

## PRESS RELEASE

Vatican City, May 5, 2023.

**For immediate release**

### Address of Cardinal Sean O'Malley, OFM. Cap., to the Holy Father, Pope Francis, during his audience with the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors.

Most Holy Father:

On behalf of our Commission, I would like to bring our most sincere greetings, especially for many members and staff who are joining us for the first time. As you can see, Holy Father, the network of Apostles of Safeguarding is growing. Our membership has grown and so has our engagement with those impacted by sexual abuse.

Our new members deepen the reach of our Commission as they bring a vast amount of experience from all parts of the world. Many of our new members have spent their working lives at the level of the local church, in parishes and dioceses and schools, and know better than anyone the reality of sexual abuse in the Church, the situations that need to be confronted and the pastoral approach that needs to be developed by all in our Church so that a **culture of care** can grow and become the norm throughout our Church. We are a sign that the ministry of safeguarding **belongs to all of us** as it is part of the Church's ministry, indeed of evangelization itself.

This is the vision and goal of our Commission and one that has taken great strides and we have made great progress in the past six months, in light of the mandate you have laid down for our Commission. In a short space of time, we have engaged in the following:

- Our Commission has updated and renewed the Church's global *Guidelines* framework first issued in 2011 to ensure they were adapted to today's challenges. We will shortly distribute these new *Guidelines* to the whole Church, beginning a global education campaign on how to ensure robust safeguarding rules are implemented and followed. Our engagement with the church follows a synodal approach.

- With the help of a US Catholic Family Foundation, we secured external funding to hire new staff members and provide support in the particular churches.
- With the help of the bishop's conferences in the more prosperous part of the Church, we have been able to establish a fund of 3 million Euros from Church donors to help provide resources in the poorer parts of our Church. This is a sign of affective and effective solidarity. We are calling it the *Memorare Program* in honor of the prayer to the Blessed Mother that anyone who comes to you for help will not remain unaided, we recently finalized a pilot program agreement with the Church in Rwanda.
- Because of your generous intervention, Holy Father, we took possession of a new Commission location in downtown Rome and began planning for programs and services to victims' groups and their allies.
- Our first meetings included a group of victims' survivors that you also met with. We were also able to celebrate a moment of prayer with victims in the Chapel of St. John the Baptist alongside our new offices. We recognized the need for a visible and physical center dedicated to the fight against sexual abuse in the Church and a welcome center for those impacted by abuse. We pray that you may join us someday soon and offer your blessing in your person, and be blessed by those who love the Lord even in the midst of so much pain.
- You based the reform of the Curia around the call to preach the Gospel. In line with this, we signed a collaboration agreement with the Dicastery for Evangelization to further the goals of safeguarding through the work of the Vatican office that oversees the Church's life in more than half the territory of the globe. With your blessing, we hope to finalize similar agreements within the Curia in the coming months.

We have tried, Holy Father, to express your urgency and your sense of purpose in our important ministry of service and we have not wasted any time in implementing the mandate you have given us.

And yet we are just getting started! You remain an example to use, of reaching to the peripheries, of being like a field hospital for victims of sexual abuse and, perhaps, of leaving nothing un-dared so that these little ones are kept safe in our Church. Holy Father, your example of outreach and constant connections throughout the Church are

an inspiration to us in our work of attempting to bridge the gaps between people. We continue to rely on your leadership in all our efforts.

The Commission relies very much on your affection and your blessing not only on our work but those who are at the heart of our life and work; those impacted by sexual abuse in the Church. We place all our expertise and our dedication not only in service of your work of unity and healing but to those who need to know the presence of the Church and her leadership in a very real way.

We thank you again and we ask for your blessing and your encouragement on our work.

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