

6 April 2018
Order of the Crown

His Excellency the Ambassador of Belgium to the Holy See; dear Rector Nuno da Silva Gonçalves, Rector of the Gregorian University; Ms Alison Edye, Executive Officer at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Australian Embassy; Msgr Desmet Rector of the Belgian College; Msgr Dumon; Brother Stockman, General Superior of the Brothers of Charity; dear Colleagues, Family, and Friends,

I am honoured by this ceremony in which I get a place within the ranks of the Officers of the Order of the Crown, a national order of the Kingdom of Belgium. I am grateful for this honour, and it is surely a recognition of the work I have been doing for a such a long time now, but even more, it is a recognition of the importance of the topic and the reality of maltreatment and abuse of children in both, the Church and society at large.

Safeguarding is what many of us here present are working for. It is more than protection, which is only protecting children from harm; safeguarding aims at helping children grow in a positive life environment. And not because they are future adults – the next generation – but because they are important as they are, as children.

As said before, I have been working for many years in the field. It has not always been easy, and even today it often is a fight. There is much resistance on every level, much denial as well, and not much support. Recognition is rather rare in this field. All the more am I grateful to Ambassador Cornet d'Elzius and, through him, to His Majesty King Philip.

I am more than happy to see that so many of my collaborators of the CCP are present. For four years now, we have been working closely together as a team. Not everyone was there from the very beginning. We started rather small (Dr Campo and myself), but soon more and more people joined the team, all very much motivated and committed to the topic of safeguarding, all of them with their own gifts and talents, contributing to the success of the Centre.

The results we achieved as the Centre for Child Protection are the fruits of the commitment of the whole team:

- together we developed the e-learning programme, we decided on the content, the PowerPoint presentations, the videos, and the translation into five languages;
- together we created a global network of partners;
- together we work on the teaching programmes and teach in several institutions;
- together we are collaborating on communications;
- together we organise conferences;
- and together we made sure that the first book of the CCP Series will be published soon.

All these results can hardly be the work of one or two persons. That is why I hope that all of you who participated in the many realisations of safeguarding at the CCP are also enjoying this moment, because it is also a celebration of your hard work.

I want to thank everyone for being present and especially those friends and family who came from afar to join the ceremony. It is heart-warming.

And of course a special thanks goes to the ambassador for organising the event, as well as Mrs. Lijssens for her contribution to make it happen.

My final words are dedicated to children and victims of abuse. Although we are working hard, we will not be able to protect every child from abuse, but we hope we can make a difference. Working with many people all over the world will help to make the Church and society at large a safer place for children – that is what we are working and praying for.

Thank you for your kind attention.