



PONTIFICAL COMMISSION FOR THE
PROTECTION OF MINORS

PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday 18 September 2020

The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors held its 14th Ordinary Plenary Assembly from September 16th to 18th.

The Commission decided to hold its plenary session partly in person partly online, taking into account the indefinite and prolonged disruptions to its work on the ground with the local church brought about by the global Covid-19 pandemic, and in recognition of its important mandate which is aimed at addressing the potential protection gap that minors and vulnerable adults might face.

The members reviewed the impact of moving their outreach, study, research and education programs online. They discussed the opportunities as well as the challenges presented by these evolving virtual and digital realities and the impact of lockdowns and quarantines particularly for minors and for people who have suffered abuse.

The group *Working with Survivors* conducted a number of virtual meetings with those who have been abused, family members and professionals. Members thank them for their generous presence and contribution to our learning. The group is now directing its efforts to incorporating this learning into a series of webinars and seminars on ministry to those who have been abused taking into account diverse cultural contexts. The work of the pilot project *local Survivor Advisory Panels* has been greatly impacted by the pandemic, but some fruits are emerging. For example, the Panel in Brazil gave the impulse for the creation of an office to help as a task force for the Special Safeguarding Commission as it implements *Vos estis lux mundi*.

The *Education and Formation* working group studied the outcomes of the recent webinar series “Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable People during Covid-19” held in collaboration with the UISG, Centre for Child Protection, and Telefono Azzurro. These webinars drew participants from

congregational leadership, safeguarding personnel in pastoral ministry, formation personnel, Catholic education personnel, and healthcare professions and social work. Attendees of these webinars expressed interest in further online formation in practical matters of safeguarding, and the Commission intends to continue offering such online formation programs in the immediate future.

The Commission welcomes the creation of the Joint UISG-USG Commission for Care and Protection. We appreciate the opportunity to be part of this journey together with the men and women religious of the Church in our ministry to minors and vulnerable people.

Since the last Plenary, the *Safeguarding Guidelines and Norms* working group under the auspices of the Pontifical Commission held a special seminar entitled “Promoting and Protecting the Dignity of Persons in Allegations of Abuse of Minors and Vulnerable Adults: Balancing Confidentiality, Transparency and Accountability.” We would like to thank the officials from different dicasteries of the Roman Curia and the experts in different canonical disciplines from around the world who contributed to the discussion of procedural issues affecting the sacrament of reconciliation, canonical processes and matters of jurisprudence. The Commission was pleased to hear that the studies which were presented in English or Italian will be published soon in *Periodica*, the canon law periodical of the Pontifical University Gregoriana. Members believe this will make a significant contribution to scholarship in these important areas.

The Commission also noted the publication of the *Vademecum* on July 16, 2020, by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and how it contributes to strengthening the administration of justice and better clarifies how those who have been abused are to be heard. Members continue to study ways in which the local churches and religious institutes can be assisted in its implementation.

Concluding the meeting members expressed their support to those directly or indirectly affected by the current Covid-19 pandemic.

The 14th ordinary plenary assembly of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors took place in Rome and online from September 16-18, 2020.

The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors was created by Pope Francis in March of 2014 to propose the most opportune initiatives for the protection of all minors and vulnerable adults and to promote local responsibility in the particular Churches.

For more information on the work of the Pontifical Commission visit our website at www.protectionofminors.va