</sup> was dismissed because the attempted rape was not established, as there was no evidence or confession on his part. As he himself says, proving an attempted rape (which had been dismissed for lack of evidence) without a confession is difficult. He did not want to dwell on the fact that the sexual assault charge<sup>50</sup> had been dismissed because of the statute of limitations and not because of lack of evidence. However, the four witnesses and JMM himself confirm these facts in their statements to the Judicial Police.

As a consequence, the facts alleged against JMM under the criminal qualification of sexual assault on a minor of fifteen years of age by a person in authority were covered by the statute of limitations and the information did not show sufficient charges against JMM of having committed the facts of rape on a minor of fifteen years of age by a person in authority. The Tribunal therefore declared that there was no reason to proceed with the case as it stood and ordered the file to be filed with the registry. Nor was there any order for psychotherapeutic assistance<sup>51</sup>.

It is not for the Independent Inquiry to critically review a decision made almost 30 years ago. However, the Inquiry team notes that the three additional victims were heard only as witnesses and not as victims themselves. Looking at the case today, a 1994/95 case in which the accused admits being sexually attracted to children (and presumably knowing that the case did not proceed only as a result of the statute of limitations) it seems astonishing that the Movement was satisfied with this non-lieu, did not follow up and did not take admitted facts further into consideration for future prevention and protection. It is likely that a court of law would today find the rape charge credible.

JMM confirms that the Zone Leader at that time and one of the founder's first companions were informed about the judicial case and the accusation. Others, by their own admission, were also aware of the case. However, it remains unclear if they had access to the full details included in the legal file.

## **1996 / 1997**

After having seen his appeal process rejected<sup>52</sup>, the plaintiff issued a writ of summons in 1996, in accordance with Articles 56, 752 and 755 of the Civil Code, against JMM. Since JMM had admitted the facts at first instance and the Tribunal recognized that they were sufficiently substantiated, although prescribed, the victim sought compensation for the damage suffered. The victim asked for 30,000 FF as an advance, as well as the appointment of an expert psychiatrist.

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<sup>49</sup> Tentative de viol sur mineur de quinze ans par personne ayant autorité

<sup>50</sup> Agression sexuelle sur mineur de quinze ans par personne ayant autorité

<sup>51</sup> As per psychological expertise from June 1995

<sup>52</sup> Audience of the 'Chambre du Conseil', 17 January 1996

The Tribunal recognizes that JMM was responsible of damaging consequences towards the victim because of the sexual abuse endured, for 2 years, while the victim was still a minor. Therefore, the Tribunal condemned JMM to the payment of 50,000 FF as well as reimbursement of all costs related to the different medical expertise and other legal fees.

The financial compensation represents a very significant amount at the time of the sentence and seems to indicate the Tribunal's recognition of the facts of which JMM was accused, even though they were time-barred. It is also interesting to explore how this substantial sum was paid by JMM, given that as a consecrated member he had officially no personal funds or financial savings. By JMM's own admission, this sum was paid by the Centre in Rome, as a loan to JMM against a future inheritance. The person responsible in Rome was therefore fully informed, although JMM did not agree to disclose his name<sup>53</sup>. This person is now deceased.

## 2017

Another procedure was initiated against JMM in 2017 by the same victim as well as a third party, also a member of the Movement. Knowing that JMM admitted in a discussion with a group of witnesses to at least eight other victims but did not want to communicate the names, the victim and the third party, knowing that the Movement had not signaled these facts to the public prosecutor, wished to inform the Tribunal de Grande Instance de Nantes of their suspicions. However, the file was classified by the Tribunal de Grande instance with 'no further action' in February 2020.

## Conclusion

**Based on the allegations of sexual abuse against 26 victims and 11 other victims reported through third parties to the inquiry, the Independent Inquiry concludes JMM was a prolific, serial child abuser responsible for multiple cases of child sexual abuse and attempted child sexual abuse including those we have information on and most likely many others beside.**

JMM by his own admission confirmed a partial number of these victims. He also wrote a letter of admission to one of the victims and to the parents of another victim. In addition, he confirms that he paid €3,000 to yet another victim who had asked him for a meeting and also provided practical support to this victim.

In addition to the evidence gathered as part of the Inquiry, at the very end of the process JMM communicated by letter with the Inquiry. In his letter he reminds the Inquiry that he has always sought the forgiveness of his victims and acknowledges the impact of his actions on others, namely the families of his victims and leaders of the Movement in France who lost their positions as a result.

JMM denies that he ever abused any child during his work with the Chaplaincy or during his world trips. He also denies having ever used drugs such as GHB or abused adolescents without

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<sup>53</sup> Name triangulated and known by the Inquiry Team. The payment of this financial reparation through the International Centre in Rome has been made during the Presidency of Chiara Lubich.

their knowledge in his weekend house as happened in other cases with another perpetrator associated with the Movement.



## **Allegation B – Handling of the alleged events by the Focolare Movement**

### **B. To establish, as far as possible, the degree of knowledge of these events by the persons responsible at the time and subsequently, and assess how they were dealt with by the persons responsible, in the light of the historical periods concerned**

The Independent Inquiry is conscious of the difficulties in identifying individual responsibilities over the last 55 years. The pyramidal structure of the Movement, its mantra of obedience and unity has certainly contributed to the systemic failure to deal with not only the case against JMM but also other cases. Many layers of people including at the highest governing level<sup>54</sup> were informed about the fact that ‘something was wrong’ with JMM and he needed to be kept under surveillance. However, the people most in charge, both in France and internationally, at the time the case of one victim came into public view via the court cases in 1994/5, remained satisfied there had been a legal process that resulted in a non-lieu and did not take any further formal action.

However, it was reported to the Independent Inquiry by JMM himself, that he was authorised during the court inquiry to travel to Central Bosnia on behalf of his employer ‘Secours Catholique’. It is difficult to understand, even without today’s knowledge around situations of abuse of power and links to sexual exploitation and abuse, that JMM was authorised by both his employer and the Focolare Movement to undertake such a trip into a very vulnerable environment at such a critical time.

Over time, the fact the non-lieu did not deny the facts but was based on time-barred facts, seems to have been forgotten. It is uncertain if the legal file had been shared with the responsables of the movement and if they had access to the full wording of the decision. The Inquiry team was unable to obtain satisfactory information on this. If the file was not shared, it is surprising the leadership in France and Rome never asked JMM to share the details of the decision, even more so when they agreed to grant him a loan to pay the reparation amount. If the file was shared, it is also surprising that the Leadership did not take serious steps to exclude JMM and thereby protect other potential victims. It is possible there may have been data protection and/or legal limits to sharing more details with the wider community as to JMM’s behaviour, but the inquiry team fails to understand why no apparent action was taken to curtail the abusive activities of JMM.

When the Movement was initially confronted with reports concerning JMM, responsibilities for addressing the JMM situation can be identified and linked to the people who were representing the Movement in France at that time.

It is highly unlikely that the highest level of Leadership was not informed about the legal issues JMM encountered in 1994 – 1998, then again in 2017. JMM had been in police custody in

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<sup>54</sup> Names known to the inquiry team, both deceased, confirmed by JMM

1994 and members of the Movement had been called upon to testify. In addition, as already established, JMM needed the Movement's help to pay the financial reparation he was condemned to pay to the victim in 1998. As the amount was very significant, such a payment must have been authorised at the highest level of the Movement. The Independent Inquiry has established that Leadership at the Centre authorised this payment in 1998 and therefore, must have been informed about the facts.

The people initially responsible for JMM many years ago are now deceased. Others, in charge later, have consistently failed to act on information based on a mistaken or misguided belief that the court case verdict meant they could not move against JMM or out of fear of the consequences or self-preservation and an avoidance of reputational damage. Action in relation to JMM only started to move, albeit very slowly, when a witness reported the issues in 2015. Today, it appears the Leadership in 2015 is certainly as responsible as the one in 1994 and in the 1970's. It is hard to escape the conclusion that actions and decision making were focused on protecting the founder, co-founder and the Movement, much more than on protecting vulnerable people and preventing further harm. It appears that people in charge through different periods have collectively avoided follow-up actions for a variety of reasons, although certainly some of them will not have realised the full impact of JMM's actions on his victims. And as noted previously, this finding corresponds to many similar situations described within religious Movements<sup>55 56 57</sup> and the Church in France as a whole.

It has been difficult, if not impossible, to identify clearly who knew about the individual facts. However, it appears from different documents and testimony that at least two leaders in France knew about JMM's behaviour and condemnation. It is also clear that the President elected in 2008 herself was informed about JMM and asked one of the former Zone responsables (today deceased) to follow up on the case. The latter considered that stories around JMM amounted to a witch hunt and did not necessarily take them up seriously. Many of the concerned people are now deceased, so it was not possible for the Independent Inquiry to gather more information directly from them on these events and the reasons that led to the decisions they took.

What seems clear is that those responsible for the Focolare Movement, both in France and at its head in Rome, were following a similar path to the one of the wider Catholic Church, being more concerned about protecting the Movement than supporting the victims and protecting other potential victims. It also appears today that their knowledge on identification of sexual abuse was limited. At least one of them was very close to JMM, which may well have contributed to them trying to hide the facts rather than confronting them openly. In any case, it appears this behaviour then led subsequent representatives to minimise the importance of

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<sup>55</sup> Enquête sur les Frères Philippe, fondateur et co-fondateur des communautés de Saint-Jean et de l'Arche  
<https://www.la-croix.com/Religion/Enquete-freres-Philippe-annees-dabus-toute-impunite-2021-02-22-1201141952>

<sup>56</sup> La communauté de l'Arche et Jean Vanier <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-51596516>

<sup>57</sup> Les foyers de charité et le Père Finet  
<https://www.lesfoyersdecharite.com/conclusions-du-rapport-de-la-commission-de-recherches-sur-le-pere-georges-finet-communique-de-presse/>

the impact of these events on victims and their families, to feel they were not responsible for taking up the case publicly as they felt it had been dealt with already, by the juridical authorities as well as through the non-official 'mise sous tutelle' of JMM.

People at different levels of responsibility, therefore, did not feel it was their responsibility to take the issue forward when they were informed about it, either officially or unofficially. Father Jean-Marie Hennaux, professor of Jesuit theology in Brussels, analyses that *'Authority will tend to govern all the details of the life of the Movement and its members; it will leave little room for initiative, except for that which goes in the general direction desired by the Centre: Authoritarianism and lack of subsidiarity. Obedience will be lived in an infantile way and the spiritual freedom of the members will quickly become reduced to nothing'*. This means that there is little space for individual accountability and may explain why a succession of people in charge did not deem it necessary to follow up on the reported incidents concerning JMM.

What appears to be most painful for many of the witnesses who spoke to the Independent Inquiry is the fact that little action was taken between 1994, the date of the court case, and 2015 when a witness met with JMM by chance during a Mariapoli and understood that he was still active within the Movement, creating opportunities for contact with young adolescents, despite the past events. It shows not only a lack of awareness but also lack of experience and will in confronting and managing such a crisis. After the first incidents were reported and brought to light during the criminal and civil case, including detailed statements of victims and admission of inappropriate sexual behaviour by JMM himself, it appeared clearly that JMM had difficulties managing his own sexuality and attraction to young boys and men. The Movement chose at Leadership level not to act and to ignore issues. It appears that the choice has been to put more weight on the declaration of non-lieu rather than the statement of the civil court decision, recognising damage to the victim and condemning JMM to pay a substantial financial reparation. However, Leadership and systems must be robust enough to confront such difficulties and protect the most vulnerable.

