



**UNIONE INTERNAZIONALE SUPERIORE GENERALI**

Piazza di Ponte S. Angelo, 28 - 00186 Roma

Tel. (39)06.68.400.20 Fax (39)06.68.400.239

E-mail: [segretaria.esecutiva@uisg.org](mailto:segretaria.esecutiva@uisg.org)

Web: [www.uisg.org](http://www.uisg.org)

---

03-09-2019

Dear Mr. Doyle,

I am replying on behalf of the new President of UISG, Sr. Jolanta Kafka rmi to your letter of April 21. I am sorry for the delay in replying but we had a change of President and Executive Board in early May and we have just had the first meeting of the new Board.

The questions raised in your letter:

- *What practical support exists for sisters who become pregnant and leave their religious order?*
- *Whether there is a possibility for the sister of giving the child up for adoption and remaining in active ministry?*

have canonical implications and also concern the proper law of each individual congregation.

While there is no special reference in canon law to the case of a sister who becomes pregnant, Canon 702 requires each institute "to observe equity and the charity of the gospel towards a member who is separated from it." Each Institute has therefore its own policies with regard to the provision of financial and other types of support which take both the context and personal circumstances into account, when a member leaves a religious congregation. These provisions would most certainly apply in the case of a sister becoming pregnant for whatever reason. If the pregnancy arose without consent on the part of the sister, either through rape or abuse of power, then there would be a special duty of care on the part of all concerned, to ensure the well-being of both the child and the mother.

Decisions on the part of the sister and the leadership are clearly to be guided by both ethical and pastoral considerations including the primary rights of the child and the duty of care that each institute has for its members. Taking decisions on the best way

---

Office of the Executive Secretary

forward for both the child and mother requires careful discernment by all involved. Each case varies in terms of the context and the culture, the situation of the parents of the child and the presence or otherwise of an alternative family support system to rear the child, if such is being considered. However it is clear from recent Vatican statements that the right of the child to have both a mother and father should take precedence. While in the majority of cases the sister decides to leave the congregation to raise her child, we are also aware of a small number of cases where the sister left her congregation during pregnancy, gave birth to her child and then gave the child up for adoption before returned to the convent. In some of these cases the sister later re-established contact with her child.

With every good wish for your work on behalf of Coping International.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sr. Patricia Murray ibvm". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Sr. Patricia Murray ibvm

Executive Secretary - UISG