

SOS Abuse Unit Activity Report

as of March 1st 2025

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PRESENTATION OF THE REPORT

Established in March 2015, with the aim of promoting better treatment of cases of sexual abuse committed by the Brothers of Saint John, the SOS Abuse Commission will become the SOS Abuse Unit in 2024.

This activity report is based on the data available on 1 March 2025. It updates previous reports by presenting current issues. The analyses of the 2019 and 2022 reports are still valid, which is why some fields are less detailed.

The work of the unit now presupposes the analyses of the *"Understanding and Healing"* Report of the Interdisciplinary Commission, published at the end of June 2023, and refers to them without repeating them here.¹

This report is addressed to the members of the 2025 General Chapter² of the Brothers of Saint John, to accompany them in their proceedings, and was offered to them during the 1st session from April 28 to May 9, 2025. Through its publication, it is also addressed to other members of the Congregation, to victims of sexual abuse committed by the Brothers of Saint John or to anyone wishing to learn about updates on the activity of the unit.

We have appended to this report the information provided by the government of the Brothers of Saint John: this information does not come directly under the unit. However, they are responding to a request from victims to be kept informed of the processing of their complaint.

1) EVOLUTION OF THE SOS ABUSE UNIT

Composition

Since its creation in 2015, the unit has continued to renew its members: in 2022, one brother was replaced by two people in the secretariat, one lay person and another brother; A magistrate has taken over from another magistrate.

Currently, the unit is composed of 7 members: 5 lay people, including a magistrate, who is its president, a clinical psychologist and a lawyer (also licentiate in canon law) and 2 Brothers of Saint John, who do not belong to the general government of the Congregation. All of them are French. The unit was de facto set up in a French context, although it has also had to deal with cases of abuse that have taken place outside France.

¹ In the report *"Understanding and Healing"*, for the presentation of the facts, we refer to the 1st part *"Historical Study"*, in particular chapters 10-17, with Appendix A, as well as in the 3rd part *"Psychological and Systemic Study"*, in chapters 21-22. For proposals for an analysis of the facts, reference can be made to the 3rd part, in particular to chapters 23-25, with Annex I. The SOS Abuse Unit does not have any particular expertise in discussing the 2nd part *"Theological Study"*.

² In this report, we have detailed the French ecclesial context, particularly for the attention of the brothers of the General Chapter coming from the other provinces of the Congregation, and for readers who are less familiar with these issues.

In addition to the documents of the universal Church, it relied in large part on the tools made available by the Church in France: by the CEF³ and by the CORREF⁴.

Development of listening units in the Church of France and establishment of the CRR at the request of CORREF

The French ecclesial context is changing. Since March 2016, several dioceses in France have set up reception and listening units for victims of members of the Catholic Church in France⁵. They develop in dioceses, movements and communities.

Following the report of the CIASE⁶, requested jointly by the CEF and the CORREF, these 2 bodies of the Catholic Church of France ask for the creation of 2 other bodies: the INIRR⁷ and the CRR⁸. The CEF gives the mission to the INIRR and the CORREF to the CRR to mediate between the victims and the dioceses for the 1st, and the religious communities for the 2nd. Many victims have turned to these 2 bodies, particularly to the CRR⁹ in the case of the Brothers of Saint John: either directly, or referred by the Congregation, the SOS Abuse Unit or other people.

Operation

The mission of the unit can be summarised in two areas. The first is the reception of victims; the second is to make recommendations to the Prior General or the Prior Provincial in dealing with situations.

The unit has worked on the drafting of job descriptions and procedures (2024), in particular thanks to the 2023 document, issued by the CEF: *"Unit for the reception and listening of victims of violence and sexual assault in the Church."*

Here are the steps for an adult who comes to the unit:

- After a 1st exchange with the complainant (email and/or telephone), a secretary of SOS abuse suggests that he meet 2 members of the unit.
- During this meeting, a report is drawn up which is then reviewed with the person. Members often inform the person of the steps to take to file a civil and canonical complaint, and can refer the person to other bodies and resource places.
- After this interview and collegial work, the unit sends recommendations to the Prior General or the Prior Provincial for the handling of the case: taking into account the victim on the one hand, and the brother concerned on the other.
- During proceedings, the civil authorities are not obliged to inform the Prior General and the Priors Provincial concerned. They are usually informed by the accused brother or by the complainant himself. In the case of canonical proceedings, they share the information they receive with the victim, either directly or via the cell.

