

ADVISORY

To: Credentialed Media for Visit of Pope Francis to the United States
From: USCCB Office of Public Affairs
Re: Information on pope's meeting with victims of sexual abuse
Date: September 27, 2015

PHILADELPHIA—Father Federico Lombardi SJ, director of the Press Office of the Holy See, on the Pope's meeting with victims of sexual abuse:

This morning between 8 and 9 a.m., at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, Pope Francis received five adults —three women, two men — who experienced sexual abuse as a minor by clergy, family members or teachers. Each was accompanied by a family member or support person. The group was accompanied by Cardinal Seán Patrick O'Malley, Archbishop of Boston and chairman of the commission set up by the Pope for the protection of minors, Archbishop Charles Chaput and Bishop Fitzgerald, head of the Philadelphia Archdiocese's commission for the protection of minors. The Pope spoke with visitors, listened to their stories, greeted them individually and prayed with them. He told them that he shared in their suffering, and he had pain and shame in particular in the case of injury caused by clergy or church workers. He renewed the commitment of the Church to the effort that all victims are heard and treated with justice, that the guilty be punished and that the crimes of abuse be combated with an effective prevention activity in the Church and in society. The Pope thanked the victims for their essential contribution to restore the truth and begin the journey of healing. The meeting lasted about half an hour and ended with the blessing of the Holy Father.

Addressing bishops at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary following the meeting with victims, Pope Francis said in Spanish:

“I hold the stories and the suffering and the sorry of children who were sexually abused by priests deep in my heart. I remain overwhelmed with shame that men entrusted with the tender care of children violated these little ones and caused grievous harm. I am profoundly sorry. God weeps.

“The crimes and sins of the sexual abuse of children must no longer be held in secret. I pledge the zealous vigilance of the church to protect children and the promise of accountability for all.

“The survivors of abuse have become true heralds of hope and ministers of mercy. We humbly owe each one of them and their families our gratitude for their immense courage to shine the light of Christ on the evil of the sexual abuse of children.”

Pope Francis' remarks to the victims themselves are available online:
www.usccb.org/about/leadership/holy-see/francis/papal-visit-2015/media-resources/upload/papal-visit-2015-meeting-with-survivors.pdf

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