

Pope Francis Rallies Catholic Clergy to Root Out Scourge of Child Abuse



Vatican City, February 6 (RHC)-- Pope Francis has warned Catholic clergy against trying to cover up sexual abuse, urging it to cooperate with a new Church panel aimed at protecting children in the face of possible sex offences.

"Families need to know that the Church is making every effort to protect their children," the pontiff said in a strongly-worded letter to the heads of national bishops' conferences and religious orders on Thursday.

The letter came as the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors is set to meet for the first time on Friday at the Vatican to drive reforms on the sexual scandals of the Catholic clerics which have caused severe damage to the Church's authority and reputation around the world.

"Priority must not be given to any other kind of concern, whatever its nature, such as the desire to avoid scandal, since there is absolutely no place in ministry for those who abuse minors," said the pope.

Last month, 10 priests and two Catholic lay workers were charged with the sexual abuse of altar boys between 2004 and 2007 in the Spanish city of Granada. In the case, the biggest of its kind yet in Spain,

the Church was accused of covering up the sex scandals.

The Roman Catholic Church has been hit by numerous scandals all over the world in the past few years, including allegations of covering up the sexual abuse of children by priests, to protect pedophiles as well as its own reputation. Rights groups have lashed out at the Vatican for its handling of Catholic priests' child sex abuse cases.

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