Over time, with some people in the know, others hurt that they were not informed, it seems the Movement has created two camps, those members looking for culprits and those seeking responses. However, rather than identifying individuals responsible and looking to blame, the Independent Inquiry suggests the Movement would do better to look into the systemic origin of this failure and the systemic failure to deal with such cases to ensure that this cannot happen in the future. The responsibility for systemic failures needs to be shared at the highest level and jointly by the previous as well as the current leadership in Rome. The more recent measures taken in 2020/21 in response to the JMM case were to ask the previous people in charge in Focolare France to resign. Such resignations alone cannot bring change to the fundamental issues that resulted in the systemic failure of the organisation. These last responsables in France were part of a chain of command and information which did not function. There needs to be a full reconsideration of a number of factors that were causal or contributed to the failures and how these combined and operated with such catastrophic

results – factors such as sense of ‘family’ within Focolare, loyalty to the cause, and its leaders, secrecy, obedience, hierarchical structures, absolute charisma. The Movement is constituted from many beautiful, gifted and committed individuals; however, there needs to be a recognition of the darker side of some of its structures which can lead to the kind of abuse in the case of JMM and others we have heard.

It is useful to listen to some of the reactions from people in charge who had partial information on the case of JMM, as well as to witnesses hurt by the fact they were not informed about the case:

## **Testimony from people in charge at different levels and different times**

There was a general feeling that an entire chain of people in charge at the local, national and the regional level were not responsible at an individual level to take this information any further, that the main issue was to keep this out of the public domain. Each time responsibilities changed, the new people in charge were briefed about the problems with JMM so that they could take some prevention measures or ‘keep an eye on him’ as it was put. It seems that this information was only passed on between the group of Focolarini and not the Focolarine. Some of them knew as well through unofficial channels and rumours.

*‘When the facts happened, I knew about it but not as a person in charge. I was not consulted about the problem or the challenges; I knew that there was a juridical decision and that there were no sanctions. I personally did not feel it was necessary to alert anyone. I suppose that the person in charge at that time did feel that there was no further reason to deal with the case.’*

*‘What directed the attitudes of our leaders back then was not criteria of today but the evaluation and decision of the Tribunal. Therefore, it appeared to be a closed case, not needing any further procedures.’*

*‘The only thing we knew was that there was a process with a non-lieu, that JMM had some issues, but we did not have access to the legal files, the statements.’*

*‘At the time, the people in charge were not worried, there had been a legal procedure and decision. I knew that there were some problems, that there had been a criminal and a civil procedure with reparation given to a victim. But it was not public and not official. When I was in charge, I tried to limit JMM’s interaction with young people, but he was a very charismatic figure. I tried to limit his interaction to protect the young people.’*

*‘The first time I heard about JMM was in 1993, at the beginning of the process (wrong date given by the witness, as the criminal process was in 1994/1995). He told me that he was accused of attempted rape. There was the criminal process, followed by the civil process; I understood that there was some financial reparation. The sum was very high.’*

*'What we were missing back then was the understanding of the traumatic impact on the victims, we were not conscious of how destructive these events were on the victims. We were not aware that this is a grooming process, a pattern with a possibility of reoffending.'*

## **Statements from witnesses who knew JMM at the time of abuses**

*'When JMM brought back young boys, I remember that I had doubts, it was all very bizarre; other Focolarini did not invite young people over for the weekend or other activities (outside of officially organised activities). It was only him who invited young people while living within the Community. They were his protégé. When I spoke about this, there was a change of subject. A friend told me that everybody knew and this is why there was no talk about it. I was 15 when I met JMM; he was always with children and adolescents. Within the Movement, we are manipulated to not see the obvious. Once you leave this environment, it seems so obvious: Somebody who is always accompanied with a young boy for the week-end!'*

*'I am convinced everybody knew, plenty of people knew about this, but they chose not to see.'*

*'I believe that when a person is attacked in their integrity and if they are immediately supported by a professional, it helps that person to liberate themselves from the traumatic experience. But for this, there is a need to report the facts. The different people in charge of the male Focolare section throughout the years bear a heavy responsibility, the responsibility of having created a chain of victims.'*

*'It is difficult when one knows about a case and it is not followed up. There are sometimes confidences about an abuse and then, you are requested to remain silent. This is difficult.'*

*'The story around JMM and the inquiry is taking up a lot of energy, with some level of manipulation. People are taken into the events without necessarily having all the information. There is a lot of judgement about situations where people only have partial information. People accusing and people defending, but most not knowing all the details.'*

The Movement of Focolare, as with other religious Movements, is based on a pyramidal power system. The distinction between Focolarini/Focolarine (consecrated lay people) and volunteers is surprisingly important. The Movement is governed by the Focolare and its responsables while the other members are contributing a lot (emotionally, professionally, financially) without sharing the same access to power, information, knowledge and governance. This leads to important disagreements and underlying factions. At the same time, a key commitment of the Movement is the message of Unity worldwide 'May they all be one'. Conflicts are not dealt with openly and immediately and lead to dissatisfaction and tensions as the Independent Inquiry came to realise through different discussions on other situations where witnesses felt systemically abused.

The case concerning JMM is a classic example of how, in such a pyramidal system, very few people are in the know and try to deal with issues informally until this is not possible anymore

and they then need to address the problem urgently and in a disorganised way. As the table in Annex VI clearly shows, the Movement and its leadership were informed about the deviant behaviour of JMM as early as the 1970's. However, the cultural and legal context, even more so within the Church, was not one of public recognition of such facts. The then responsible (deceased) chose to solve the issue informally. Two witnesses report that they informed Rome, one personally, the other one through written communication. They both felt their reports were not taken seriously, one of the victims even reports that it was obvious that the responsible people at the International Centre wanted to distance him and did not plan to follow-up on his report.

However, in 1994, when one of the victims chose to confront JMM publicly through a criminal court case followed by a Civil case which he won, the Movement needed to acknowledge the situation. When the same victim and a third party, suspecting that JMM had made additional victims, chose in 2017 to denounce JMM again to the Tribunal de Grande Instance of Paris, one representative of the movement was called upon as a witness. On this occasion, he declared:

*'Mid-1990, there was a process against JMM where he was accused of sexually abusive facts on the plaintiff. There was a non-lieu because of facts which were time-barred, but he was condemned by a civil court to pay reparation. He had recognised the facts. Sometime later (2015/2016) another witness was aware of these facts and took contact my predecessor. The latter discovered the facts at this moment (name of the victim, details of facts, details of condemnation) through the witness and took this very seriously. He informed me about it as we were in a period of transition. I want to underline that at the time of JMM's condemnation, the authorities of our Movement had taken the decision not to leave any responsibility to JMM within youth groups, but he was still part of the Movement. (...) JMM declared during this discussion that there were other victims (confirmed by JMM himself), without giving any names, or numbers.'*

When asked about the number of victims from which he received testimony, he replies to the Police authorities that *'he did not keep exact accounts, but probably around 15.'* The witness, in the same police interview, recognizes that the former representative and himself were aware *'that there was an issue with JMM in the 90's without knowing the exact facts.'* They knew there was a process with a non-lieu and that JMM did recognize the facts. However, no exclusion of JMM was decided. As by his statement, this decision had been taken by the person who was in charge of the Zone at the time of the process (today deceased). According to the witness, he had discussed with JPP in 2015 or 2016 and JPP informed him that JMM was talking about an individual incident. He also admitted that today, such a case would certainly be handled differently.



As mentioned earlier, the Independent Inquiry is not mandated to evaluate legal decisions, but the non-lieu for sexual aggression<sup>58</sup> as well as discarding attempted rape<sup>59</sup> for lack of proof due to the victim's resistance allowed the Movement to internally communicate from one responsible to another that the case had been handled legally and was not substantiated. It appears that the full decision was not communicated to different levels of responsibility<sup>60</sup>.

The member who was called to testify in 2017 admits that he knew about the past criminal case before he was called to testify. As a result of the Movement's non-action, JMM has been able to remain in situations of authority although several former responsables confirm that, since they were briefed about JMM's sexual interest for adolescents, they 'kept an eye on him'. Unsurprisingly, this prevention measure does not appear to have been very effective as allegations of sexual abuse involving JMM have emerged since the Court Case against him.

In 1997, when JMM was condemned by a Civil Court to pay a reparation of FF50,000, he was able to pay this substantial amount, although as a consecrated lay person he was not supposed to have any personal savings. The Independent Inquiry has been able to establish through JMM's own admission that the fine was paid through a loan given by the Movement secured against a future inheritance JMM would later hand over to the Movement. To pay such an important sum, Governance at the highest level must have been informed about the case. However, it has not been possible to access financial files of the International Centre from 30 years back. Some of those testifying believe the Founder President must have been informed about these facts at latest when JMM was condemned for payment of reparation and reimbursement of costs. JMM did not agree to communicate the name<sup>61</sup>.

Also, by JMM's own admission, the Movement advanced funds to him to pay his debts and he was authorised to make three separate payments. The lawyer and other costs were paid in the same way. JMM declared that the people who knew of these arrangements were the then person in charge as well as one of the founder's first companions.

In 2016, when the case surfaced again, it was decided to send an official notification to the different branches and Focolare. However, it seems that many of the people in charge decided NOT to publicise the information widely but keep it within governance circles at the local level.

By JMM's own admission, this amount was paid by the Centre in Rome, as a loan to JMM against his future inheritance. The responsible person in Rome, therefore, was fully informed, although the person is now deceased.

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<sup>58</sup> Legal term in French: Agression sexuelle

<sup>59</sup> Legal term in French: tentative de viol

<sup>60</sup> See details of legal proceedings and decisions as findings for Allegation 1.

<sup>61</sup> Name identified through triangulation and known to the Independent Inquiry. The payment of this financial reparation through the Centre in Rome took place during the Presidency of Chiara Lubich.



## Conclusion

**The Independent Inquiry finds systemic failures in the handling of the JMM case and establishes that a chain of people in charge over many years, both in France and in Rome, failed to act on the situation of JMM in a way that would have protected victims and prevented other incidents of abuse or attempted abuse.**

The evidence gathered by the Independent Inquiry demonstrates that forgiveness and a continuous focus on the well-being of the perpetrator outweighed the recognition and realisation of the immense suffering of some of the victims. The representatives involved and knowing about the case contented themselves with the fact that, although having admitted sexually abusive and inappropriate situations, JMM was not condemned by the Tribunal. The Leadership of the Movement across all levels and periods of time did not acknowledge that facts were confirmed (although were not followed up legally because they were time-barred for sexual aggression and discarded for lack of proof for attempted rape). On a moral and consecration level, JMM was certainly at fault.

The Movement chose to conceal, minimise, and deny the facts, and was then unable or unwilling to prevent these situations arising again or to simply identify them and deal with them with determination and justice. JMM is not a unique case in the history of the Movement and in similar ways other situations have not been dealt with. It is important for Focolare to recognise and acknowledge and accept the dark side in a Movement that wants to represent unity and harmony and seeks to create a 'family' brought together on the basis of a shared religion and the teachings of Christ. Attitudes are changing but for the future development of Focolare as a safe organisation it will be crucial that anyone still more focused on protecting the Movement itself rather than individual people, will need to shift from this thinking.

As noted in the conclusion to Allegation A, in addition to this evidence gathered as part of the Inquiry, at the very end of the process JMM communicated by letter with the Inquiry. In his letter he also notes that when he was indicted on 20 September 1994, JPP, the Head of the Movement in France, told him that he had called the head of the Focolarini in Rome to inform him of the indictment. Thus, JMM confirms the people in charge of the Movement in Rome at that time were aware of this.