³ CEF: France Bishops' Conference: www.eglise.catholique.fr

⁴ CORREF: Conference of Religious of France: www.viereligieuse.fr

⁵ See the article entitled "Publication of the audit report of the reception and listening units for victims of violence in the Church" of December 4, 2023 on the www.eglise.catholique.fr website

⁶ CIASE: Independent Commission on Abuse in the Church (report issued on October 05, 2021): www.ciase.fr

⁷ INIRR: National and Independent Authority for Recognition and Reparation (2021): www.inirr.fr

⁸ CRR: Recognition and Reparation Commission (2021): www.reconnaissancereparation.org

⁹ 26 people out of the 31 who contacted the CRR (to our knowledge) had previously contacted SOS abus, most of them before the CRR existed.

The members of the unit continue to train¹⁰ with the CEF, the CORREF, the Loyola Faculties, the Paris officiality, by participating in conferences organized by the CRR, etc.

The challenges of the passage of the Congregation to the provinces

The creation of the provinces, at the general chapter of 2022, implies a reflection on the functioning of the unit, to adapt to this new configuration.

The competence of the SOS Abuse Unit concerns, we recall, sexual abuse: other abuses such as abuses of authority and spiritual abuses – if they are not linked to sexual abuses - do not fall within the mission of SOS abuse, and are referred to the Priors Provincial of the brothers involved.

Since the Church in the various regions of the world has taken up the issue of abuse in a variety of ways, some countries or certain episcopal conferences have chosen to go through bodies, similar to those mentioned for France, to collect testimonies and to have external expertise for the management of affairs.

It is up to each province to go through these existing bodies in the processing of complaints of sexual abuses, or to establish them if necessary.

2) PRESENTATION OF THE FIGURES SINCE THE 2022 REPORT

The following figures concern:

- People who have contacted the SOS Abuse Unit directly
- Cases submitted to the SOS Abuse Unit by the Prior General or the Priors Provincial

The previous 2022 report counted complaints up to August 31, 2022 and complemented the 2019 main report. These 2 documents remain valid, and their analyses are confirmed.

As in the previous reports of the SOS Abuse Unit, the complaints concerning the founder, Father Marie-Dominique Philippe o.p., are not counted in the figures of this report.¹¹

Complaints of sexual abuse of minors and adults

The unit was contacted 30 times via the dedicated email address sos.abus@stjean.com, or at the request of the congregation's authorities. Of these 30 referrals, 13 fall within the mission of the SOS Abuse Unit, being complaints of sexual abuse: 7 on adults, 6 on minors. The other 17 steps being 7 complaints of spiritual abuse and 10 requests for information, they were forwarded to the Priors Provincial concerned, as well as to the Prior General.

¹⁰ Examples of training courses taken in Paris: "Everyday abuse" by CORREF (21/11/2022), "Sexual abuse: legal and canonical training" by CORREF (19/01/2023), "Welfare of minors and the fight against paedophilia" by the National Service for the Protection of Minors of the CEF (2023), "Reparation and practices of forgiveness" at the Loyola Faculty (15/03/2024), "Restorative justice" by the CRR (12/12/2024), e-training "Stop Abuse" of the diocese of Paris (2025), "The place and concern of victims in criminal proceedings" (2021) or "The vulnerable person, in French law, in canon law" (2023 by the Paris official).

¹¹ 2 testimonies were added in 2024 to the SOS abuse file of Father Marie-Dominique Philippe.

AUTHORS

The 13 complaints of sexual abuse concern 11 brothers as well as 2 former brothers. Of the 11 brothers in the community, 6 had not yet been implicated with the SOS Abuse Unit compared to previous reports (3 for abuse of adults, 3 for abuse of minors).

