



PONTIFICAL COMMISSION FOR THE  
**PROTECTION OF MINORS**

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**PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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*Attn: News desks and Religious Affairs Correspondents*

**Assembly of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors: make the Church a “safe place” for children.**

The members of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors gathered in Plenary Assembly from 6 to 8 February in Rome.

The members who took part in the Assembly are: Cardinal Sean O'Malley, O.F.M. Cap., U.S.A., president; Msgr. Robert Oliver, U.S.A., secretary; Rev. Luis Manuel Ali Herrera, Colombia; Catherine Bonnet, France; Marie Collins, Ireland; Gabriel Dy-Liacco, Philippines; Sheila Hollins, England; Bill Kilgallon, New Zealand; Sister Kayula Lesa, M.S.C., Zambia; Sister Hermenegild Makoro, C.P.S., Zimbabwe; Kathleen McCormack, Australia; Claudio Papale, Italy; Peter Saunders, England; Hanna Suchocka, Poland; Krysten Winter-Green, U.S.A.; Rev. Humberto Miguel Yanez, S.J., Argentina and Rev. Hans Zollner, S.J., Germany.

The Pontifical Council subsequently issued the following communique, the full text of which is published below:

“This year’s meeting was the first opportunity for all seventeen members of the recently expanded Commission to come together and share their progress in the task entrusted them by

the Holy Father, namely to advise Pope Francis in the safeguarding and protection of minors in the Church.

During the meetings, members presented reports from their Working Groups of experts, developed over the past year. The Commission then completed their recommendations regarding the formal structure of the Commission and agreed upon several proposals to submit to the Holy Father for consideration.

The Working Groups are an integral part of the Commission's working structure. Between Plenary Sessions, these groups bring forward research and projects in areas that are central to the mission of making the Church 'a safe home' for children, adolescents, and vulnerable adults. These include: pastoral care for survivors and their families, education, guidelines in best practice, formation to the priesthood and religious life, ecclesial and civil norms governing allegations of abuse, and the accountability of people in positions of responsibility within the Church when dealing with allegations of abuse.

The Commission is keenly aware that the issue of accountability is of major importance. In its Assembly, members agreed on an initial proposal to submit to Pope Francis for consideration. Moreover, the Commission is developing processes to ensure accountability for everyone in the Church - clergy, religious, and laity - who work with minors.

Part of ensuring accountability is raising awareness and understanding at all levels of the Church regarding the seriousness and urgency in implementing correct safeguarding procedures. To this end, the Commission also agreed to develop seminars to educate Church leadership in the area of the protection of minors.

Following on from the Holy Father's Letter to Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences and to Superiors of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, dated February 2, the Commission looks forward to collaborating with churches on a local level in making its expertise available to ensure best practices in guidelines for the protection of minors.

The Commission is also preparing materials for a Day of Prayer for all those who have been harmed by sexual abuse. This will underscore our responsibility to work for spiritual healing and also help raise awareness among the Catholic community about the scourge of the abuse of minors.

Pope Francis writes, in his letter to Church leaders, 'families need to know that the Church is making every effort to protect their children'. Conscious of the gravity of our task to advise the Holy Father in this effort, we ask you to support our work with prayer”.

*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](http://www.protectionofminors.va)*