Pope Francis himself reminded the Movement on February 6<sup>th</sup> 2021 that:

*'In fact, the intermingling of the sphere of governance and the sphere of conscience gives rise to abuses of power and the other abuses we have witnessed, once the cauldron of these unpleasant problems has been uncovered.'*

This advice and statement lead directly into the recommendation section of this report.

## Recommendations

**To provide recommendations on current child protection arrangements - for the Focolare in France and more generally for the whole Focolare Movement - including reporting and response systems and, in particular, case management (*from Terms of Reference*)**

The recommendations below are based on consideration of the issues emerging from the investigations into the activities of JMM described in the earlier sections of this report as well as on other abusive situations including sexual abuse, reported to the Inquiry team. Information received focuses on the situation in France, but similar cases could be found in other countries where the movement is present. Encouraging victims and witnesses to speak out will need to be included in improvement plans and prevention strategies across the Movement.

In addition, the Inquiry team was provided with a large number of documents (96 in total) covering child protection and safeguarding within Focolare – see Appendix IX for the full list and note, in many cases the same document appears in more than one language. The documents range from overall international framework documents (the Guidelines and Handbook are the principal documents that frame safeguarding and the protection of minors across the whole Focolare movement) to practice guidance notes, training materials, policies and guidance developed by Focolare at national level, through to communications from leadership on the commitments to safeguarding and child protection.

As well as considering the findings of the Inquiry and review of documentation, the Independent Inquiry team met with several prominent members of the Focolare international leadership including the former and current leadership representatives in France, the current President, Co-President and a previous President. Key members of the CO.BE.TU were also interviewed to gather information on the way in which safeguarding has developed in Focolare, the prevention measures in place to protect children and adults, how safeguarding cases are dealt with and current and future plans for ensuring the safety and protection of everyone in the Movement, especially children.

### **History of safeguarding in the Focolare Movement**

It was pointed out that the founder of the Focolare, Chiara Lubich, was a primary school teacher and so the promotion of wellbeing and safeguarding of children has always been central to the commitment and life of the Movement. However, in spite of this and the events described in relation to JMM, it was not until 2011 the commitment to promoting the wellbeing of children and adolescents began to formally focus on preventing child abuse.

At that time, the Church had issued an urgent invitation to all Catholic Bishops' Conferences, and therefore also to all lay Movements and Associations, to be vigilant and adopt rigorous and transparent procedures of both to prevent and manage episodes of child abuse.

In September 2013, a first international conference on child safeguarding was held by the Movement in Rome with experts from various disciplines. This led to the drafting of the "Guidelines for the promotion of the well-being of children and adolescents", which envisaged the establishment of a Permanent International Commission (CO.BE.TU) and national commissions made up of people with different professional backgrounds: lawyers, psychologists, educators, developmental experts, and paediatricians. The CO.BE.TU has played a central role developing safeguarding, with the dual role of supporting implementation and responses to safeguarding cases and concerns.

In addition to the Guidelines, a Practical Handbook for the promotion of the well-being and Safeguarding of Minors was also drawn up. This is an explanatory manual for Assistants/Animators and is considered an integral part of the training for all those who are in direct contact with children and young people in the Movement. The Handbook presents the norms for prevention contained in the Guidelines in a user-friendly language, together with good practices in work with children and young people.

To further support implementation, since 2014 positions of responsibility for the Safeguarding of Minors have been created, and where possible, national Commissions have been established. The role of these commissions and designated staff (normally one male and one female Safeguarding Officer) includes delivering training courses and handling reports of abuse.

As of 29 June 2021, the situation of courses worldwide was as follows:

The total number of courses held globally was 168, of which 10 were held in Africa, 62 in North and Latin America, 66 in Europe, 10 in the Middle East and 20 in Asia. In total, 15,045 members of the Movement participated in these courses, of whom 398 were in Africa, 8,566 in North and Latin America, 4,814 in Europe, 209 in the Middle East, and 1,058 in Asia.

The main learning is delivered via the 'Basic Training Course for The Promotion of the Well-Being and Safeguarding of Minors' aimed at adults and educators who work with minors and has a minimum course duration of six hours. This appears to provide orientation on the Guidelines and is then structured using the Handbook to cover practice issues on dealing with violence, as well as providing input on first aid and using forms.

On 14-17 March 2019, four years after the first congress, the second international congress on the Safeguarding of Minors was held in Rome, with the participation of 168 experts in various disciplines. In March of the same year, the then President of the Focolare Movement, Maria Voce, and Co-President Jesús Morán sent an open letter to all the members of the Movement calling on them to make an active commitment to the safeguarding of minors by ensuring a zero tolerance policy towards all forms of violence, abuse, mistreatment, and acts of bullying/cyberbullying against any person, particularly minors or vulnerable adults. The communication also strongly urged members to report cases of abuse or violence, or situations that may pose a risk to persons or to the safeguarding of minors:

“Finally, we encourage you to look beyond our movement. On the path towards unity, we cannot fail to hear the cry of pain of all the children and young people of the world. The violation of children's rights, the abuse of all kinds perpetrated against them at every latitude, is one of the greatest scourges of our time. It is part of our vocation to reach out to them. That is why we should be in the front line in the defence of the weakest persons, wherever they are victims of any form of abuse or violence”.

## **Assessment and general safeguarding recommendations**

There is no doubt the Focolare Movement has taken significant steps to change the situation in relation to the protection of minors and further developments are planned. There is a policy and procedural framework that provides a clear reference point for everyone in the movement (although the extent to which it is disseminated to all people including children is not known). There is also a strong commitment from leaders to ensuring the Movement is a safe place, although as indicated already, there are a significant number of people in the Movement who do not feel safe and in spite of the encouragement to do so, have not reported their concerns. Victims also do not feel Focolare are meeting their commitments to them.

There is also a commitment to learn from this Inquiry and to improve in the future. The investment to date in developing good practice, delivering training and creating an infrastructure for safeguarding via the designated staff and the safeguarding commissions, is important to sustain ongoing development in this critical area. The Inquiry team acknowledges the work to date and the efforts and intentions of those in leadership positions to continue to improve. The following actions and developments are strongly recommended as part of the continuing safeguarding journey:

## **Culture and leadership**

As with many organisations, much emphasis in Focolare is placed on policies and procedures and training, and rightly so. However, organisational culture and leadership is central to creating safe environments and ensuring that policies and codes of good conduct are followed. As described in this report, aspects of culture in the Movement facilitated the abuse committed by JMM and others. In an organisation rooted in such strong religious beliefs and principles of faith and charism that emphasise love and unity, this is a difficult truth to face. However, in order to deal with the outcomes of the review, repair the damage and move forward positively, the Movement must embrace a change in its culture. The safety and protection of all, dignity and respect for everyone must be the first priority.

It will be important for the Movement as a whole to engage in a period of reflection as there will be the need for a healing process following this Inquiry. Leaders must create safe spaces for conversations so that members can discuss the findings of this report, talk about their

experiences of being in the Movement, raise their concerns, share ideas on how to improve the communities especially in regard to safety and protection matters. These discussions will be challenging for participants and those leading them, but it is essential everyone feels involved and engaged in the change process, has a say and a stake in it, and can openly discuss uncomfortable issues of power, hierarchy, obedience, subservience, loyalty and how some of these laudable requirements of membership can also produce unintended negative consequences such as feeling disempowered to challenge or report misconduct and abuse.

A process of global reparation is required through recognising the truth of what has happened and acknowledging the responsibility of the Movement for the reported cases. It is necessary to confront the past, have a critical view on as many of the past cases as possible, address the situation of victims with compassion, learn from the dreadful experiences and commit to preventing such situations arising again.

In a number of cases parents or relatives of victims were seen by others in the community as partially to blame for the abuse as they did not see it happen, failed to prevent it or otherwise did not protect their children from harm. This victimisation or victim-blaming seems not uncommon within the Movement and will need to be addressed.

Organisational culture change is very demanding and requires leaders to really enact the commitments they have spoken of during the course of this Inquiry. Leaders must act with integrity and live out their spiritual beliefs as well as the commitments they have made specifically to the protection of children and adults. They will need to create an environment in which all members are not only aware of their mutual obligations to respect and protect one another, but also confident and empowered to act should they have concerns about the conduct of others. Leaders must be role models for good, safe, appropriate relationships which includes acting firmly in cases where safeguarding rules are breached. Communicating clearly and often via strong safeguarding messages is necessary, establishing what is expected and also what needs to happen if there are breaches and the possible consequences of these.

It must be established that in Focolare, everyone is accountable to each other and there are also formal accountability mechanisms so it is clear that if safeguarding measures are not in place, not operating effectively or are ignored or breached, this will be treated seriously. Part of the culture change must also be to accept and support those that speak out and certainly not to punish, blame or exclude those Members that raise concerns about their own safety and protection or that of others.

**Actions should include:**

- International leadership to share the outcomes of the Inquiry and support a process of reflection across the Movement
- Leaders at all levels to initiate discussion of the Inquiry findings and to create 'safe space' discussions that allow members to talk about their response to the Inquiry,

their own experiences of being in the Focolare and changes they would propose to improve safeguarding

- International leadership to convene similar ‘listening events’ or be involved in some of the listening exercises
- International leadership to continue reinforcing strong safeguarding messages and to generally communicate as often and openly as possible in line with the outcomes of the Inquiry to emphasise the importance of safeguarding, the need to report and the need for those responsible to take any concerns seriously
- Provide training and support to Leaders at all levels on safeguarding and their specific responsibilities to create safe environments and a safety culture
- Emphasise the faith basis of treating everyone with dignity and respect and align safeguarding with the Christian values and beliefs espoused by the Movement
- Emphasise that abuse is never the responsibility of the victims and seek to eliminate victim-blaming and other forms of victimisation

## **Prevention measures - policy and procedures, learning and development**

As previously noted, the Focolare Movement relies on two principal documents that form its safeguarding framework, the ‘Guidelines for the promotion of the well-being of children and adolescents’, and a Practical Handbook (an explanatory manual for Assistants/Animators) which is an integral part of the training for all those who are in direct contact with children and young people in the Movement.

The Guidelines establish some general principles for safeguarding children (establishing the spiritual basis of this as well as that defined by the most relevant international instrument, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child). The focus is on those working directly with children and ensuring they are clear about their responsibilities to protect children – prevention measures rely on these adults self-declaring they are suitable to work with children and them undertaking training.

The Guidelines tend to deal in more detail with the steps to take when there is a concern about possible abuse of a child. Prevention measures are dealt with in more detail via the Handbook and the subsequent training for those working with children, which sets out the skills and training required, Code of Conduct and relationships with children, risk management, looking after children when they are away from home, identifying signs of abuse, managing disclosure and use of forms.

Although guidelines are important, it appears through interviews that members of the movement were not, and are still not aware of safeguarding issues, of defining abuse, identifying abusive situations, or realising the impact of such events on individuals.

The two commissions dealing with protection of minors and of vulnerable adults have recently merged.

Some situations involving abuse of power develop over time, sometimes over a number of years. Leadership must encourage greater awareness and a more democratic governance wherein such situations can be taken up proactively before they escalate.

