

Spiritans Restorative Programme

Christmas 2025 Progress Update and Commitment to Action: A Message of Accountability and Care

We made a commitment to those who were sexually abused in childhood in Spiritan institutions that we would communicate clearly, regularly and honestly about the steps being taken toward redress, healing and justice.

My hesitation about communicating has never been from a lack of care or commitment, but from a fear of causing further hurt – of being misunderstood, of disappointing or of being seen as delaying what cannot come quickly enough. Still, as we come to the end of the year, and it is Christmas, it feels important to say something, even at the risk of imperfection.

This season invites reflection on peace, joy, dignity, and belonging – realities that so many were cruelly denied as children. I know Christmas can deepen pain rather than ease it, and I want to acknowledge the heavy burden carried by victims and survivors, then and now. We Spiritans today are answerable for the harm caused, regardless of how distant we are from those responsible.

We recognise that the long wait for concrete action has caused deep pain. Many survivors carried their suffering in silence for decades, and for many, words alone are not enough. Meaningful redress, accountability and restorative action are essential. We are profoundly sorry for the harm caused and for the ongoing distress experienced while this work continues.

What Has Happened So Far in 2025

In 2025, the Restorative Programme has progressed in meaningful ways through the focused cooperation of Spiritans and Restore Together across all its pillars: restorative meetings facilitated by Tim Chapman and his team, counselling supports, testimony and truth-telling, memorialisation, and ongoing work on redress, including the sale of a high-profile asset to build a dedicated fund.

Since November 2022, more than 60 victims, represented by their solicitors, have used the justice system. We are also acutely aware that many survivors would prefer alternative pathways, such as mediated settlements or a dedicated Redress Scheme. Respecting those preferences has shaped our work over the past year. I know progress is never fast enough for those waiting, and explanations about pace offer little comfort. What matters is delivery. I believe 2026 will be a year of significant progress.

As part of a broader reform and restructuring programme of the Spiritans in Ireland, suitable assets for sale have been identified. This process has begun. Rockwell Farm has been sold and the proceeds from the sale will enable the creation of a dedicated Restorative Fund. This funding will not in and of itself be sufficient, but it will support mediated settlements, redress and other restorative measures. This is not symbolic; it is a tangible commitment to action.

The agreed Restorative Process framework consists of several interlinked pillars. Each may hold different significance for survivors at different times and all are available as required.

Acknowledgement and Apology: In 2025, I met with survivors for extended, facilitated conversations acknowledging harm and offering apologies. Through restorative meetings, I have learned how deeply abuse by a religious person fractured many people's sense of self, faith, spirituality and belonging. One survivor described a "fractured soul". That reality stays with me. No one should ever feel discarded or beyond care whatever cracks we have.

Therapy and Counselling: All victims/survivors who come forward are offered a therapeutic pathway with a choice of independent counselling, group therapy or restorative support. Access to therapy and counselling is available at any stage of the restorative programme.

Testimony and Truth Telling: We recognise that truth-telling is essential – for survivors and for the Congregation. We continue to consult with Restore Together to support an independent Victim/Survivor Truth Gathering Project which is in development. We have commissioned a review of Spiritan archive to try to understand the historic failures of governance and accountability.

Redress Scheme: We have held regular meetings with Restore Together since September 2025 and ongoing work continues to agree the detail of the Scheme. There is a process underway to appoint an independent scheme provider and survivor co-design consultations, that will allow direct input from victims will begin in early 2026. Mediated settlements and legal reparations continue in parallel.

Memorialisation: We remain committed to memorials that acknowledge suffering endured in Spiritan institutions and future-focused remembrance will be developed in collaboration with survivors.

To those who suffered abuse in our Spiritan schools, we cannot undo the past, but we are committed to restoration, healing and justice for you. I know confreres carry sadness and shame for what has come to light. They too have been robbed of peace and much joy by the actions of others. The path ahead for confreres must be one of honesty, accountability, humility, and perseverance. Christmas carries many messages for us.

As this year closes, I hold hope – not as sentiment, but as commitment – that restoration, while always a work in progress, can continue to take shape through listening, accountability and sustained action, and that agreed goals will be achieved.

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Provincial.