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The organizing committee for the meeting for the protection of minors in the Church, to be held in the Vatican from 21 to 24 February, 2019, has made steady progress in preparations for the gathering. A letter sent today regarding those preparations exhorts all participants to follow the example of Pope Francis and meet in person with victim survivors before the Rome summit.

“The first step must be acknowledging the truth of what has happened,” the letter says. “For this reason, we urge each episcopal conference president to reach out and visit with victim survivors of clergy sex abuse in your respective countries prior to the meeting in Rome, to learn first-hand the suffering that they have endured.”

Such personal encounters are a concrete way of ensuring that victim survivors of clerical abuse are first and foremost in the minds of all at the February gathering as they come together “in solidarity, humility, and penitence” to move forward in addressing the abuse crisis.

In addition, the letter includes a brief request for information to be used for internal preparation for the meeting. The meeting will focus on three main themes of responsibility, accountability, and transparency as participants work together to respond to this grave challenge.