Ensuring a robust safeguarding environment should be enhanced in the following ways:

- Conduct a survey of safeguarding implementation to evaluate the extent to which safeguarding measures are implemented across all countries
- Develop an action plan based on the results of the Inquiry and the results of the survey to strengthen safeguarding
- Recognise safeguarding is everybody's responsibility and ensure all Members, including children themselves, receive details about safeguarding
- Provide training and guidance on keeping children safe to all members as part of an overall development of training provision
- Develop dedicated safeguarding training for leadership at all levels
- Review the Guidelines and Handbook against international standards to address gaps and increase the focus on prevention, good practice and victim support in particular
- Review the Guidelines and Handbook and other safeguarding materials to ensure they reflect the broader concern for safeguarding everyone in the movement, children and adults
- Training should also expand to include the broad concept of safeguarding and include recognising signs of all forms of harm to children and adults, including issues such as abuse of power, bullying, harassment, sexual misconduct, spiritual and financial abuse

## **Response measures - reporting and responding**

As noted above, the Guidelines contain detail on the steps to take when there is a concern about possible abuse of a child, who has responsibility and guidance on matters such as reporting matters to external authorities. Responding to reports of possible child abuse by members rests with the zonal and local commissions for the protection of minors, whereas abuse committed by consecrated laity members is handled by the central commission in Rome (CO.BE.TU). The victims should be offered medical help, which includes therapeutic help and immediate psychological support, as well as legal information and any other type of support that is necessary.

Each local commission for the protection of minors is required to appoint two Safeguarding Officers (male and female) who will respond to any complaints or reports. Management of the cases subsequently depends on the status of the alleged perpetrator or subject of complaint. In the event that the accused person is a diocesan priest or a male/female



religious, a deacon, or a consecrated person, the Bishop of the diocese in which the priest is incardinated or the General Superior of the institute to which the religious man or woman belongs will be informed and responsible for taking this forward. If a disclosure is reported regarding the members of the General Council of the Work of Mary, or the focolarini/e of common life with perpetual vows or the married focolarini with promises, CO.BE.TU. will coordinate and manage the case having been given this specific mandate by the President of the Focolare Movement. In this case, the disclosure must be sent to the Co-President who will send it to CO.BE.TU. asking them to begin the internal investigation or can be sent directly to the CO.BE.TU.

All other cases or concerns should be reported to the commission or its focal points (Safeguarding Officers) or people appointed by the Head of the Focolare to manage the case. CO.BE.TU should be informed of cases and may support the commissions or might even take over the case depending on the circumstances. In any event, the CO.BE.TU will receive the outcome of the investigation for review, with any actions then being the responsibility of the Delegate.

On paper, the procedure seems clear, although in practice it seems it is less so and investigations and case management depend inevitably on a range of factors that are not contained in the procedure. CO.BE.TU is heavily involved in dealing with cases, although the vast majority relate to historical cases. The Inquiry was not in a position to review case work but received a number of comments relating to case management, especially from victims and others with experience of the process from within the movement. Unfortunately, in spite of the commitments made in the Guidelines, case management it seems is often experienced as a slow process that is legalistic, not victim friendly and does not always result in action.

CO.BE.TU has changed over the years since it was established in 2013. The small team expanded to seven members and there are now 15 members from various geographies and professional backgrounds, although the majority are lawyers and Italian. A Supervisory Board was set up in 2014 and has more recently been established as a working entity, made up of three external members. These changes may bring about some changes, but it will be important to address some of the structural issues described to the Inquiry, including the fact that there is no full time, dedicated resource for investigations and case management. CO.BE.TU members tend to be employed elsewhere and must carry out their duties when they have time. This involves much dedication and sacrifice but also means case work may not progress in good time (and the procedures themselves, which set timelines, propose that a case could take more than seven months to be processed even without any delays). It might be helpful to include in the CO.BE.TU an expert with similar experience at an international level to support all the national commissions with appropriate advice.

It is helpful in some ways to have legal experience and expertise as part of the CO.BE.TU but a downside is that legal considerations of cases may be lengthy and there is also a risk that concerns around potential liability and harm to the organisation might also become a

preoccupation. Some dissatisfaction was expressed by victims that complaints were not listened to or taken seriously or there was victim blaming by different entities receiving their complaints, CO.BE.TU, the Adult Commission (Commissione per la Tutela della Persona), the Commission in France. There were also accusations of promises being made and not kept, as well as there being a reluctance on the part of the Movement (CO.BE.TU is perceived as representing the Movement and being the authority and decision-making body in this) to report matters to the authorities, again because of concerns regarding its reputation. From these testimonies, it appears that there is currently a lack of clarity, not necessarily within the different commissions, but with the potential complainants, which commission should deal with which cases, who should report what to whom, etc. In addition to this, many cases are no longer within legal remits as they are either time-barred or concern adults in positions of power or trust, leading sometimes to sexual abuse. Dealing with these cases in too legalistic an approach can be detrimental. They should instead be linked to organisational and moral commitments of the Movement rather than to legal compliance – the moral obligation to report concerns stated in the guidelines should be matched by the moral obligation to do everything possible to act on reported concerns.

It is important the workings of CO.BE.TU and the leadership overall align with the principles and commitments of its safeguarding frameworks and embody a victim/survivor-centred case management model that has at its core a caring and compassionate approach to handling reports of abuse allied to timely and effective procedures for investigating and disposing of cases. To this end, the Inquiry recommends:

- Creating safe spaces within all national chapters of the Movement to reporting incidents of emotional, financial, spiritual abuse as well as abuse of authority and power to facilitate sharing and follow-up of all past and current situations where individuals consider themselves victims of inappropriate behaviour within the Movement
- Reporting channels, including the option for an (external) confidential reporting channel, are reviewed and further developed
- Current procedures are reviewed in line with international standards and revised accordingly
- There is increased transparency on reporting and response mechanisms – clear information should be made available, including on what to do if you are concerned someone is being harmed/at risk of harm and what will happen if a report is made, what will happen and who is involved in the process
- Resource allocation in responding to reports of abuse is reviewed and the option to introduce or increase dedicated (including external) resources is fully explored

- Case management guidelines should detail a clear intake system, assessment of reports and process for decision-making that recognises the need to limit confidential information.
- Roles and responsibilities between the CO.BE.TU (responsible for complaints involving consecrated lay members) and national commissions need to be implemented clearly and in a transparent way.
- The CO.BE.TU Supervisory Body as well as the CO.BE.TU is reformed to include external expertise that can support the case management role, scrutinise the work of the commission and also act as an appeals body. There needs to be transparent information publicly and easily available on CO.BE.TU members and CO.BE.TU Supervisory Body members as well as clarification who is a member of the Movement and who is an external individual
- Ensuring all those responsible for receiving reports, conducting investigations and managing cases have sufficient training, experience and support to carry out their roles and that case management is timely and adhering to good practice principles as defined in international standards
- Handling complaints and investigations is based on written records rather than oral transmission to improve case management, documentation and follow-up
- Sanctions are based on a clear, transparent, openly available disciplinary matrix which is implemented consistently rather than on case-by-case basis
- Conduct regular (annual) audits of case work, ideally supported by external experts, to ensure good practice, learn lessons and support improvement of investigation processes
- Strengthen guidance on the need to report child abuse and any other serious criminal offences and encourage and support victims to report to the relevant national authorities following receipt of such concerns rather than after internal investigation
- Develop a simple-to-navigate victim support strategy that details the provision that needs to be made to ensure all victims as well as their family members are treated with respect and dignity, and are supported through the investigation process and beyond, including with therapeutic, practical, educational, vocational and any other needs appropriate to the circumstances
- Develop a user-friendly mechanism that, aside from other supports, also allows all victims to claim financial compensation where the Movement is responsible in some way for the abuse occurring or for not responding effectively when it was notified

- Ensure full inclusion into both the victim support strategy as well as the financial compensation mechanism of additional victims of JMM, who might come forward later as well as any other victim of any other abusive situation.
- Case management needs to distinguish four different levels of intervention: reception of reports, dealing and investigating cases, analysing disciplinary measures and deciding on compensation and support requests.
- Ensure confidentiality and transparency are improved by communicating on reporting and responding measures and emphasising the handling of sensitive information only on a 'need to know' basis. Breaches of confidentiality should be subject to disciplinary action
- The Presidency of the Movement should be actively informed on an annual basis on specific issues with regards to safeguarding incidents through a formal Report.

## Monitoring and review

Safeguarding activity is tracked to some extent but it is important for any organisation to be fully aware of the status of safeguarding implementation across all sites and reassured that cases are being reported and handled effectively. Regular review and audit activity is also an effective way of ensuring compliance and also learning lessons from current practice. It is recommended to:

- Develop clear standards for safeguarding that define and describe what measures are required and regular (annual) checks are conducted against these
- A formal report is submitted annually by CO.BE.TU to the President for wider discussion that details progress with safeguarding implementation and case activity, which is also then made available to all members of the movement and ideally made public as part of a commitment to openness, transparency and accountability.

## Other considerations

### Apologies

Many victims of abuse do not seek financial compensation or other forms of redress. Their concern may be much more focused on receiving an apology. For them, this may represent something deeper than monetary reparation; an acknowledgement by the individual and/or the organisation concerned that they were telling the truth, that they were harmed, that they were let down, that it was not their fault. Whatever the reason, it will be crucial for these victims after so many years to be finally vindicated and publicly recognised as being wronged.

The Independent Inquiry found systemic failings in matters relating to JMM and therefore recommends the Focolare Movement makes a genuine, profound and unconditional public apology to his victims that recognises the Movement failed to protect them and others from abuse that could and should have been prevented or detected.

As far as possible, the victims should also receive individual apologies from the President accepting the failure of the Movement to protect them and expressing sincere apologies.

## Redress/Compensation scheme

The requirement for redress (including financial compensation) to be provided to meet the particular needs of victims is an important principle in addressing the impact of abuse. It is recommended the Focolare Movement develops a clear position on this and establishes a fund and a victim/survivor-centred, user-friendly mechanism that means those victims abused or affected by **JMM and other perpetrators**, should they wish, can apply for redress, including financial compensation, in addition to help with any support needs they may have.

It is recommended the compensation mechanism is independent of Focolare, operated in a transparent and efficient way by a third party organisation or body made up of suitably experienced individuals independent of Focolare. The panel should include individuals from a mix of professional backgrounds, for example legal/judicial members and non-judicial members from e.g. psychologists, social workers. Settlements should be offered as quickly as possible and applicants should have the right to appeal.

In developing the redress/compensation scheme, it is recommended Focolare consult on this with victims and research existing schemes to ensure the scheme is rooted in learning and establishes clear principles, simple procedures and processes that work in a safe and timely manner and are user-friendly<sup>62</sup>. The following principles and approaches have been established following historical child abuse inquiries in a number of countries and should form the basis for Focolare's scheme:

The scheme should be open to anyone who claims to be a victim of JMM and is able to show on the balance of probabilities they were abused by JMM and under 18 at the time or a vulnerable adult. If an applicant has already provided evidence to the Independent Inquiry, they should not be required to provide any further evidence unless they wish to.

Those who are new to the process will need to be interviewed by a suitably qualified and experienced independent professional. It is also recommended applications can be made by close relations on behalf of someone who has died and receive a reduced amount of compensation.

Focolare will need to set times for when the scheme becomes live and is open for applications, e.g. June 2022, and set a deadline for applications to the scheme e.g. May 2025.

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<sup>62</sup> Contact and consultation with victims for the development of the compensation procedure and the choice of the third party to manage the scheme will take place through the CO.BE.TU

The compensation award payment should have a fixed starting figure payable to any applicant who was a victim as confirmed by testimony and any documentary evidence. Beyond this, an enhanced award payment should be made based on the applicant's statement provided, including the nature and extent of the abuse that that person was subjected to and the ongoing impact to the applicant's life. This would be for those who experienced more serious abuse and/or more serious consequences.

