



PONTIFICAL COMMISSION FOR THE
PROTECTION OF MINORS

***Press Statement
For Immediate Release***

26 March 2017

The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors [PCPM] met for its eighth Plenary Assembly from March 24-26, 2017.

A central topic in this Plenary Assembly was the resignation of founding member Marie Collins. The Commission members expressed strong support for her and her continuing work to promote healing for victims of abuse and the prevention of all abuse of minors and vulnerable adults. They also expressed their particular gratitude that Marie Collins has agreed to continue working with the Commission's educational programs for new bishops and the offices of the Roman Curia.

Commission members have unanimously agreed to find new ways to ensure its work is shaped and informed with and by victims/survivors. Several ideas that have been successfully implemented elsewhere are being carefully considered for recommendation to the Holy Father.

The Commission discussed the importance of responding directly and compassionately to victims/survivors when they write to offices of the Holy See. Members agreed that acknowledging correspondence and giving a timely and personal response is one part of furthering transparency and healing. They acknowledged that this is a significant task due to the volume and nature of the correspondence and requires clear and specific resources and procedures. They have agreed to send further recommendations to Pope Francis for consideration.

This Plenary Assembly followed the Education Day on March 23, at the Gregorian University, co-sponsored in partnership with the Centre for Child Protection and the Congregation for Catholic Education. Titled "Safeguarding in schools and homes: learning from experience worldwide", it had a particular focus on Latin American countries that have large Catholic school systems, and presentations concerning efforts in Australia and Italy. The academic seminar was attended by more than 150 people. These included prefects and representatives from Vatican dicasteries including the Secretary of State Cardinal Parolin, seminary rectors, educators,

formators and authorities from Italian State Police and the Vatican gendarme who are all seen as key collaborators in the PCPM's educational efforts. The Commissioners reiterated their sincere gratitude to the invited guests and speakers: Fr Friedrich Bechina, FSO, Undersecretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education; Mónica Yerena Suárez - Provincia Marista de México Central; Fr Wilfredo Grajales Rosas, SDB – Director del Instituto Distrital para la Protección de Niños, Niñas, Adolescentes y Jóvenes, Bogotá, Colombia; Juan Ignacio Fuentes, CONSUDEC Argentina; Francis Sullivan, CEO, Truth Justice and Healing Commission, Australia and Dott. Giovanni Ippolito, Direttore Tecnico Capo Psicologo, Questura di Foggia. The speakers were also invited to address the opening session of the PCPM Plenary Assembly.

The Commission members continue the work entrusted by Pope Francis to assist local Churches with their responsibility for the protection of all minors and vulnerable adults (Statutes, art. 1). As our Holy Father wrote to the Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences and Superiors of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "I now ask for your close and complete cooperation with the Commission for the Protection of Minors. The work I have entrusted to them includes providing assistance to you and your Conferences through an exchange of best practices and through programmes of education, training, and developing adequate responses to sexual abuse" (2 February 2015). The Commission is also receiving representatives of bishop's conferences around the world who are in Rome for their Ad Limina visits.

Commissioners continue to visit episcopal conferences and local churches throughout the world to assist in policy development and implementation of best practices to create a safer environment. So far this year, these include workshops with the Church leadership, formators, catechists and child protection officers in Zambia and Colombia. Members are currently preparing to present to the first European Conference on Formation and Prevention in Seminaries co-organized by the Archdiocese of Florence and the Centre for Child Protection of the Gregorian University, and the upcoming meeting of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences in Bangkok, Thailand this Spring, and the May meeting of the Directors of CELAM and the Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences of Latin America and the Caribbean Islands.

An essential element of these presentations is the PCPM Guidelines template. The Holy Father wrote, "every effort must also be made to ensure that the provisions of the Circular Letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith dated 3 May 2011 are fully implemented" (2 February 2015). Thus, at the plenary meeting, the members spoke again of their willingness to work together with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith communicating a "[Guidelines Template](#)" to episcopal conferences and religious congregations, both directly and through the Commission [Website](http://www.protectionofminors.va) (www.protectionofminors.va).