

Pope: Church's efforts to safeguard minors must not wane

By Devin Watkins

As the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors holds its plenary assembly, Pope Francis took the opportunity to invite its members to continue strengthening the Church's efforts to prevent abuse. The Pope thanked the Commission's members for their personal and collective witness and acknowledged that many of them have dedicated their lives to caring for victims of abuse.

He called their work "a courageous vocation that comes from the heart of the Church and helps her to be purified and to grow." The Pontifical Commission, he added, has expanded its efforts over the past 10 years in response to his call to "make the Church an increasingly safe place for minors and vulnerable adults."

Healing fabric of lives

Pope Francis admitted that those who work in the safeguarding field could grow discouraged as they witness "the scandal of abuse and the suffering of victims". Yet, he said, "our commitment must not wane" as the Church seeks to restore the fabric of broken lives and heal victims' pain. Their work, he said, seeks to make the Church become, "always and everywhere, a place where everyone can feel at home and each person is treated as sacred."

Listening to voices of victims

The Pope went on to say that closeness to victims is not an abstract concept but "a very concrete reality, comprised of listening, intervening, preventing, and assisting." He encouraged the Commission's members, and all Church authorities, to acknowledge the suffering caused by abuse and listen directly to the voices of victims.

Creating network of solidarity

Pope Francis invited the Commission to carry out their work in respect for victims, while making visible the Church's closeness through their efforts to implement best practices to safeguard minors. He expressed support for the Memorare initiative, which aims to assist local Churches worldwide in training and strengthening the prevention and safeguarding capacities for children and vulnerable adults. The Memorare initiative, he added, "will create a network of solidarity with victims and those who promote their rights, especially where resources and experience are limited."

Church's commitment to compassionate care

In conclusion, the Pope thanked the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors for its annual safeguarding report, saying it keeps the Church moving in the right direction. The Protection Commission's service, he concluded, helps the Church "continue to be fully committed to the prevention of abuse, its firm condemnation, the provision of

compassionate care for victims and ongoing commitment to being a welcoming and safe place.”

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2024-03/pope-francis-protection-minors-commission-plenary-safeguarding.html>