Based on what victims/survivors typically struggle with, the scheme should also be prepared to provide assistance to people with queries about:

- Mental health problems
- Other health problems
- Counselling
- Addiction problems
- Benefits and housing
- Debt and personal finance
- Education, jobs and training
- Access to personal records
- Help to report abuse incidents to the authorities and legal assistance with this if required

Overall, Focolare should operate the scheme in a way that is fair and compassionate. The approach should not be a legalistic one that, for example, imposes a 'statute of limitations' rule on applications or places a high standard of proof on applicants. The approach should be supportive and Focolare should adopt a pastoral approach towards victims/survivors.

It is recommended Focolare make lump sum payments to applicants and any previous payments should be taken account of, and may preclude, any further payments, unless civil cases are thought to have been dismissed unfairly e.g. on technicalities and limitations.

It is also important that it should not be a requirement that the abuse has been reported previously to Focolare or to other authorities, including the Independent Inquiry in order that an application can be considered. Nor should Focolare insist on confidentiality as a condition of compensation, for example via a Non-Disclosure Agreement. Older applicants and those in poor health should be prioritised.

## **Other victims**

The case of JMM has received public scrutiny, so will this report. However, it will be important for the movement not to forget other victims and other pending issues and develop a strategy for how to follow up on all the other cases and also include these victims in their follow-up actions and support procedures.

The publication of this report could well trigger further reports of other victims of JMM and other alleged perpetrators. It will be important to prepare for this and create sufficient resources to respond.

At the same time, and as this Independent Inquiry has been informed by a variety of sources, there are a number of abusive situations not linked to sexual abuse and not always linked to a specific perpetrator but to systemic issues allowing abuse of power which will also need to be analysed and addressed through appropriate follow-up actions.



## **Appendix I      Terms of reference for the review**

### **Independent Inquiry into JMM - Term of Reference**

In light of ongoing concerns regarding cases of violence against minors by J.M.M., a former consecrated member of the Focolare, resident in France, the Focolare Movement decided to entrust to an independent Body, GCPS Consulting, the task to set off and bring ahead an extraordinary inquiry.

The task of GCPS Consulting will be to listen to the victims and to gather further testimonies, as well as investigating whether there were any omissions, cover ups or silences on the part of those responsible for the Movement. At the end of the investigation, the independent Body will make its final report public.

### **Object of the mandate**

The object of the mandate given by the Focolare Movement to GCPS is to achieve the following general objectives:

1. To carry out an investigation into the sexual abuses committed by JMM, reviewing the details of known offences, the context in which they occurred, and highlighting others that may come to light.
2. To establish, as far as possible, the degree of knowledge of these events by the persons responsible at the time and subsequently, and assess how they were dealt with by the persons responsible, in the light of the historical periods concerned.
3. To provide recommendations on current child protection arrangements - for the Focolare in France and more generally for the whole Focolare Movement - including reporting and response systems and, in particular, case management.
4. To draw up within a year a public report detailing the findings and recommendations of the commission of enquiry.

To achieve the above objectives, with the collaboration of the Focolare Movement's Central Commission for the Promotion of the Welfare and Protection of Minors (CO.BE.TU.), GCPS Consulting shall gather all available information about JMM's history. This includes: how he entered the Movement, the time he lived in the Focolare in-house communities, his activities, responsibilities, and contacts, the circumstances in which he operated and was in touch with minors, his collaborators and contemporaries, reports of abuse received against him, and any other relevant details about him.

It should be noted that, during the investigation, the only interlocutor between the Focolare Movement and GCPS Consulting will be the Central Commission for the Promotion of Wellbeing and the Protection of Minors of the Focolare Movement (CO.BE.TU.), which has exclusive competence, according to art. 47 of the Guidelines in force in the Focolare Movement, in the management of cases of child abuse concerning its consecrated lay members, such as the case of JMM.

Only to the latter, therefore, can GCPS Consulting address any request useful for the investigation.

## **Process**

GCPS Consulting will aim to make the inquiry process as victim-centred as possible. To this end, as far as possible, the proposed process will be shared with known victims of abuse who made a request for an Independent Inquiry in view of their input and to ensure they reflect their idea of an Independent Inquiry. To this end, GCPS will have direct contact with the victims in planning the process.

The inquiry team will invite victims of abuse by JMM to contact the Inquiry. The exact number of people who have been subject to abuse is not known at this time, but an invitation will be extended to contact the inquiry team via confidential routes with a view to enabling victims to say as much or as little as they wish about their experiences.

The inquiry team will comprise people (it is intended for there to be men and women available) who are experienced and trained in listening to people who have been subject to abuse.

It is recognised that victims may need support or assistance in order to participate in the Inquiry, as a consequence of disclosing their experiences to the Inquiry team and possibly as a result of the abuse they have experienced. The Inquiry team will make provision to discuss the needs of individuals when it comes to participating in the Inquiry and what they may need before, during and after their engagement.

If in the course of their work the Inquiry team receives information about new allegations of sexual abuse or other issues of misconduct, these will be referred to the Central Commission for the Promotion of the Welfare and Protection of Minors of the Focolare Movement (CO.BE.TU.) or to the Co-president of the Focolare Movement who will set off the due procedure to ensure the allegation is investigated by the appropriate authorities.

During the investigation process the Independent Inquiry team shall:

- Review of all relevant documents concerning known cases of abuse and the handling of these by the Focolare, as well as background materials, guidelines/procedures, and so on in order to establish context and define further detailed planning of the Inquiry process.
- Hold sessions with victims (either remotely or in person) to speak with them directly regarding their experiences.
- Conduct interviews with witnesses and other involved people, persons responsible, and others who may be in a position to provide information regarding the alleged violations and how these were handled.

## **Implementing Timeframe**

In light of the scope and nature of the work, especially the possible number of people to be interviewed, it is proposed to set an initial 12-month timeframe for the Inquiry, to be

reviewed as the process unfolds. The key principle is that there will be flexibility to allow victims to come forward and speak to the Inquiry commission and to ensure the investigating team is able to pursue all relevant lines of enquiry.

We further propose that the Inquiry process commences in January 2021. The first two months (January and February 2021) should be spent establishing the Inquiry process, working with the Focolare Movement's Central Commission for the Promotion of the Welfare and Protection of Minors (CO.BE.TU.), and with the victims to ensure the process is satisfactory, to identify relevant victims support services, to set up communication channels for victims and others actors to be able to contact the Inquiry, to work with Focolare media/communications colleagues to promote the Inquiry, to gather background documents and other materials, to establish the Inquiry team, and so on.

Active investigation and interviewing/listening to victims and others would commence in March and potentially go through to September 2021. Final Reporting should be issued by end of December 2021.

## **Outputs**

At the end of the inquiry, GCPS shall draft a public report detailing findings and recommendations from the Inquiry team. The report shall include:

1. An analysis of the information gathered with clear findings and conclusions on the main elements of the Inquiry.
2. A timeline reconstruction or chronology that describes the history of JMM in the Focolare Movement in France, key events, contacts and details of alleged abuses, along with details of how persons responsible and other people in leadership or key roles received and processed this information, as well as the initiatives taken to respond to it.
3. Analysis of the impact of the abuses committed by JMM, on the lives of the victims.
4. Recommendations about current safeguarding arrangements – for the Focolare Movement in France and across the Focolare Movement more broadly - including reporting and responding systems and case management in particular.
5. The report will also include recommendations and findings on the following matters:
  - An apology - by whom and the nature of the apology;
  - The requirement for redress to be provided to meet the particular needs of victims.

However, the nature or level of any potential redress (financial or by means of the provision of services) is a matter that the Focolare will discuss and agree as a separate matter and following receipt of the Inquiry team final report. Forms of redress or compensation will not be something for the Inquiry Team to consider as part of its work, although the latter may be consulted and give advice on the details of any such scheme.

The final report will be made available prior to publication for review<sup>63</sup> by victims individually to ensure their stories and their experiences are appropriately presented.

The final report will be drafted in the respect of the privacy and confidentiality of each person who shared their story and at no point will any details of the persons involved in the Inquiry will be divulged to the Focolare or anyone else without their express permission or unless there is a need to do so (e.g. for child protection purposes or being required to do so by a court of law).

All information will be subject to strict confidentiality, privacy and data protection requirements and details of what information is captured and how it will be used, will be made clear to all those that participate in the Inquiry process.

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<sup>63</sup> Subject to any legal or other constraints on sharing the content of the final report.

## **Appendix II Terms of reference for the Independent Oversight Function**

In response to a specific requirement of the victims consulted as part of the institution of the investigation, a requirement fully shared by the Focolare Movement, and with the aim of guaranteeing the full independence and accountability of the investigation, an independent supervisory function will perform the following functions

1. To review the mandate letter and, at the beginning of the process, to discuss with the Commission of Inquiry any issues arising from the review of the mandate letter and to provide guidance and recommendations on how best to proceed, in particular on issues of independence, confidentiality and victim-centredness.
2. Generally oversee and advise on the integrity of the investigative process to ensure that it is consistent with the stated principles and approach.
3. To provide further assistance, if and when requested, during the course of the investigation, should the commission of enquiry require independent advice.
4. To be a point of contact for both the Focolare Movement and the victims, and for anyone else who has a legitimate personal interest in the case, in the event of a claim or complaint, for example about the way they have been treated by the Commission of Inquiry or if they are dissatisfied with the enquiry process.
5. At the end of the process, review the results and provide suggestions on important issues, such as what relates to the results achieved, and ensure that the terms of the mandate letter have been respected.

Management of the review: The enquiry commission will carry out the investigations as defined in the enquiry's mandate letter and in accordance with good practice and its professional judgement.

The Board of Inquiry will keep the Supervisor (ISP) informed and consult with him/her whenever necessary or requested. Several dates will be set for their coordination; in addition, the Board of Inquiry may request a meeting, as may the Supervisor.

### **Obligations of the Independent Supervisor**

The Independent Supervisor will be asked to commit to the following:

1. Review of the documentation provided - this should be sufficient to provide knowledge of the background, context of the investigation and the issues under discussion.
2. Participation in regular (at least four) meetings convened at a distance:
  - i. First meeting: the supervisor meets with the enquiry panel after a review of the background documentation to discuss the process and issues to be addressed.
  - ii. Second meeting: towards the end of the phase which includes interviews with victims.

iii. Before the final drafting of the preliminary report.

iv. Finally, at the end of the review.

3. To provide ad hoc advice as and when requested to the Inquiry Commission.

4. Accept the principles of confidentiality and integrity of the process.

5. Receive complaints and grievances about the enquiry - this would include

Receiving and responding to messages, in English or French, on the email address: (superviseurac@gmail.com) from the Focolare Movement, the victims or anyone who feels aggrieved for any reason, such as:

- If they have not been treated well (e.g. if they have not been listened to or if communication with them has been insufficient);

- If the investigation does not do what it should (i.e. it does not implement the indications in the mandate letter);

- if deadlines have not been met;

- or any other problem.

If necessary, the supervisor could send a message or speak (in French) with the complainant to gather information about the complaint and then interview the enquiry committee and/or others depending on the claim made, before deciding whether the complaint is admissible.

The supervisor will have to make a judgement, ensure that remedial or other action is taken and report back to the complainant on the outcome.

