



THE CHURCH IN MALTA

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
Archdiocese of Malta

3rd September 2015

95/2015

**JOINT DECLARATION BY THE BISHOPS OF THE DIOCESE OF MALTA AND OF GOZO,
MONS. CHARLES J. SCICLUNA AND MONS. MARIO GRECH**

The Bishops wish to reassure the public that one of the main objectives of their diocese is to safeguard minors and that the laws, both civil and ecclesiastical, are always observed and followed in this respect, just as in every other case.

As already announced, during the autumn of the year 2014, the Bishops, together with the Major Religious Superiors of Malta and of Gozo have adopted and published the new policy regarding the procedures for the investigation of alleged abuse of minors by members of the clergy and religious orders and other pastoral workers. At the beginning of this year, these same ecclesiastical authorities nominated a group of experts to form the Commission for the Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults (also known as the Safeguarding Commission), under the leadership of the Head of Safeguarding, Mr Andrew Azzopardi. This Commission has been in operation since February 2015.

According to this policy and Canon Law, when there is alleged abuse of minors by a priest, the Bishop immediately sets limits or suspends the pastoral ministry of the priest in question so as to avoid him having any further contact with minors. The Bishop also refers the case to the Safeguarding Commission for the necessary investigations. Civil law that may be applicable is also observed. Following the process, if it is proved that the accusation is true, the priest is given the applicable penalty. This penalty could be a permanent restriction of his priestly ministry, or a dismissal from the clerical state.

The Bishops are in agreement that, with immediate effect, every definitive decision taken with respect to permanent restrictions on the priestly ministry or removal from clerical state will be made public through the websites of both Diocese - www.maltadiocese.org and www.gozodiocese.org.

This line of action is to be taken in conjunction with the present practice wherein the parish priest of the concerned priest is also informed of this decision. The priests are also removed from the official list of members of the clergy.

✠ **Charles J. Scicluna**
Archbishop of Malta

✠ **Mario Grech**
Bishop of Gozo