



PONTIFICAL COMMISSION FOR THE
PROTECTION OF MINORS

PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Attn: News desks and Religious Affairs Correspondents

The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors encouraged by Pope Francis’ call to zero tolerance of abuse

The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors [PCPM] is encouraged by the Letter to the Holy People of God issued Monday by Pope Francis.

The Commission thanks the Holy Father for his strong words recognizing the pain and suffering endured by people who have suffered sexual abuse, the abuse of power and the abuse of conscience perpetrated by some members of the church.

We are forever indebted to the prophetic courage and endurance of many men and women whose “outcry was more powerful than all the measures meant to silence it”.

Zero tolerance and accountability are pre-requisite in safeguarding

The members of the Commission feel supported by the Holy Father’s call to church leadership to “implement zero tolerance and ways of making all those who perpetrate or cover up these crimes accountable”.

Pope Francis’ letter reinforces the PCPM message that zero tolerance and accountability are a pre-requisite in safeguarding vulnerable people from abuse, now and in the future.

Commission member [Prof. Myriam Wijlens](#) states:

"For me a canon lawyer who has been engaged in many abuse cases three aspects stand out: first, Pope Francis clearly expresses a connection between sexual abuse, abuse of power and abuse of conscience. He verbalizes what many do not want to see connected.

Secondly, he mentions two levels of abuse of power: there are those who use their position to sexually abuse minors and vulnerable adults and there are those in leadership positions who abuse their power to cover this up.

Thirdly, the response of asking for pardon and seeking repair will never be sufficient also because it only looks backwards. A forward looking response implies asking for a radical change of culture where the safety of children enjoys top priority. Protecting the reputation of the church stipulates putting the safety of children first. The clergy alone will not be able to bring about such a radical change, thus Pope Francis writes: in humility they will have to ask for and receive help from the whole community".

For more information on the PCPM and its work in promoting a safeguarding culture in local churches around the world visit: www.protectionofminors.va

Background

The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors was created by Pope Francis in March of 2014. The Chirograph of His Holiness Pope Francis states specifically:

"The Commission's specific task is to propose to me the most opportune initiatives for protecting minors and vulnerable adults, in order that we may do everything possible to ensure that crimes such as those which have occurred are no longer repeated in the Church. The Commission is to promote local responsibility in the particular Churches, uniting their efforts to those of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, for the protection of all children and vulnerable adults."

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