## Appendix III Documents and Sources

### Internal documents from the Focolare Movement

- Numerous internal documents of the Movement in France and from the International Center (see also detailed list with regards to safeguarding in Appendix IX)
- Press releases and statements from the Presidency of the Movement (Maria Voce, Margaret Karram, Jesus Moran)
- Various newsletters from Nouvelle-Cité, Città Nova and S.I.F. (Focolare Information Service)

### Private documents

- Numerous private documents from victims, witnesses, Focolare members, third parties (details confidential)

### Press releases, websites, television and radio podcasts with regards to the Focolare and to other movements

- Les Jours – online news in France – Series ‘Tu ne pardonneras pas’ dedicated sexual abuse allegedly committed by JMM
- ‘Le Quotidien’ – French TV show, hosted by TMC – Interview of one of JMM’s victims
- Communauté de Presse des Foyers de Charité et le Père Finet  
<https://www.lesfoyersdecharite.com/conclusions-du-rapport-de-la-commission-de-recherches-sur-le-pere-georges-finet-communique-de-presse/>
- France Inter Secrets d’info from 27th November 2021 <https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/secrets-d-info/secrets-d-info-du-samedi-27-novembre-2021>
- France Inter Grand bien vous fasse from 18th November 2021  
<https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/grand-bien-vous-fasse/grand-bien-vous-fasse-du-jeudi-18-novembre-2021>
- Website Association d’aide aux victimes des dérives de mouvements religieux en Europe et à leurs familles AVREF <https://avref.fr/les-focolari.html>
- Website de la Mission interministérielle instituée auprès du Premier ministre par décret présidentiel du 28 novembre 2002 <https://www.derives-sectes.gouv.fr/quest-ce-quune-derive-sectaire/comment-la-detecter>
- Website de l’Union nationale des Associations de Défense des Familles et de l’Individu victimes de sectes UNADFI <https://www.unadfi.org/actualites/groupe-et-mouvances/la-longue-liste-des-abus-dans-les-communautes-nouvelles/>

### Publications

- *Sectes en Sommeil*, 2ème trimestre 2006 Bulle UNADFI n° 90, La famille de Nazareth et l’atelier de psychanalyse existentielle, <https://www.unadfi.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Famille-de-Nazareth.pdf>
- Observatoire des Nouvelles Croyances : *Dérives sectaires, à l’intérieur même d’institutions d’église*, juin 2014, Soeur Chantal-Marie Sorlin, responsable du bureau des dérives sectaires



- L'OBS 27<sup>th</sup> November 2021, Abus de pouvoir, Sophie Fontanel
- [https://www.nouvelobs.com/nos-vies-intimes/20211127.OBS51492/abus-de-pouvoir.html?utm\\_term=Autofeed&utm\\_medium=Social&utm\\_source=Facebook&fbclid=IwAR30dgYFLf3labY1k4wEe3Tq5A5yV9Fbt2FM\\_8S9CWI-dDXbWgMdb3Lk-Rc#Echobox=1638002833](https://www.nouvelobs.com/nos-vies-intimes/20211127.OBS51492/abus-de-pouvoir.html?utm_term=Autofeed&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook&fbclid=IwAR30dgYFLf3labY1k4wEe3Tq5A5yV9Fbt2FM_8S9CWI-dDXbWgMdb3Lk-Rc#Echobox=1638002833)

### **Books**

- *Io e il movimento dei Focolari, storia di un inganno e una liberazione*, 2019, Renata Patti
- *La setta divina*, 2021, Ferruccio Pinotti
- *Les chambres secrètes des Focolari*, 2020, Miguel Perlado
- *La mécanique du Silence*, 2017, Daphné Gastaldi (MEDIAPART)
- *La mauvaise vie*, 2005, Frédéric Mitterand

### **Reports**

- Enquête sur les Frères Philippe, fondateur et co-fondateur des communautés de Saint-Jean et de l'Arche <https://www.la-croix.com/Religion/Enquete-freres-Philippe-annees-dabus-toute-impunite-2021-02-22-1201141>
- Rapport parlementaire n° 2468 <https://www.gemppi.org/sectes-et-mouvances/les-sectes-en-france-1995-rapport-parlementaire-n-2468/>
- Rapport sur la communauté de l'Arche et Jean Vanier <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-51596516>
- Rapport CIASE <https://www.ciase.fr/medias/Ciase-Final-Report-5-october-2021-english-version.pdf>

### **Other relevant websites**

- Chiara Lubich <https://centrochiaralubich.org/en/the-spirituality-and-aims-of-the-focolare-movement/>
- Economie de communion <https://economie-de-communion.fr>

## Appendix IV Timeline / Chronology of JMM

### Curriculum Vitae Jean-Michel M. including important events

1958-1963	Ecole Supérieure d'Informatique, d'Electronique et d'Automatisme, and trainee at the Centre d'Etudes Nucléaires de Fontenay aux Roses (EURATOM/CEA). Engineering degree in 1963
1961 / 1962?	First encounter with the Focolare Mouvement
1963	JMM participates in his first Mariapoli (Le Puy)
1964?	1 <sup>st</sup> year in Loppiano
1964-1965	Military service <sup>64</sup>
1965	Paris Zonal Advisor for the Mouvement
1965-1967	Engineer at SEREB (Aérospatiale)
1967 to 1990	Director of 'Editions Nouvelle Cité' and Editorial Director of the monthly 'Nouvelle Cité'
1975	Diploma 'Centre de Perfectionnement des Journalistes rue du Louvre Paris'
08/12/1976	Pronunciation of perpetual vows
1980	JMM spends a therapy week-end with 'La Famille de Nazareth
1980 to 1985	Continuing education courses at ASFORED
1983-1987	Treasurer of the professional association for journalists for religious information
1987-1990	President of the Religious Publishers Group of the Syndicat National de l'Edition
11/1990	Cessation of payments by Nouvelle Cité et resignation of JMM
11/1990 - to 09/1991	Città Nova provides technical and financial support to NC and asks JMM to write a series of articles on its behalf. Travels and reportings for Città Nuova from Cameroun, Brazil, Argentina, United States, Japan, Korea, Philippines, Thailand and Australia.
10/1991	JMM is looking for work in France from Rome
01/11/1991	JMM leaves Italy and returns to Clamart, then Châtillon
04/1993	JMM writes to the parents of one of his victims
02/1994	JMM receives a work proposal from the Secours Catholique
03/1994	Complaint against JMM with civil action by one of the victims
20/09/1994	JMM is taken into custody, heard by the investigating judge and placed under judicial supervision <sup>65</sup>
11/08/1995	Order of dismissal (non-lieu)
08/2005	Information from JMM to HJ for his inheritance
2007	VR is the new responsible for the Focolare where JMM lives. He is informed about JMM's situation.
05/2010	JMM still writes for NC (articiel published with regards to the tour of the President to France)
10/2013	In a letter to the President, JMM talks about his life with young electronic engineering students whom he has tutored for over 10 years <sup>66</sup> as well as his inheritance

<sup>64</sup> Spent in Kremlin Bicêtre (Paris) at the Chaplaincy. The law from 21.12.1963 has lowered duration of the military service from 18 months to 16 months.

<sup>65</sup> Details of the judicial supervision are not known.

<sup>66</sup> No allegations of abuse of power or sexual abuse have been reported by this group of persons

10/2013	JMM informs HJ about the transmission of 100'000€ proceeding from the sale of the house he had inherited from a family member
2015	JMM participates at the Mariapolis in Ploermel
09/11/2015	HLR is informed through a whistleblower and one of the victims about the facts concerning JMM
2015/2016	JMM follows a psychotherapy. This therapy has been resumed again in 2020
01/2016	Msg Pansart writes to the Pontifical Council and gives directives to BB about the necessary follow-up regarding JMM
04/2016	Victims / Whistleblowers alert the Pontifical Council about JMM
06/2016	JMM is dismissed from his vows and from the focolarini section of the Work of Mary
06/2016	Officials inform the members of the Movement about JMM's exclusion
21/01/2017	Complaint to the Tribunal de Grande Instance of Nantes against the Focolare, for not having reported to the Judiciary the cases of sexual abuse by JMM on other, unidentified victims
03/2017	Publication of the book 'La Mécanique du Silence' highlighting the fact that JMM was still active within the Mouvement 10 years after facts had been known to the Mouvement
04/2017	Several members of the Focolare were summoned to the police for a hearing. One of them stated during the hearing that JMM had not been in contact with young people since 1998.
09/2017	Closure of the file without any further action
09/19	JMM writes to one of the victims to ask for forgiveness
09/2020	Meeting in Nantes with 4 of the victims (or their representatives). Several commitments are taken by the Co-President.

Disclaimer: There might be slight discrepancies in some specific dates due to the difficulties of compiling precise and written information, changing governance structures over time, lack of information on travels and activities of JMM as well as an overall lack of a centralised information system within the Movement. The above is a compilation and cooperation with triangulation from different sources.

## Appendix V Timeline of responsibilities within Focolare France & Europe linked to reported incidents with regards to JMM

Date	Responsible for Center	Zone	Responsible for zone	Zonette	Responsible for Zonette	Focolare	Responsible for Focolare	Assistant / Co-President	President
1964/65	A. PETRILLI (d)	Loppiano	G. Marchetti (d)	Loppiano		Loppiano	???	L. Foresi	C. Lubich
5 victims / 2 suspected victims									
1965/70	A. PETRILLI (d)	France	A. Baima (d)	Paris	M. Longo (d)	Châtillon	Mario Longo (d)	P. Foresi	C. Lubich
2 victims									
1970/80	O. Basso (d) / G. Battisti (d)	France	A. Baima (d)	Paris	P. Pages	Châtillon	Patrice Pages	P. Foresi / A. Petrilli	C. Lubich
8 victims / 1 suspected victim									
1980/ 82	O. Basso (d) / G. Battisti (d)	France	A. Baima (d)	Paris	P. Pages	Châtillon	Patrice Pages	P. Foresi / A. Petrilli	C. Lubich
6 victims / 5 suspected victims									
1982/84	O. Basso (d) / G. Battisti (d)	France	A. Baima (d)	Paris	P. Pages	Châtillon	Patrice Pages	P. Foresi / A. Petrilli	C. Lubich
3 victims / 1 suspected victim									
1984/90	Giorgio Marchetti	France	J.P. Prodan (d)	Paris	Y. Clabaut / J.L. Hôte	Châtillon	Y. Clabaut / J.L. Hôte	A. Petrilli	C. Lubich
No additional victims, some ongoing situations									
1990/92	Giorgio Marchetti	Centro (Città Nuova)	J.P. Prodan (d)	Roma		Roma	G. Boselli (d)	P. Foresi	C. Lubich
1992/94	Giorgio Marchetti	Francia	J.P. Prodan (d)	Paris	J.P. Prodan (d)	Châtillon	J.P. Prodan (d)	P. Foresi (until 1996)	C. Lubich
03/94	Report to the Tribunal de Grande Instance Nantes by 1 victim								C. Lubich
1990/95	1 victim								
1994/02	Giorgio Marchetti	France	J.P. Prodan (d)	Paris	J.L. Hôte	Clamart	J.L. Hôte	O. Basso	C. Lubich
1995/00	1 victim / 2 suspected victims								
2002/08	H. Jurt	France North	J.L. Hôte	Paris	H.L. Roche	Clamart	H.L. Roche	O. Basso, P. Foresi	C. Lubich
2008/13	H. Jurt	France North	H.L. Roche	Paris	V. Renard	Clamart	V. Renard	G.-C. Faletti	M. Voce
2013/14	H. Jurt	France	H.L. Roche	Paris	B. Brechet	Châtillon	B. Brechet	G.-C. Faletti	M. Voce
2015/16	F. Rovere	W. Europe	H.L. Roche	France	B. Brechet	Breuillet	B. Brechet	J. Moran	M. Voce
2016/20	R. Rovere	W. Europe	H.L. Roche	France	B. Brechet	Châtillon	B, Brechet	J. Moran	M. Voce
2020/ Feb2021	R. Rovere	W. Europe	José L. Romero	France	S. Schmidt	Châtillon		J. Moran	M. Voce
Since Feb2021	R. Rovere	W. Europe	A. Amman	France	F. Bertagnin	Châtillon		J. Moran	M. Karram

## Appendix VI Chronology of incidents

Year	Milestones	Date of reporting	Confirmed by
1958/1963	JMM Ecole Supérieure d'Informatique et stagiaire à EURATOM		
1961/1962	JMM first encounter with Focolare		
1963	JMM Engineer Diploma		
1963	JMM assists at First Mariapoli and meets V1's family		
1963/66	Victim 1	October 2020	Confirmed through triangulation with witnesses
1963/64	Victim 2	December 2020	Confirmed through triangulation with witnesses
1963/64	Victim 3 (deceased)	December 2020	Confirmed through triangulation with witnesses
1963/64	Victim 4	December 2020	Confirmed through triangulation with witnesses
1963/64	Suspected Victim - SV1 <sup>67</sup>	December 2020	Suspected through triangulation with witnesses
1963/64	SV2	December 2020	Suspected through triangulation with witnesses
1964	JMM in Loppiano		
1964/65	JMM Military Service @Aumônerie Kremlin Bicêtre		
1965	JMM Zonal Advisor Focolare		
1967	JMM Director at Nouvelle Cité		
1967/68	Victim 5	December 2020	Confirmed through interview triangulated through witness statement
1970/71	Victim 6 (deceased)	Resp. was informed also reported in 2020 & 2021	Confirmed through triangulation (2 unprompted third party statement)
1970/75	Victim 7	Resp. was informed but again reported in 2018	Letter to the victim from JMM
1971/82	Victim 8	Reported in 2020	Written statement
1972	Victim 9 (deceased, suicide 1972)	Reported in 2020 by V8	Written statement

<sup>67</sup> Suspected Victim (SV) involves a reported incident but with no formal follow up

1974	Victim 10		Confirmed through interview
1974	Victim 11	Reported in 2021	Written statement
08/12/76	JMM Perpetual Vows		
1977/78	Victim 12		
1977/81	Victim 13	Reported in 1983 to responsible in Loppiano, reported in 2003 to the Bishop of Evry Reported to 2020	Interview and written statement
1980?	Victim 14	Reported in 2019	Confirmed through interview and triangulation (unprompted witness statement)
1980	SV3	Reported in 2020	Triangulation through different sources
1980/82	Victim 15	Reported in 1994	Confirmed through interview and written statement
1980	Victim 16	Reported in 2020	Confirmed through written statement and triangulation through different witnesses
1980	SV4	Reported in 2020	Confirmed through unprompted witness statement
1980	SV5	Reported in 2020	Confirmed through unprompted witness statement
1980	SV6	Reported in 2020	Confirmed through unprompted witness statement
1980	Victim 17	Reported in 2020	Confirmed through interview and written statement
1980	SV7	Reported in 2020	Confirmed through witness interview
1980	SV8	Reported in 2020	Confirmed through witness interview
1980	JMM first therapy week-end		Confirmed through witness statements as well as JMM's own interview
1981/85	Victim 18	Reported in 2015	Confirmed through interview, written statement and triangulation through other sources
1981	Victim 19	Reported in 1994	Confirmed through interview and triangulation
1981/82	Victim 20	Reported in 1994	Confirmed through interview, court case and letter from JMM to parents 04/1993
1982	Victim 21	Reported in 1994	Confirmed through written statement
1982/83	Victim 22	Reported in 2020	Confirmed through interview and triangulation
1982/83	SV9	Reported in 2021	Confirmed through interview from witness

1984	Victim 23	Reported in 2021	Confirmed through interview and JMM's own interview
1990	JMM resigns from NC because of lack of funding		
1990?	Victim 24	Reported in 2021	Confirmed through interview
1990/91	JMM travels through different countries on behalf of NC Rome	No reports received	
28/03/93	Complaint against JMM		
20/09/94	Custody		
1993/95	Victim 25		Confirmed through interview
11/08/95	JMM Non-lieu		
1995/99	Victim 26		Confirmed through triangulation and written contact
1995/99	SV10		
1997	SV11		
2007	Grooming		Reported through whistleblower
2014	Grooming		Reported through whistleblower
2015	JMM still present at MP Ploermel		
2015/2016	JMM Psychotherapy		
06/2016	JMM released from vows		
2017	Grooming		Reported through whistleblower

Disclaimer: There might be slight discrepancies with specific dates due to the difficulties of compiling precise and written information, changing governance structures over time, lack of information on travels and activities as well as an overall lack of a centralised information system within the Movement. The above is a compilation and cooperation with triangulation from different sources.



## Appendix VII Chronology of official actions and different communications regarding JMM

1971	VR reports about JMM's mention of depression (He would occasionally refer to a period of severe depression he had experienced a few years after joining the Focolare).  AB writes to GM about JMM taking on a possible zonette responsibility ( <i>He has almost fully recovered from a kind of nervous breakdown that lasted 4 years, but it is still an unstable balance (...) In the last 3 or 4 years, I too have often struggled to make deep unity with him; since some months, it is improving (...)</i> )
11/1990	Città Nova provides technical and financial support to NC and asks JMM to 09/1991 report on its behalf from different regions and countries. JMM travels for this assignment for Città Nuova to Cameroun, Brazil, Argentina, United States, Japan, Corea, Philippines, Thailand and Australia.
01/11/1991	JMM returns to Clamart, then to Châtillon
31/12/1991	JMM writes to GM: <i>At our last meeting you asked me if the wound I had was closing. I told you that I thought some years would be necessary.</i>
02/1994	JMM receives a work proposal from the Secours Catholique
03/1994	Complaint against JMM with civil action by one of the victims
20/09/1994	JMM is taken into custody, heard by the investigating judge, and placed under judicial supervision <sup>68</sup>
11/08/1995	Order of dismissal (non-lieu)
2007	VR is the new responsible for the Focolare where JMM lives. He is informed about JMM's situation.
05/2010	JMM still writes for NC (article published with regards to the tour of the President to France)
10/2013	JMM informs HJ about the transmission of 100'000€ proceeding from the sale of the house he had inherited from a family member
2015	JMM participates at the Mariapolis in Ploermel
09/11/2015	HLR is informed through a whistleblower and one of the victims about the facts concerning JMM
24/11/2015	HLR confirms that he knows about 4 victims who do not envisage to make an official complaint
10/12/2015	JMM is served with removal orders, signed by him on 1/1/2016
2015	YC, after lunch with JMM shares his feelings: (...) <i>Although, I noticed, he never confessed to me that he felt guilty or regretted the evil he had done.</i>
11/2015	Various Church dignitaries are aware of JMM's past
2015/2016	JMM follows a psychotherapy. This therapy has been resumed again in 2020
01/2016	Msg Pansart writes to the Pontifical Council and gives directives to BB about the necessary follow-up regarding JMM
04/2016	Victims / Whistleblowers alert the Pontifical Council about JMM
06/2016	JMM is dismissed from his vows and from the focolarini section of the Work of Mary
20/06/2016	Internal dissemination of a document to inform about the exclusion of JMM to all official members of the Mouvement who in turn will inform orally all the other members

<sup>68</sup> Details of the judicial supervision are unknown.

22/06/2016	Elements of language are determined by the Movement in France to respond to internal and external requests about JMM. The International Centre is informed.
07/2016	SIT Info – Internal bulletins form 10 and 22 July 2016 taking up elements of language with regards to the case JMM
01/2017	HLR is approached by Médiapart ( <i>D. Gastaldi – La Mécanique du Silence</i> ). There is an external communication to Médiapart to answer submitted questions on January 7 <sup>th</sup>
21/01/2017	Complaint to the Tribunal de Grande Instance of Nantes against the Focolare, for not having reported to the Judiciary the cases of sexual abuse by JMM of other, unidentified victims
03/2017	Publication of the book ‘La Mécanique du Silence’ highlighting the fact that JMM was still active within the Mouvement 10 years after facts had been known to the Mouvement
04/2017	Several members of the Focolare were summoned to the police for a hearing. One of them stated during the hearing that JMM had not been in contact with young people since 1998.
09/2017	Closure of the file without any further action by the TGI of Nantes
03/2019	Letter signed by the President and the Co-President to the members of the Movement regarding abuses in general, reiterating the wish not to protect the institution but to identify the victims (SIT n° 102)
04/2019	CO.BE.TU is informed that there are at least 3 other victims
09/2019	JMM writes to one of the victims to ask for forgiveness
08/2019	COBETU asks to the officials of France to transmit the files of the victims (without receiving them)
10/2019	2 new members are nominated for the French Commission
11/2019	BB writes to the TGI to modify his testimony (knowledge of a new victim – retracting the information later as he understood that the situation was a situation with mutual consent amongst adults)
11/2019	The official representatives of France write to all members to inform them about the call for testimonies of CIASE. The Movement publishes a press release with the same information.  CO.BE.TU declares that they are competent and opens a file about JMM.
12/2019	Press release about the CIASE and sexual abuse within the Church, the commitment of the Movement, a new letter of information as well as an article in NC about JMM  The representatives of France inform the CIASE that they received direct and indirect communication from 25 victims (This figure was slightly mistaken, with victims and witnesses likewise reported as victims).
02/2020	Public meeting in Nantes organised by CIASE A member of the Movement meets by chance two victims of JMM and informs the Co-President in February 2020
09/2020	Meeting in Nantes with 4 of the victims of JMM (or their representatives). Various public commitments are taken.
19/09/2020	Representatives of the Movement in France write to the Members to inform them about the situation as a follow up of the meeting in Nantes.
16/10/2020	One of JMM’s victims speaks to the Press (Quotidien TMC and Les Jours, online)
10/2020	The Journalist representing ‘Les Jours’ contacts the Movement and receives some factual elements as answers. She also gets access to the representatives of the Movement to ask for their comments.
21/10/2020	The 3 representatives resign from their positions.

