



HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE

24 February 2019

MEETING ON “THE PROTECTION OF MINORS IN THE CHURCH”

(21-24 february 2019)

STATEMENT

BY FR. FEDERICO LOMBARDI, S.I.

MODERATOR OF THE MEETING

We have heard the voices of the victims of the terrible crimes of sexual abuse against minors committed by members of the clergy. We sincerely ask them for forgiveness, as we do also of all our brothers and sisters, for what we did wrong and for what we failed to do.

We will return to our dioceses and communities in various parts of the world with a deeper understanding of this terrible scandal and the wounds it has caused on the victims and on the entire people of God. We recall what St. John Paul II said already in 2002, words that are still very current and express our commitment: “People need to know that there is no place in the priesthood and religious life for those who would harm the young.” We want that absolutely all pastoral activities of the Catholic Church wherever they take place be completely safe for minors out of respect for their dignity and their human and spiritual growth.

Responsibility, accountability, transparency are the words that have resonated during these days in which we have prayed, reflected and shared our experiences under the guidance of the Holy Father, Francis, and that we are committed to translating into concrete action. The collegial spirit and synodal journey of the ecclesial community will give us the support and encouragement needed to continue to overcome the tendency to hide things and to favor the institution over the persons it must serve. In this way, we can achieve spiritual and structural renewal necessary to root out from the Church every form of abuse, not only sexual, but also of power and conscience.

We are confident that from this Meeting concrete initiatives will soon follow. Among them:

A new *Motu Proprio* from the Pope “on the protection of minors and vulnerable persons”, to strengthen prevention and the fight against abuse on the part of the Roman Curia and Vatican City State. This document will accompany a new law of Vatican City State and Guidelines for the Vicariate of Vatican City on the same subject.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith will publish a *Vademecum* that will help bishops around the world clearly understand their duties and tasks.

In addition, in a spirit of communion with the universal Church, the Pope has expressed the intention of creating *task forces* of competent persons to help episcopal conferences and dioceses that find it difficult to confront the problems and produce initiatives for the protection of minors.

On Monday, 25 February, the Organizing Committee will meet with the heads of the Roman Curia who participated in this Meeting in order to ascertain as of now the follow-up work necessary to the proposals and the ideas decided upon during these days, as desired by the Holy Father.

These first steps are encouraging signs that will accompany us in our mission of preaching the Gospel and of serving all children throughout the world, in mutual solidarity with all people of goodwill who want to abolish every form of violence and abuse against minors.
