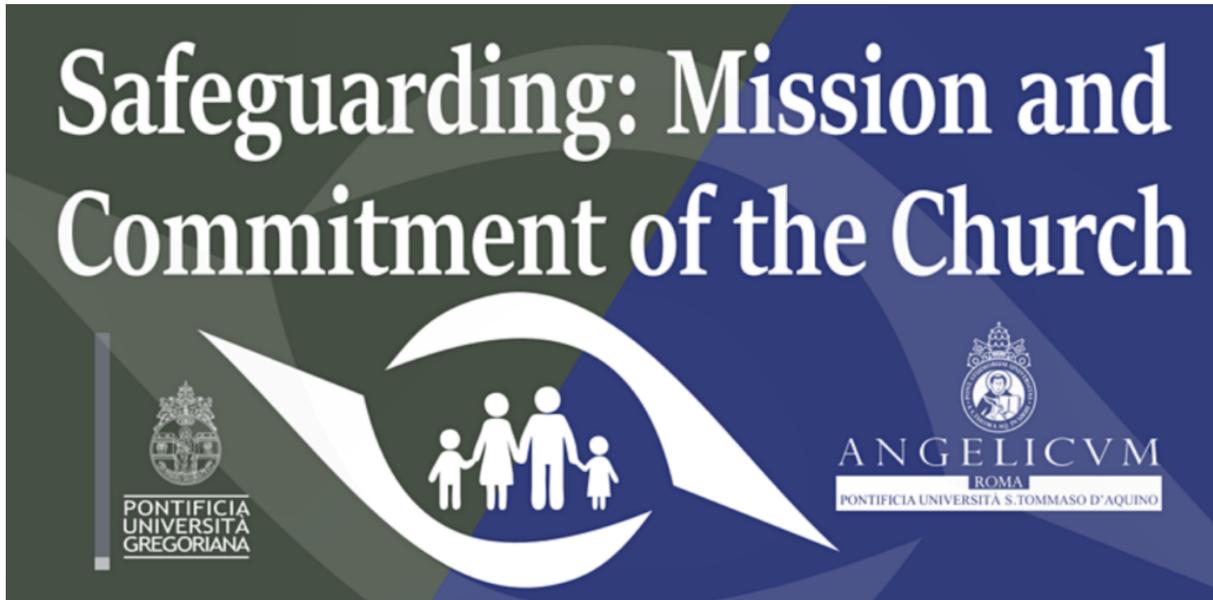


Safeguarding: Mission and Commitment of the Church



The Angelicum is actively working to promote safe-environment training for all of our students and employees in collaboration with the Gregorian University. We sat down with Sr. Helen Alford, O.P., Vice Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and ordinary member of the Pontifical Academy for Social Sciences, to discuss these efforts.

1. Sr. Helen, can you share with us how this joint venture with the Pontifical Gregorian University came about?

The Angelicum has made every effort to help our students share the Gospel in these challenging times. In many countries throughout the world, there has been a growing realization of the need for this human formation in order to safeguard the Church's Mission to spread the Gospel while promoting the dignity of every person. To respond to this need, we teamed up with our neighbors at the Gregorian University, who recently started the *Institute of Anthropology - Interdisciplinary Studies and Care* (IADC). Together we set up a plan for a three hour, one day programme. Our university Senate voted with a large majority in favour of making the course obligatory for all new students joining our programmes, so that within the next few years, all students will receive this formation. We will also offer an optional, semester-long course for those who want to study the issue more deeply.

2. Do not most dioceses and religious communities do their own formation in regard to safeguarding the environments in which their leaders work already?

In some countries, such formation is well established, and is sometimes also required by law, but there are still many places in the world where this issue is not so widely discussed or confronted. Our students come from around 100 different countries; we wanted to make sure that all of them have had the chance to learn about this crucial issue for the Church, in order to bring this awareness back to their home countries. If a student can show that he or she has done a certified programme of the same or a higher level, then we will not expect the student to follow this introductory course.

3. Why is this program important for us as a Pontifical University? How will this help serve the universal Church?

First of all, this programme is important because, as a university run by the Order of Preachers, it is part of our preaching mission to clear away obstacles that hinder the preaching of the Gospel. This includes teaching people how to understand and react to the signs of abuse and anything that hinders the dignity of the human person. Basically we are forming our students and future leaders of the Church and our hope is that the formation that each of them receives will be carried back to their respective local churches. As a central Roman Pontifical university that is sending its students back to 100 countries or more, we are sending out the seeds of good practice regarding safeguarding that can take root all around the world. We believe this ultimately will help the universal Church in adopting appropriate practices in seminaries, colleges, schools and universities worldwide.

4. Will there be further steps in this program/ efforts to promote a safe environment in our university and beyond? (such as assisting other pontifical institutions)

We are running this programme as a pilot this year. It has been discussed with the Conference of the Rectors of Pontifical Universities (CRUIPRO), with the idea that the pontifical system as a whole could start running a course like this, starting next year for all new students. We look forward to working in cooperation with other institutions both in Rome and throughout the world.