22/10/2020	Press release from the International Centre, disseminated in the whole world, in 8 languages. SIT info publishes in France on the same matter.
24/10/2020	Interview of OM on KTO after having been contacted by them for comments. Some other echos in the press (Les Jours, Famille Chrétienne, La Croix, Quotidien, France Inter, KTO, some internet sites)
12/2020	Series of SIT Info n° 130, 131, 132 including the press release, information on GCPS and the Independent Inquiry, asking again everybody to circulate the information on the inquiry SIT info n° 149 communicates the name of the spokesperson with regards to JMM's situation
2020/2021	Serie of articles with regards to the Movement of the Focolare in 'Les Jours'
01/2021	Focolare contracts GCPS for an Independent Inquiry
04/2021	Press release informing about the Independent Inquiry
07/2021	An independent overview for the Independent Inquiry is nominated (SIT n° 153)
11/2021	Press release to inform about the final date for publishing the report

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## Appendix VIII Definitions & terminology

Child <sup>69</sup>	Any human being <b>under</b> the age of eighteen, unless the age of majority is attained earlier <b>under</b> national legislation.
Child protection <sup>70</sup>	Child protection is part of the safeguarding process. It focuses on protecting individual children identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. This includes child protection procedures which detail how to respond to concerns about a child.
CIASE	Independent Commission on Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church (Commission indépendante sur les abus sexuels dans l'Église)
CO.BE.TU	Commission for the Protection of Minors (Commissione Centrale per la Promozione del Benessere e la Tutela dei minori del Movimento dei Focolari)
Consecrated Member	A person who took their personal vows linked to poverty, celibacy, chastity. Consecrated members can be married and are lay persons
Financial abuse <sup>71</sup>	A type of abuse which includes having money or other property stolen, being defrauded, being put under pressure in relation to money or other property and having money or other property misused.
Focolare	Focolare means 'Fireplace' or hearth and is used to identify a house where Focolarini or Focolarine live
Focolarino/a/i/e	A lay person of the section of the Focolarini and Focolarine in the Work of Mary / Focolare Movement whose self-giving to God is fulfilled in the life of unity in the focolare and in the Movement, and – for those who are married – also in the family, according to their state. The focolarini live the evangelical counsels (chastity, poverty, obedience) by committing themselves with private vows for those who lead a common life, and with private promises for those who are married.
GCPS	Global Child Protection Services Ltd (trading as GCPS consulting)
Grooming <sup>72</sup>	A deliberate act of gaining the trust of a comparatively less powerful (often younger and less mature) person as well as their environment, to later manipulate them into an inappropriate relationship.
Mariapoli <sup>73</sup>	City of Mary: Since the early years of the Focolare, people have gathered together for a few days in summer to live its spirit together and to give witness to how society would be if everyone lived the Gospel law of love.
Non-lieu <sup>74</sup>	A closing decision by which an investigating court declares that there are no grounds to continue the proceedings
Psychological hold (emprise) <sup>75</sup>	Intellectual or moral ascendancy <sup>76</sup>
Safeguarding <sup>77</sup>	Taking all reasonable steps to prevent harm from occurring; to protect people, especially vulnerable adults and children, from that harm; and to respond appropriately when harm occurs.

<sup>69</sup> UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

<sup>70</sup> <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection>

<sup>71</sup> The Care Act 2014

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.handsoffinitiative.org/what-is-grooming-and-what-are-the-signs/>

<sup>73</sup> <https://www.focolare.org/mariapoli/>

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/non-lieu/54907>

<sup>75</sup> <https://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/emprise/29011>

<sup>76</sup> is the influence one individual or group of individuals may hold over others through his perceived intellect, morals and character.

<sup>77</sup> Adapted from Safeguarding resource and support hub <https://safeguardingsupporthub.org/>

Sexual abuse <sup>78</sup>	Refers to any action that pressures or coerces someone to do something sexually they don't want to do. Sexual activity with children is always defined as sexual abuse as a child can never consent to the sexual activity
Triangulation <sup>79</sup>	Triangulation facilitates validation of data through cross verification from more than two sources. It tests the consistency of findings obtained through different instruments...

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<sup>78</sup> [https://www.loveisrespect.org/pdf/What\\_Is\\_Sexual\\_Abuse.pdf](https://www.loveisrespect.org/pdf/What_Is_Sexual_Abuse.pdf)

<sup>79</sup> <https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/evaluation-options/triangulation>

## Appendix IX Safeguarding documents reviewed

ATT 4.1.1- Guidelines text.pdf  
ALL 4.4.1- Certificate of Attendance Safeguarding Course.pdf  
ALL 4.4.2-Declaration of Commitment.pdf  
ALL 4.3.3-Practical Manual test with solutions.pdf  
ALL 4.3.2- Practical Manual Worksheet.pdf  
ATT 14- Answers of abuse victims - excerpts.pdf  
ALL 4.2.3- How to manage situations of violence test with solutions.pdf  
ALL 4.2.1- How to handle situations of violence text.pdf  
ALL 4.2.2- How to manage situations of violence PPT.ppt  
ALL 4.1.0- Introduction to the course.pdf  
ALL 4.1.3- Guidelines test with solutions.pdf  
ALL 4.1.2- Guidelines PPT.ppt  
ALL 4.0.3- Structure of the course.pdf  
ALL 4.0.2- General scheme of the course.pdf  
ALL 1.3.6- USA- Focolare Movement Child Protection Policy.pdf  
ALL 3.3.4- PARENTAL CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION.pdf  
ALL 3.3.3- PARENTAL CONSENT CONGRESSES WITH OVERNIGHT.pdf  
ALL 3.3.2- Declaration of Commitment.pdf  
ALL 3.3.1- AUTHORIZATION FOR THE USE OF PHOTOGRAPHS.pdf  
ALL 1.3.3- Germany - Linee Guida Tutela dei Minori.pdf  
1- THE SAFEGUARDING OF MINORS IN THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT-15.11.2021.pdf  
ALL 1.3.5- Swiss - MIRA.pdf  
ALL 1.3.2- France -Reglement pour protection des mineurs Mov Focolari.pdf  
ALL 1.3.4- Ireland Focolare Movement Child Protection Policy.pdf  
ALL 1.3.1- England Focolare Movement Child Protection Policy.pdf  
ALL 4.3.1-FM Practical Manual PPT.ppt  
ATT 1.2- Publication of the document on the Protection of Minors.pdf  
ATT 2. Programme of the Congress for the Safeguarding of Minors, September 2013.pdf  
ATT 1.1 - Guidelines for the promotion of the well-being of children and adolescents-2014.pdf  
ATT 4.0.1- General outline of the course (1).pdf  
ATT 1.2- Publication of the document on the Protection of Minors.pdf  
ATT 2. Programme of the Congress for the Safeguarding of Minors, September 2013.pdf  
ATT 1.1 - Guidelines for the promotion of the well-being of children and adolescents-2014.pdf  
ATT 4.0.1- General outline of the course (1).pdf

ATT 8 - Letter from Maria Voce and Jesús Morán on the Safeguarding of Minors to members of the Focolare Movement, 2019.pdf  
ATT 11- Letter from CO.BE.TU. of 25 June 2020 to the Commissions for the Promotion of the Wellbeing and Safeguarding of Minors.pdf  
ATT 10- Guidelines for the Promotion of the Wellbeing and Safeguarding of Minors and Vulnerable Persons, 2020.pdf  
ATT 7 - Report of the Meeting for local representatives and commissions for the promotion of wellbeing and safeguarding of minors.pdf  
ATT 6 - Programme of the Meeting for local representatives and commissions for the promotion of well-being and the Safeguarding of Minors – March 14-17, 2019 .pdf  
ATT 5.4- Outline of national minors safeguarding commissions.pdf  
ATT 5.3- Outline of national minors safeguarding commissions..pdf  
ATT 5.2 - Minors Safeguarding Training Courses.pdf  
ATT 5.1- Report of 1 September 2021 to the Vatican Dicastery, and overview of minors safeguarding traini.pdf  
ATT 4.1.1-Guidelines text.pdf  
ATT 4.0.1- General outline of the course.pdf  
ATT 3.2 - Booklet Practical Handbook for the Promotion of Minor Wellbeing and Safeguarding of Children.pdf  
ATT 3.1 - Practical Handbook for the Promotion of Minor Wellbeing and Safeguarding of Children.pdf  
ATT 12 Letter to the Zonal persons in charge of the Safeguarding of Minors, to the Zone Delegates.pdf

ATT 13 - Communication of the Presidency on the Safeguarding of Minors.pdf  
ATT 9- Guidelines for the promotion of the well-being and safeguarding of children and vulnerable persons 2019.pdf

ANX 4.2.2- comment gérer les situations violentes PPT.pptx  
ANX 4.1.2- Lignes directrices PPT.pptx

ANX 4.3.2- Manuel Pratique Fiches de travail.pdf  
ANX 4.2.3- comment gérer les situations violentes test avec solutions.pdf  
ANX 4.1.1- Lignes directrices texte .pdf  
ANX 4.1.3- Lignes directrices test avec solutions.pdf  
ANX 4.2.1- comment gérer les situations violentes texte.pdf

ANX 4.0.2- Schéma général du cours.pdf  
ANX 3.1.3 - Autorisation des parents pour la publication de photos-films.pdf  
ANX 3.1.4 - Autorisation pour l'usage des images et des expériences des mineurs.pdf  
ANX 3.1.2 - Autorisation annuelle des parents pour les activités.pdf  
ANX 3.1- Guide pratique pour la promotion du bien-être et la protection des mineurs.pdf  
ANX 3.1.1 - Acte d'engagement.pdf  
ANX 1.3.6 - USA- Focolare Movement Child Protection Policy.pdf  
ANX 2 – Programme Congrès protection des mineurs, septembre 2013.pdf  
ANX 1.3.5 - Suisse - MIRA.pdf  
ANX 1.3.4 - Irlande - Focolare Movement Child Protection Policy.pdf  
ANX 1.3.3 - Allemagne - Linee Guida Tutela dei Minori.pdf  
ANX 1.3.2 - France -Reglement pour protection des mineurs Mov Focolari.pdf  
ANX 1.2 – Publication du document sur la protection des mineurs.pdf  
ANX 1.1- Lignes directrices pour la promotion du bien-être de l'enfance et de l'adolescence 2014.pdf  
ANX 1.3.1 – England Focolare Movement Child Protection Policy.pdf  
1- LA PROTECTION DES MINEURS AU SEIN DU MOUVEMENT DES FOCOLARI- 15.11.21.pdf  
ANX 4.0.3- Structure du cours.pdf  
ANX 3.2- Livret Guide pratique pour la promotion du bien-être et la protection des mineurs.pdf  
ANX 4.0.1- Plan général du cours.pdf  
ANX 4.1.0- Introduction au cours.pdf  
ANX 4.3.3- Manuel Pratique test avec solutions.pdf

ANX 4.3.2- Manuel Pratique Fiches de travail (1).pdf  
ANX 4.3.1- Manuel Pratique du MdF- PPT.pptx

ANX 9 – Lignes directrices pour la promotion du bien-être et la protection des mineurs et des personnes vulnérables 2019.pdf  
ANX 8 – Lettre de Maria Voce et Jesús Morán sur la protection des mineurs aux membres du Mouvement des Focolari, 26.03.2019.pdf  
ANX 7 – Rapport sur le congrès pour responsables et commissions locales de la promotion du bien-être et la protection des mineurs.pdf  
ANX 5.4 – Pays, référents protection des mineurs et commissions nationales.pdf  
ANX 6 – Programme Congrès pour responsables et commissions locales de la promotion du bien-être et de la protection des mineurs 14-17.03.2019.pdf  
ANX 5.2 – Cours de formation sur la protection des mineurs.pdf  
ANX 5.3 – Liste des commissions nationales de protection des mineurs.pdf  
ANX 5.1- Rapport du 1er septembre 2021 Commission Pontificale pour la protection des mineurs.pdf  
ANX 4.4.2- Acte d'engagement.pdf  
ANX 4.4.1- Certificat de participation au cours de protection.pdf  
ANX 4.3.2- Manuel Pratique Fiches de travail (2).pdf  
ANX 4.3.3- Manuel Pratique test avec solutions (1).pdf  
ANX 14 – Réponses des victimes d'abus – extraits.pdf  
ANX 13 – Communication de la Présidente et du Co-président sur la protection des mineurs.pdf

ANX 12 – Lettre aux référents de zone de la protection des mineurs, aux délégués de zone et au Conseil général.pdf

ANX 10 – Lignes directrices pour la promotion du bien-être et la protection des mineurs et des personnes vulnérables 2020.pdf