



The Holy See

**VIDEO MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS
FOR THE MEETING "OUR COMMON MISSION OF SAFEGUARDING GOD'S CHILDREN"
ORGANISED BY THE PONTIFICAL COMMISSION FOR THE PROTECTION OF MINORS
AND THE BISHOPS' CONFERENCES OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE
[Warsaw, Poland, 19-22 September 2021]**

[Multimedia]

Dear brothers and sisters, I am happy to welcome you now that you are gathered together to reflect on the response that the Church is now providing to the crisis of the sexual abuse of minors by members of the Church, and on the ways in which it might more adequately respond to this serious issue that we are facing.

In speaking to the leaders of the Episcopal Conferences from throughout the world, gathered in Rome in February 2019, I expressed my encouragement so that they might assure the wellbeing of victims might not be sidelined in favor of the misguided concern for the reputation of the institutional Church. Rather, only by facing the truth of these evil practices and of humbly seeking pardon from victims and survivors will the Church find its way to a place where it can be relied upon once again as a place of welcome and safety for those in need. Our expressions of sorrow must be converted into concrete pathways of reform to both prevent further abuse and to give confidence to others that our efforts will bring about real and reliable change.

I encourage you to listen to the cry of the victims and to dedicate yourselves, with each other and with society in a broader sense, in these important discussions because they truly touch the future of the Church in Central and Eastern Europe – not only the Church's future, but the hearts of Christians as well. This is our responsibility.

You are not the first to have had the responsibility to undertake these steps, which are necessary, and it is probable that you will not be the last. But know that you are not alone in these difficult times.

The recognition of our errors and our failings can certainly make us feel vulnerable and fragile. But it can also present a moment of splendid grace, a moment of self-emptying, that opens new horizons of love and reciprocal service. If we recognize our mistakes, we have nothing to fear, because it will be the Lord himself who will have led us to that point.

With malice toward none and charity toward all, I urge you to be humble instruments of the Lord, at the service of the victims of abuse, considering them as companions and protagonists of a common future, learning from each other and become more faithful and resilient so that, together, we might face the challenges of the future. May the Lord bless you, may the Madonna protect you, and please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.

Bulletin of the Holy See Press Office, 18 September 2021.