Of the 6 complaints of sexual abuse of minors, 4 are direct testimonies¹², 2 are information received by other units or institutions to which the victims have turned. 4 brothers are concerned. In all cases, the report to the Public Prosecutor was made either by the Prior General or by the institutions to which the victims applied. 2 cases concern the Provinces of Europe and France, 4 cases concern only the Province of France. 4 complaints were received in 2022, 1 in 2023, 1 in 2025.

ORIGIN OF TESTIMONIES

2 cases concern both the Provinces of Europe and France, 4 cases concern only the Province of France.

4 complaints were received in 2022, 1 in 2023, 1 in 2025.

Of the 7 complaints of sexual abuse of adults, 3 concern the Province of France, 1 the Provinces of France and Europe, 1 the Province of Europe, 2 the Provinces of Asia-Oceania and Africa.

1 was received in 2022¹³, 4 in 2023, 2 in 2024.

Summary table since previous reports

Here is the summary table of the figures, with the successive updates of the various SOS Abuse reports.

	2015-2019	2019-2022	2022-2025	Total 2015-2025
Complaints of sexual abuse of adults	32	37	7	76
– Pre-2013 events	86%	84%	83%	84%
– <i>Brothers newly implicated</i>	27	22	3	52
Complaints of sexual abuse of minors	8	35	6	49
– Minors under 15 years of age	2	19	4	25
– Minors 15-17 years old	6	16	2	24
– <i>Brothers newly implicated</i>	6	13	3	22
Total Sexual Abuse Complaints Received	40	72	13	125

The above percentages show that the largest proportion of complaints for sexual abuse of adults correspond to events that took place before 2013: this is a constant that is confirmed compared to previous reports.

For the sexual abuse of minors, the 2022 report states: *"We have received 21 cases (2 from 2015-2019, 19 from 2019-2022) of minors under the age of 15 involving 7 brothers or former brothers (11 of whom are victims of the same former brother convicted several times)"*¹⁴

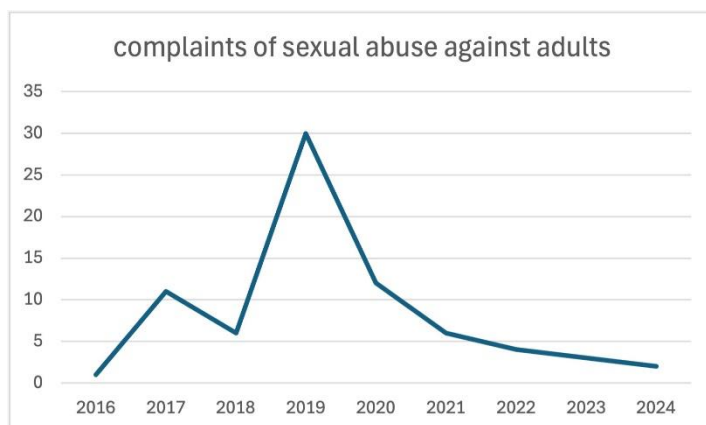
¹² 2 come from the minor's parents, 2 from a person who is currently an adult and a minor at the time of the facts

¹³ That's 1 from the current report (as of August 31, 2022), or 4, adding to the previous report (so for the whole of 2022)

¹⁴ Report of the "SOS abuse" Commission 2022, p.3

Most of the cases handled from 2022 to 2025 complement cases in which brothers had already been implicated.

