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TO BE READ AT ALL MASSES ON SATURDAY/SUNDAY 23/24 NOVEMBER 2013

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

1. Today is the Feast of Christ the King. In the preface for today's Mass, the kingdom which Christ aims to establish is described as a "kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace." It is far from fanciful to recognise that effective safeguarding and the elimination of abuse are imperatives of the kingdom of Christ. It is in fidelity to Christ our King that today, we announce three safeguarding initiatives.
2. On behalf of the Bishops of Scotland, we are writing to let the Catholic community know that on Monday 25th November 2013, the Bishops' Conference will announce to the wider public three initiatives regarding safeguarding in our Catholic parishes and communities, which are being launched in a spirit of openness and transparency.
3. But first of all, the Bishops wish to say on behalf of the Catholic Church in Scotland that we recognise the trauma and pain that survivors of abuse have suffered and that we are committed to providing for them both justice and healing. We believe that we can only do this when we work alongside those who suffer and when we reach out with complete transparency and truth to anyone affected by abuse within our Catholic community. Safeguarding is a priority within the Church, and all who work in the Church must realise this. Those involved in this work have been called to carry out an essential function which is both acutely sensitive and highly important. The Bishops and the whole Catholic community are grateful to them.
4. The first initiative is to publish the results of our Diocesan Safeguarding Audits from 2006-2012, which will give a statistical breakdown of reported safeguarding incidents during those years. From this statistical presentation, you will be able to see at a glance how many incidents have been reported in each year, the category of the incident, the category of the reported perpetrator, the category of the victim and the outcome of the investigation. These statistics have been compiled by the Safeguarding Offices of each diocese, signed off by each Diocesan Bishop and collated by our Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Service. Our Safeguarding Service will also collate and publish a statistical return on behalf of all religious congregations and orders working in Scotland. These returns can be viewed at: www.bpsconfscot.com
5. The second initiative is the announcement of a professional, external "Review of safeguarding protocols and procedures" as outlined in our safeguarding manual "Awareness and Safety in our Catholic Communities", prepared in 2007. This review will be directed by the

Very Rev Andrew McLellan, former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and former Chief Inspector of Prisons. This review is aimed at assessing the suitability and robustness of our safeguarding procedures and the quality and rigour of their implementation nationally. In announcing this initiative, the Bishops' Conference recognises that in the last decade and more, the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Service has provided high quality guidance and policies in matters of safeguarding for our parish communities. As an external review, this new initiative should be seen as an endorsement of the professional status of our Safeguarding Service.

6. The third initiative is the announcement of a Statistical Review of all Historic Cases of Abuse from 1947-2005. Each bishop has agreed that his Diocesan Curia and Safeguarding Office will provide for the relevant information to be extracted from files held by each Diocesan Curia. Once the statistics have been compiled they will be subjected to independent statistical analysis. Provision will also be made for any cases where further risk assessment might be deemed professionally necessary.
7. The Bishops' Conference is confident that these initiatives will show that the Catholic Church in Scotland is unreservedly committed to the on-going implementation of thorough and effective safeguarding policies, procedures and protocols. Moreover, these initiatives will in large part meet the need for accurate information about our present and historic safeguarding situation, appropriate openness and transparency, and a guarantee of independent analysis of our policies and processes.
8. Today the Year of Faith called for by Pope Benedict XVI and carried forward by Pope Francis comes to an end. It has brought many blessings to the Church. For us in Scotland this Holy Year has been both a test of faith and a renewal of faith. If we can say that a fruit of the Year of Faith has been; the consolidation of our safeguarding practices and the renewal of trust in our unshakeable commitment to atoning for abuse in the past, guarding against abuse in the present and eliminating abuse in the future, and supporting those who have been harmed, then God will have truly blessed us. We put our faith and trust in Christ the King and we seek the maternal intercession of Mary our Mother and Mother of the Church.

Yours devotedly in Jesus Christ,

+Philip Tartaglia

✠ Philip Tartaglia, Archbishop of Glasgow

President of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland

+Joseph Toal

✠ Joseph A Toal, Bishop of Argyll & the Isles, Apostolic Administrator of Motherwell

Vice-President of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland

+Hugh Gilbert

✠ Hugh Gilbert, Bishop of Aberdeen

Episcopal Secretary of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland