Vatican
Vatican News



Pope Leo XIV greets Archbishop Thibault Verny of Chambéry, France, during a meeting at the Vatican June 5, 2025. The pope appointed Verny president of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, succeeding U.S. Cardinal Seán O'Malley. (CNS/Vatican Media)

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 — July 7, 2025
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Pope Leo XIV's appointment of the new president of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors shows that safeguarding remains a top priority, its former president said.

"Our Holy Father Pope Leo XIV has affirmed the continued priority of the commission's work for the universal church in his thoughtful appointment" of Archbishop Thibault Verny of Chambéry, France, as the new president of the commission, said Cardinal Seán O'Malley.

"The Holy Father's words and deeds in these early months of his pontificate assure the world that the church will not grow complacent in her efforts to as best possible ensure the protection of children, vulnerable adults, and all people in our communities," he said in a written statement released July 5, the day the Vatican announced the new appointment.

Verny, 58, has served as a member of the papal commission since 2022.

"In addition to important contributions to the work of the commission, the archbishop has years of in-depth experience working with law enforcement, other civil authorities, and church leadership to ensure accountability for the serious failures of the church in France," where he served as auxiliary bishop of Paris before joining the commission, O'Malley wrote.

"He has been at the forefront in seeking healing and reconciliation with survivors," the cardinal said, and he "played an important role in the development and implementation of substantive policies and procedures, with cultural specificity, for the prevention of any recurrence of abuse."

"With deep humility and profound gratitude, I thank the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, for my appointment," Verny said in a written statement.

"I am honoured by the trust he has placed in me, fully aware of the grave and sacred task entrusted to the commission: to help the church become ever more vigilant,

accountable, and compassionate in her mission to protect the most vulnerable among us," he wrote.

Advertisement

Protecting minors and vulnerable adults entails a journey of "conversion that we are all on together. As Pope Francis always reminded us, only under this condition can the Gospel truly be heard and believed," the archbishop wrote.

Verny thanked O'Malley, 81, who served the commission from its inception by Pope Francis in 2014, and who retired from leading the Archdiocese of Boston in August 2024 after he turned 80.

O’Malley displayed "courageous and prophetic leadership," which has "left an indelible mark not only on the church but on society at large," the archbishop wrote.

"In times of profound difficulty, Cardinal O'Malley has been a moral compass for the faithful and for people of goodwill everywhere," always upholding the importance of listening to survivors of abuse and "giving them space to be heard, believed, and accompanied in their search for truth, justice, healing, and meaningful institutional reform," he wrote.

"As I continue my work with the commission, I am committed, together with the members and personnel, to building on that legacy," Verny wrote. "Our priorities will focus on supporting churches, especially those still struggling to implement adequate safeguarding measures."

"We will promote subsidiarity and the equitable sharing of resources so that all parts of the church, regardless of geography or circumstance, can uphold the highest standards of protection," the new president wrote.

The commission's work will continue to emphasize listening to local communities "with humility, with respect and with cultural intelligence," he wrote in a statement on the commission's website. "We cannot impose safeguarding models in places we do not understand."

Addressing difficult and often taboo topics within local traditions will be important, he said, noting that "effective safeguarding cannot avoid hard conversations."

The papal commission was established after Francis accepted a proposal to set one up to advise him on ways to prevent abuse and to be a resource for the local church regarding best practices for safeguarding and the pastoral care of victims and their families.

The proposal came out of Francis' advisory Council of Cardinals, of which O'Malley has been a member since it was established in 2013.

The papal commission has 18 members, including its secretary, Colombian Bishop Luis Manuel Alí Herrera, and adjunct secretary, Teresa Kettelkamp, who served as executive director of the U.S. bishops' Office of Child and Youth Protection from 2005 to 2011.