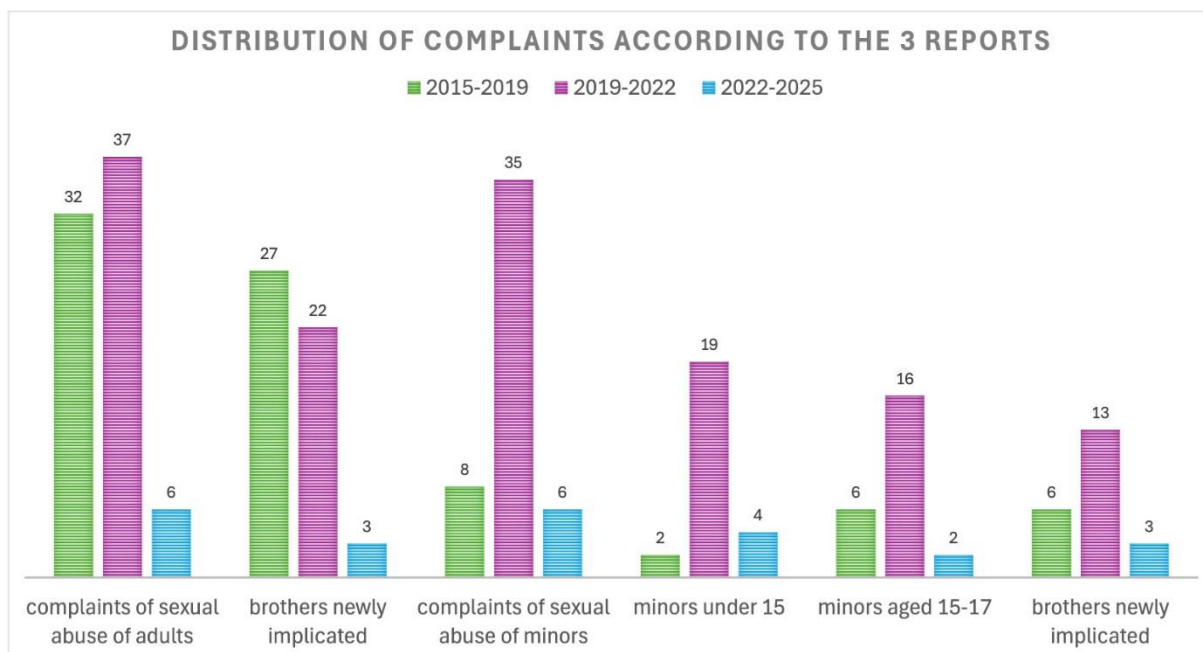
Evolution of the number of complaints since SOS Abuse's creation



To understand the general trend in the evolution of referrals, based on the figures given in the 2022 report¹⁵, let's take a look at the number of complaints concerning sexual abuse of adults since SOS abuse's creation: 2016 (1), 2017 (11), 2018 (6), 2019 (30), 2020 (12), 2021 (6), 2022 (4), 2023 (4), 2025 (0, at March 1, the date of this report).

The unit was created in 2015, and the 1st complaint was filed in 2016.

In order to be able to compare with the data in previous reports, if we represent the summary table of referrals in the form of an infographic, we obtain the following graph:



Victims

Since September 2022, the unit has accompanied 8 victims: in addition to the 7 victims of sexual abuse, SOS Abus has also met 1 person concerned by spiritual abuse.

¹⁵ Idem, p.3, paragraph "B. Abuse of adults"

All of them share three main motivations: to be recognized for what they have suffered; to find out if other people have been victims and to prevent the same facts from happening again.

The analysis of the consequences for victims in the 2019 report remains valid: *"The consequences for victims are not limited to injuries caused by the actions. Justifications, the paternal or authoritative relationship in general, the intellectual and spiritual prestige of the perpetrators of abuse, also have very harmful consequences for the victim."*

In all 8 cases, it is an asymmetrical relationship. In 4 cases, it is clearly a relationship of spiritual accompaniment.

For 3 of these people, the publication of *"Understanding and Healing"* was the trigger and for a fourth, it was hearing a testimony directly about abuse in the Church.

Although the unit is not authorized to legally "characterize" an act, we can nevertheless say that for 2 of these 8 victims, it is a sexual assault that would probably fall under the category of a crime. Either because the victim was a minor, or because the person described a rape.

During the interview with the person who has referred the matter to the unit, the members can propose to file a civil or canonical complaint, warning them that the processes of handling cases take a long time. The arduousness linked to the duration of the cases is a recurring suffering expressed by the victims.

Following the publication of *"Understanding and Healing"*

The introduction to the report of the 2022 SOS Abuse Unit states that *"the report of the Interdisciplinary Commission set up at the request of the 2019 General Chapter to shed light on the abuses committed in the Saint-Jean family in connection with those of the founder, Father Marie-Dominique Philippe, will provide abundant documentation as well as detailed analyses. This report (2022) therefore assumes knowledge of the previous one (2019), and it is inseparable from that of the Interdisciplinary Commission (2023). This report (2025) is part of the same perspective."*¹⁶

The publication of *"Understanding and Healing"* allows members of the Congregation, victims and any reader to get a better glimpse of what may have led some of the Brothers of Saint John, contrary to the profession of vows and priestly ordination, to establish a hold on their victims to the point of committing sexual abuse.

