



## PRESS RELEASE

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### Immediate Release

#### **At Plenary Assembly, Commission looks ahead to pilot Annual Report, strengthening ties with the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith**

The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors gathered in Rome on October 7-11 for their fall Plenary Assembly.

In his homily at the Assembly's opening Mass on October 7, Commission President, Cardinal Seán Patrick O'Malley OFM Cap., said "Those who are hurting have a particular claim on our love. The Commission has an opportunity and obligation to make the Church a more Samaritan Church."

The weeklong meeting of 30 expert members and personnel from across five continents was the first gathering under Commission Secretary, Bishop Luis Manuel Ali Herrera, and Adjunct Secretary, Teresa Kettelkamp since their appointment by the Holy Father last Spring.

The working sessions focused on the strategic implementation of the Commission's mandate in three key areas: Local safeguarding capacity building through the growth of the [\*Memorare Initiative\*](#), the testing and review of policies in the [\*Universal Guidelines Framework\*](#) and the forthcoming release of the [\*Pilot Annual Report on Safeguarding Policies and Procedures in the Catholic Church\*](#).

The Assembly also welcomed Archbishop John Kennedy, secretary of the Disciplinary Section of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, who was joined by Father Robert Geisinger S.J., the promoter of justice, and Father Brian Taylor, an official of the dicastery.

The joint session addressed current procedures in confronting sexual abuse in the Church, as well as safeguarding guideline development. The engagement during the Plenary Assembly was an expression of the unity of efforts in the work of prevention and provided an opportunity to explore ongoing collaboration between the Dicastery and Commission.

Great attention was dedicated to the imminent launch of the *Pilot Annual Report on Safeguarding Policies and Procedures in the Catholic Church*. The goal of the Annual Report, which was [\*requested by the Holy Father in 2022\*](#), is to provide an assessment of the nature and effectiveness of safeguarding policies and procedures in the Church and offer recommendations for continuous improvement. Members also reviewed the *Instrumentum Laboris* or blueprint for the next Report covering the calendar year 2024/2025. It is hoped that the report will serve as a mechanism for sustainable and verifiable change in the Catholic Church's approach to the ministry of safeguarding.

The Commission also continued developing the *Universal Guidelines Framework*, reviewing feedback received from local churches to date and the ongoing pilot phase in collaboration with the church in Costa Rica, Zimbabwe, Poland and Tongo. The next step will be to incorporate the outcomes of the pilot into a consolidated safeguarding framework, which remains the Commission's primary strategic objective and long-term goal.

The Plenary evaluated outcomes from meetings with 13 national bishops' conferences over the past 6 months who were in Rome on Ad Limina visits. These meetings are an opportunity to learn about local safeguarding procedures and to identify those local churches that lack the necessary resources to provide adequate care.

In light of this, the Assembly assessed its safeguarding capacity building program, *Memorare Initiative* and its alignment to the reporting requirements of *Vos estis lux mundi*. The *Initiative* focuses on helping local churches to establish structures for receiving and managing complaints in a transparent and accountable manner and providing professional assistance services for people harmed by abuse. It is currently active in several national episcopal conferences and conferences of religious across Latin America, Africa and Asia with 12 more local churches in the process of establishing the program.

Lastly, Commission members were updated on several institutional meetings held during the summer months with partners in the Roman Curia including the Dicastery for Clergy, the Dicastery for Bishops, the Dicastery for Laity Family and Life and the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

"The Commission has ensured that safeguarding is and always will be a presence in the life of the Church," Cardinal O' Malley told the gathering. "While not all our goals have yet been achieved, we will continue to press for reform where we identify systemic failures. Our efforts have made a significant difference and perhaps most importantly are a sign of hope and solidarity for those who have suffered abuse and for their loved ones."

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