

Cardinal Seán O'Malley OFM. Cap., President, on the Appointment by Pope Francis of Members of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors

Today's announcement by the Holy Father, Pope Francis, of members of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors marks a further step in making our Church an ever-safer place for children and vulnerable persons. I congratulate the new members and those who have been reappointed and thank them for their willingness to serve.

Coming from all over the world with varied backgrounds and a common passion for the well-being of children and vulnerable people, the members announced today include advocates and practitioners of prevention and protection to the many areas in which the Church ministers to children. The Holy Father has appointed ten new members to the Commission, seven women and three men. They are joined by nine members who have been reappointed plus one member who was appointed to a three-year term last year.

Half of the members of the Commission are men and half are women. 6 members come from Asia/Oceania and 6 from Europe with 4 from the Americas and 4 from Africa. There are three bishops, three religious sisters and two priests that join 10 members of the lay faithful and two members of other Christian Churches.

Commission members includes representatives from canon law, social work, the medical and psychological professions, law enforcement and the judiciary as well as pastoral experts who currently work in dioceses and religious congregations. They have all spent significant amounts of their professional lives listening to and supporting victim/survivors of sexual abuse by clergy and church personnel.

In his recent address to the Commission, Pope Francis affirmed its independence as it works ever more closely with the Dicastery of the Doctrine of the Faith, informing the work of the Dicastery, the Curia and vice-versa.

The Holy Father also asked that an Annual Reporting system be established on efforts in prevention and safeguarding so that gaps can be identified, improvements made, and that progress can be tracked. The Commission members appointed today are a sure sign that the mandate of prevention and protection laid out by the Holy Father in the Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium* will extend through all parts of the Church.

Together with the Commission Secretary, Fr. Andrew Small, OMI, I look forward to working with all our members and the entire Church in fostering the changes necessary at the level of the Roman Curia, Bishops Conferences and within Religious Life in a way that will make our Church a credible advocate for the dignity of children throughout the world.

Policies are of little use unless they are put into practice, guidelines are ineffective unless there is robust training for and by those responsible for their implementation. And none of this will add up to a credible prevention mechanism unless there is transparency in reporting with consequences for failings. That is the future that Pope Francis has requested his Commission to help bring about, and I look forward to shepherding those efforts.

And finally, I offer a word of special thanks to those who are concluding their service with the Commission. Your contribution and your dedication to the Church's work of child protection is very much appreciated. We owe you a debt of gratitude and trust that the work of prevention, healing and justice will continue in your future endeavors.

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