The SOS Abuse Unit encourages the Brothers of Saint John to read this report and to continue the work of truth that the institute has undertaken. The SOS Abuse Unit remains available to victims wishing to alert the Brothers of Saint John of the sexual abuse committed by some of its members.

¹⁶ It should be noted that the reports of the SOS Abuse Unit can be found in appendices F (2019) and G (2022) of the report *"Understanding and Healing"* available on the institutional website of the Brothers of Saint John. The Interdisciplinary Commission worked in part with sources from the SOS Abuse Unit. The latter validates the analyses proposed by the Interdisciplinary Commission.

ANNEX 1: PROCESSING OF CASES OVER THE PERIOD 2022-2025

It should be remembered that the handling of cases is the responsibility of different bodies: the authorities of the Congregation, the ecclesial authorities, the civil authorities, and in the case of France, the CRR¹⁷.

Link to the CRR

To our knowledge, 31 people have contacted the CRR. Among them, 16 victims received a payment of financial reparation, after a memorandum of understanding supervised by the CRR and signed by the congregation. The average reparation is around €40,000, for a total of €651,000 already paid. This amount corresponds to reparations paid since the signature of the protocol with the CRR: it does not include reparations paid before 2023.

The Congregation also undertakes non-financial reparations, the most frequent of which is the acknowledgement of the abuses and their consequences by means of a letter.

The Congregation did not agree to recognize a person as a victim of abuse, as he or she had been rejected by the justice of the State and had not been recognized by the canonical justice system either. One person withdrew. The other cases are still being processed.

In addition to the Prior General, the mediation with the CRR has involved the former secretary of the SOS Abuse Unit, and on a few occasions the new one.

General Procedures

The Congregation of the Brothers of Saint John is a religious community of diocesan right, whose ordinary bishop is the bishop of Autun (France).

In the case of complaints of abuse that are not addressed directly to the SOS Abuse Unit, whether the abuse is committed in France or elsewhere in the world, the Prior General submits the case to the SOS Abuse Unit, which recommends notifying the Bishop of Autun of the situation if necessary.

The Prior General or the Prior Provincial of the place where the brother resides notifies the bishop of the diocese in which the brother resides and, if it is not the same, the bishop of the diocese where the facts are alleged to have taken place. It is up to the bishop of Autun, and in some cases to the local bishop, to open the preliminary canonical inquiry. The bishops can refer to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF)¹⁸ when it comes to reserved offenses.¹⁹

In the case of sexual abuse of a minor, the Prior General must legally report it to the Public Prosecutor of the French Republic. The SOS Abuse Unit gives an opinion in the case of sexual abuse of an adult.

At the time when canonical or civil procedures are launched, the Ordinary, or the Prior General in agreement with the latter²⁰, imposes in most cases a limiting framework on the

¹⁷ CRR: Recognition and Reparation Commission (2021): www.reconnaissance-reparation.org

¹⁸ In June 2022, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) became the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF).

¹⁹ See the document entitled "Vademecum on some procedural points in the treatment of cases of sexual abuse of minors committed by clerics" (05 June 2022) on the Vatican website: www.vatican.va

²⁰ Code of Canon Law, c.1722; Vademecum No. 58-65

brother concerned, called "precautionary measures". At the end of the processing of the case, a judgment or a decision is taken, at the canonical level as well as at the legal level. Sanctions or penalties are then pronounced or not. Precautionary measures end either because they are replaced by a sentence (guilt) or because they are lifted (innocence or dismissal).

At the level of canonical justice

As a reminder, the Roman body, which was called the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), became the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) in June 2022.

