



PONTIFICIUM OPUS
A SANCTA INFANTIA



GUIDELINES

in the use of the images of minors



SECRETARIATUS INTERNATIONALIS



GUIDELINES

in the use of the images of minors

The guidelines contained herein concern the use of the images of minors in the various tools and communication materials used by the Pontifical Mission Societies at a national and International level, in order to underline the charism of the PMS within the Church and in the world.

This present document intends to offer a practical contribution concerning the matter:

- The concept of the person's dignity, of each person, created in the image and likeness of God. Image that must be kept and never obscured, because the dignity of the person is at the heart of the Church.¹
- The concept of image and social communication, intended as resources for the promotion of the person.
- The concept of minor.

These elements must be considered in the light of an ethics that should distinguish the communications of the Church and its institutions.

The fundamental ethical principle is the following: the human person and the human community are the end and the measure of the use of social media. Communication should be made for the benefit of the integral development of other people.²

The current canonical order, while not providing for precise provisions in this regard, sets out in Can. 220 the right of everyone to good reputation and to protect his or her own privacy: *It is not legitimate for anyone to illegally harm the good reputation one enjoys, or to violate the right of every person to defend their intimacy.*

"Good reputation and intimacy thus appear as two aspects of the dignity of the person, one externally

¹ FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium* n.213: A human being is always sacred and inviolable, in any situation and at every stage of development. Human beings are ends in themselves and never a means of resolving other problems... Reason alone is sufficient to recognize the inviolable value of each single human life, but if we also look at the issue from the standpoint of faith, "every violation of the personal dignity of the human being cries out in vengeance to God and is an offence against the creator of the individual".

² PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS, *Ethics in social communications*, Vatican City, June 4 2000.

and the other more directly concerning the private and personal sphere ... It is a natural right and the norm before any juridical value is and remains of a moral character which for a Christian finds foundation also in the decalogue".³

It is about the right to a good name and respect, which can be harmed even with inappropriate use of the images that portray the person and that belong to his/her private sphere, and in the context of children and young people this means the family and the different communities of belonging and experience.

No person wishes to be described as miserable even if he/she lives in an extreme condition of poverty, which is often due to complex and different motivations according to cultures. In addition poverty is not only a lack of money, work or food, but it is also a lack of affection, of a community and for us Christians the greatest poverty is not knowing the Lord.

Good intentions do not justify the use of questionable images of suffering, particularly on children. We are called to use discretion, prudence and common sense to inform, to help people to know the world and the Church in the world, we do not intend to sweeten reality, but not even hurt people's feelings with unpleasant images of those who at that moment cannot defend their dignity.

Having these two elements in mind, we can now introduce the subject, i.e. the minor.

The International Convention on the Rights of the Child and Adolescent, approved on November 20, 1989 by the General Assembly of the United Nations, in Article 1 defines a "child as every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, majority is attained earlier".

The Code of Canon Law states that "A person who has completed the eighteenth year of age, has attained majority; below this age, a person is a minor. A minor who has not completed the seventh year of age is called an infant and is considered incapable of personal responsibility; on completion of the seventh year, however, the minor is presumed to have the use of reason". (Can. 97)

Therefore

1. Every interaction and activity involving minors is always inspired by the principles of dignity, respect, personal dignity and responsibility.
2. Our communication must always be positive.
3. It is important to use images that promote and attract because they communicate beauty, protection, development, faith, testimony, joy, preferring photos of children in a group.
4. The child must be the subject and not the object of the image, and must highlight the ability to be protagonists of their own destiny and not passive beneficiaries of the action.
5. Photos and videos must be appropriate or relevant to the activity the child is engaged in, for missionary childhood or in school or in other situations in his/her life.
6. One must not fuel discrimination or addictions from one country to another.
7. Use discretion, prudence and common sense to inform, avoiding hurting the recipient's feelings with raw images of those who at that moment cannot defend their dignity.
8. Take and use photographs and images of decent children who do not present themselves as victims, vulnerable or submissive, dirty and hungry, in tears or naked.

³ GIACOMO INCITTI, *Seal, secret, confidentiality ... areas of responsibility and subjects involved*, Rome 6 March 2018.

9. Do not refer to sensational stereotypes and materials to promote one's business, photographing extreme situations and pain, exploiting the presence of minors to induce mercy and reach an increase in fundraising.
10. Make sure the images are an honest representation of the situation and facts.
11. Do not involve children and young people in advertising that could harm the harmonious development of their personality and that of children who look at the image.
12. Pay particular attention and sensitivity in the dissemination of images of sick, injured, disadvantaged children or in difficulty to avoid that, in the name of a compassionate sentiment, which could contribute to sensationalism that ends up becoming exploitation of the person.

Avoid

- acting in a way that shames, compromises or degrades children by causing forms of emotional abuse;
- putting the child in danger or exposing him/her to possible humiliations;
- discriminating children when choosing who to take a picture of;
- labeling children or describing them in a way that could cause sentimentalism or even psychological, physical, verbal or sexual abuse against them;
- publishing a story that could endanger a child, his/her family and others that surround him/her;
- feeding the sense of welfare

Conclusion

With these guidelines, the International Secretariat of the Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood intended to offer an instrument to those who collaborate in the mission of the Church, hoping that it will make choices in accordance with the priorities indicated above. Our aim is not to move those who see or read and thus obtain an offer, but to involve the baptized in the *missio ad gentes* through prayer and cooperation, promoting support for particular churches because is a member of a single Body which is that of the Church.

We are responsible for the information we disseminate, always in mutual respect.

Rome, 19th May 2020

Sr. Roberta Tremarelli AMSS
General Secretary
Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood