



PRESS RELEASE

Immediate Release

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Conclusion of the Spring 2026 Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors

- **Gratitude for Pope Leo XIV's Leadership**
- **Victim–Survivor Engagement: An essential element of Safeguarding**
- **Advancing Universal Guidelines Framework**

Rome, 20 March 2026 – The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors (PCPM) concluded its Spring 2026 Plenary Assembly in Rome after five days of intensive discussion, reflection, and planning. Bringing together Members and staff from around the world, the Assembly focused on strengthening victim/survivors (V/S) engagement, reviewing global safeguarding standards, and deepening collaboration across all levels of the Church.

The Plenary Assembly began by expressing deep gratitude to Pope Leo XIV for his leadership in reaffirming the central mission of safeguarding the dignity of every child, adolescent and vulnerable person entrusted to the Church's care.

A Plenary Focused on Safeguarding Sustainability in Challenging Times

Opening the Assembly, Pope Leo XIV encouraged and reaffirmed the Commission's mission to accompany local Churches as they strengthen safeguarding culture and structures. In his address to the Plenary Assembly Commission President H.E. Mons. Thibault VERNY emphasized the need for attentive listening, humility, and shared responsibility at a time when global conflict continues to impact children and vulnerable communities.

The Commission heard from Prof. Benyam Dawit Mezmur on safeguarding challenges and sustainability in Africa and from the Catholic Action for Children Initiative chairs Msgr. Robert Vitillo and Sr. Niluka Perera on collaborative initiatives across Catholic institutions. Members echoed the urgency of fostering an open, collaborative spirit among actors in the church and civil society.

Victim/Survivors Engagement: An essential element of Safeguarding

The Commission reviewed its trauma-informed procedures to ensure consistency and clarity across all regions and discussed ways that victim/survivors testimony can more systematically inform policy development, training, and the Annual Report. Members reiterated the Holy Father's vision that this engagement with victim/survivors and their

families is not an isolated aspect of safeguarding but the central reference point for every action.

Recent media reports on abuse are a painful reminder of the profound harm suffered by victims and survivors and of the grave failures that caused that harm within the Church. The Commission receives these realities with sorrow, with seriousness, and with a renewed commitment to listen, to accompany, and to help ensure that safeguarding, accountability, transparency, and care for those harmed remain at the heart of the Church's life. While important steps have been taken in recent years, much still remains to be done.

Advancing Universal Guidelines Framework

The Assembly dedicated substantial time to reviewing the current phase of development of the Universal Guidelines Framework. Members reflected on the long history of the Guidelines development and examined how they could be made more accessible, culturally adaptable, and spiritually rooted. The discussion underscored the importance of clear, practical language to support implementation in diverse contexts, and the need to harmonize the Guidelines before submitting the final text to the Holy Father later this year. The Commission renewed its commitment to providing guidelines that can equip local Churches with a usable tool that encourages consistent safeguarding practice grounded in both Gospel values and professional standards.

Strengthening the Memorare Initiative Worldwide

The Commission reviewed progress on the Memorare Initiative (MI), which now supports 18 local Churches across Asia/Oceania, Africa, and Latin America. Updates highlighted its growing role in strengthening local reporting systems, training personnel, strengthening networking and communication, and assessing safeguarding capacity through a structured three-step model: assessment, implementation, and evaluation. Members discussed challenges ranging from limited accountability mechanisms to resource constraints in some regions, while noting successful developments in Africa and Latin America.

Annual Report: A Growing Tool for Accountability and Accompaniment

The Commission discussed advancements in the 2025 and 2026 editions, underscoring the report's evolving role as both a global accountability tool and a mechanism for accompaniment. Regional groups shared insights into safeguarding progress and challenges, including disparities in resources, inadequate data systems, and evolving legislation. The Plenary Assembly also heard with gratitude how the Annual Report victim/survivors Focus Groups are directly informing the analysis and recommendations contained in the text. New partnerships with civil society actors are also expanding the evidence base of the Report, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research. Members noted the importance of including lived experience and data from Religious Conferences, Institutes, and relevant Dicasteries of the Roman Curia. This work aims to address growing concerns around safeguarding within religious life, where issues of power, culture, and taboo often impede reporting. The findings of the Third Annual Report reflect

the consolidation of the path towards a culture of care in the local churches and consecrated life.

Study Groups: Vulnerability and Online Abuse

The Study Group on Vulnerability presented an emerging multidisciplinary framework that explores vulnerability in relational, cultural, and institutional contexts. Members expressed strong interest in the group's forthcoming publication, noting its relevance for both canon law and pastoral practice. The Online Abuse Study Group reported progress in mapping digital risks in ecclesial contexts and sharing practical tools for local Churches for prevention, protection, and appropriate response. As underscored by Pope Leo XIV in his address to the Commission, digital safeguarding must be an urgent priority given the scale of online abuse of children and persons in vulnerable situations globally.

ENDS

For further information:

Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors

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