Since the last report, the files of 21 brothers have been processed²¹:

- 1 brother has been exonerated by the bishop of the diocese to which he is assigned
- 5 brothers left the congregation: 1 brother was dismissed from the congregation and the clerical state (DDF); 2 brothers who had already been dismissed from the clerical state (DDF) left the congregation; 2 brothers obtained a dispensation from the vows and obligations related to the priesthood in the context of the procedure brought against them (DDF)
- 5 brothers received a conviction from the DDF, including 1 who appealed
- 1 brother has a penal precept from the ordinary (bishop of Autun) at the end of the preliminary investigation
- 1 case is closed without further action by the bishop of Autun for prescription
- 5 brothers received precautionary measures
- 4 brothers received a warning from the Ordinary

In addition, 1 brother (outside the province of France) received a disciplinary warning from the Prior General, after having been denounced for inappropriate messages, facts that he acknowledged.

1 temporary professed brother from another province (outside the province of France) was not admitted by his Prior Provincial to perpetual profession, because of a sexual assault he had committed.

Other situations are dealt with by the Priors Provincial directly, when they do not involve sexual abuse. Work is underway between the provinces and the general government to define the appropriate procedure for transmitting information and monitoring brothers.

At the level of State Justice

The civil justice system, which is subject to the presumption of innocence and the secrecy of the investigation and investigation, does not communicate information to third parties, unless expressly requested by the public prosecutor, who decides whether it is appropriate to provide certain information. We cannot therefore give precise indications on this subject here. To our knowledge, about ten procedures are underway.

²¹ 21 cases of brothers have been processed or are in progress. Some files involve several items on this list.

In 2024, 2 brothers received a dismissal of the cases that concerned them, one in France, the other in Asia. In the case of the former, the prohibition of spiritual guidance has been upheld; in the case of the latter, the canonical case is pending.

It should be remembered that a dismissal of the case is a measure of expediency, provisional in that it does not make a definitive assessment of whether or not guilt exists, without prejudice to the case of the statute of limitations.

Civil justice and canonical justice are independent: it may happen that civil justice comes to a different conclusion from canonical justice. For example, a brother may be found guilty by canonical justice of certain acts for which civil justice will have pronounced a different verdict.

Follow-up of sanctioned brothers

In 2023, the Prior General has assigned a 1st brother to accompany the sanctioned brothers, then a 2nd brother in 2024: their mission is to accompany or ensure the accompaniment of the brothers during their sanction, and to make the link with the general and provincial government.

ANNEX 2: EXAMPLE OF A JOB DESCRIPTION: THE CHAIRMAN OF SOS ABUSE (APRIL 2024)

Tasks of the Unit

The SOS Abuse Unit is commissioned by the Prior General of the Brothers of Saint John to:

- Collect testimonies from people complaining of sexual abuse committed by the Brothers of Saint John
- To submit recommendations to the Prior General on the handling of the case
 - for the complainant
 - for the brother concerned:
 - 1/ with the civil justice system
 - 2/ to the Ordinary, the community and canonical justice
 - 3/ for religious and psychological follow-up, review, precautionary measures, sanctions

Role of the Chairman

- Chairing the meetings of the SOS Abuse Unit
- To allow the various skills to express themselves on the subjects addressed: psychological, legal, canonical skills,
- Collaborating with the Prior General of the Brothers of Saint John
 - To be informed by the secretary at the same time as the Prior General when information concerning a brother has reached the secretary.
 - To enable the unit to make recommendations to the Prior General of the Brothers of Saint John in the processing and follow-up of cases
- Work in collaboration with the secretary of the unit
 - who informs him when information, a testimony or a complaint appears.
 - in the development of the agenda of the meetings
 - in the follow-up of the cases of the brothers involved
 - in contact with complainants
 - ensure that complaints are handled seriously
- Ensure the validity of the texts describing the functioning of the unit, and that they are updated as practices are adjusted.
- Be able to report to institutions outside the community on the work implemented (State Justice, CEF, CORREF, CRR, etc.)

Required skills

- Knowledge of state law and canon law
- Notions of psychology to understand the expertise of psychologists in listening to complainants
- Exercising or having held the office of magistrate of the judicial order
- Must be a layman

Mandate

After consultation with the members of the unit, the chairman is appointed by the Prior General of the Brothers of Saint John for a renewable period of 3 years.