Vatican
Vatican News
An older white man wears a brown robe and a wooden pectoral cross as he stands between t

Jesuit Fr. Jerry McGlone, second from right, is seen with Jennifer Wortham, far left, and Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley of Boston, president of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, in prayer during a sunrise walk to end abuse Nov. 18, 2021, outside the hotel in Baltimore where the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops held its fall general assembly Nov. 15-18. (CNS photo/Bob Roller)

Carol Glatz

View Author Profile

Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Vatican City — April 24, 2023
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

The heads of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors and a section of the Dicastery for Evangelization have signed a memorandum of understanding aimed at improving assistance to victims of abuse, bishops and local churches both in mission countries and emerging communities.

U.S. Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley of Boston, president of the commission, and Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, pro-prefect for "the first evangelization and the new particular churches" section of the dicastery signed the agreement of collaboration at the Vatican April 21.

The enhanced collaboration will include sharing resources, information and formation and "promoting concrete structural change to build a culture of safeguarding," according to Vatican News April 21.

O'Malley, who spent many years as "a missionary bishop" when he ministered in the U.S. Virgin Islands, told Vatican News he understands what it is like to run a diocese with very limited resources.

The commission, he said, hopes to work with the dioceses that are under the dicastery's purview and "help them to be able to develop programs, to be able to receive victims" in ways that also offer needed pastoral outreach and care, not just the correct "juridical practices," and to help them in safeguarding and prevention so that "our churches and schools and communities will be safe places for children and young people."

The Dicastery for Evangelization has contact with so many dioceses, he said. "I think half of the ecclesiastical jurisdictions in the world come under the pastoral care of this dicastery."

And the dicastery has "a very broad mandate" that includes overseeing seminaries and religious men and women, "so we would help them with that" and many other things, he said.

Advertisement

"We also will be working with the bishops' conferences when they do their 'ad limina' visits to make sure that part of the quinquennial report will be about safeguarding and what have been the challenges and the successes, and give them an opportunity to come and talk about that here" at the Vatican, O'Malley said.

Tagle told Vatican News that the new collaboration is "a welcome development."

In the spirit of synodality and reform of the Roman Curia, he said, the different offices in the Curia "are asked to work together in an interdicasterial manner so that we could learn from each other. We could provide information and then also support each other."

"The other thing is we can offer, we can open to the commission the many so-called ecclesial spaces that the dicastery has been handling," Tagle said, "especially in the area of formation" of bishops, clergy, seminarians and religious.

"At the same time," he added, the papal commission "could assist the dicastery and the episcopal conferences in understanding better … the impact on human lives and on communities of abuse, abusive behavior."

O'Malley said, according to Pope Francis' new mandate, the papal commission's new role is "to promote a culture of safeguarding in all the dicasteries of the Curia. The agreement with the Dicastery for Evangelization is just the first step of building that culture and "we'll be working with other dicasteries in a similar fashion."