

# MEDIA RELEASE



## Pope's Child Sexual Abuse Commission Meets for First Time in Rome

4 May 2014

The Pontifical Commission advising Pope Francis on the protection of children in the Catholic Church has called for Bishops to be held accountable if they fail to report suspected sexual abuse or to protect children from paedophile priests.

Reports from Rome of the inaugural meeting of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors are quoting Commission member, Cardinal Sean O'Malley from the US, saying a person's rank in the Church should not be cause for special treatment or protection.

"Our concern is to make sure that there are clear and effective protocols to deal with superiors in the Church who have not fulfilled their obligations to protect children," he said.

CEO of the Truth Justice and Healing Council, Francis Sullivan, has welcomed the reports saying everyone in the Church needs to be accountable for the protection of Children.

"From the very top down we all have a role to play in doing everything we can to ensure children in the care of the Church are safe and secure and protected from the evils of abuse of any kind," he said.

The inaugural meeting of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors was held in Rome this weekend.

Mr Sullivan said the meeting also discussed the Pontifical Commission's role and mandate and how it would be expanded to gain input from more countries.

"The first meeting of this group is a very important step forward in the Vatican's commitment to addressing the tragedy of child sexual abuse within the Catholic Church," Mr Sullivan said.

"The meeting also discussed ways to include additional representatives and input from other parts of the world. It is important the Pope and the Pontifical Commission receives the widest possible input from all sources and from all places around the world.

"For the Pontifical Commission to be truly effective it needs a very clear understanding of what has happened world-wide, how the Church responded both at the time of the abuse and now and what the Church now has in place to protect children and to look after survivors," Mr Sullivan said.

When the Pontifical Commission was announced in December last year it was tasked with looking at programs to educate pastoral workers to identify signs of abuse, identify means of psychological testing and other ways of screening candidates for the priesthood, and make recommendations regarding church officials' cooperation with civil authorities on reporting suspected abuse.

Statement from the Pontifical Commission meeting can be read here:

<http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2014/05/03/0320/00706.html>

The Truth Justice and Healing Council is coordinating the Church's response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

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