Vatican

Vatican News



Pope Leo XIV is seen in a video clip meeting with members of the board of Ending Clergy Abuse, a coalition of survivors and human rights advocates working to end clergy abuse, enforce accountability and promote justice and truth, during an audience in the library of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican Oct. 20, 2025. Also present is Pedro Salinas, a Peruvian journalist and abuse survivor. (CNS/screengrab from Vatican Media video)

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Pope Leo XIV met with a coalition of survivors of abuse and victims' advocates for the first time at the Vatican Oct. 20.

Members of the board of Ending Clergy Abuse met with the pope for about an hour in a closed-door meeting that was later confirmed by the Vatican.

"This was a deeply meaningful conversation," Gemma Hickey, Ending Clergy Abuse board president and survivor of clergy abuse in Canada, said in a press release. "It reflects a shared commitment to justice, healing and real change."

"Survivors have long sought a seat at the table, and today we felt heard," Hickey said in the statement.

"Pope Leo is very warm, he listened," Hickey said at a news conference, according to Reuters. "We told him that we come as bridge-builders, ready to walk together toward truth, justice and healing."

While the group of six people representing Ending Clergy Abuse met with the pope, video clips from the Vatican also showed a separate meeting between Leo and Pedro Salinas, a Peruvian journalist and abuse survivor.

Salinas, a former member of Sodalitium Christianae Vitae who suffered physical and psychological abuse by the movement's founder, Luis Fernando Figari, is seen in the footage giving the pope a copy of his new book, *The Truth Sets Us Free*, in Spanish.

The book recounts his attempts to bring to light the truth about the movement, which was eventually suppressed.



Pope Leo XIV is seen in a video clip greeting Pedro Salinas, a Peruvian journalist and abuse survivor, during an audience in the library of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican Oct. 20, 2025. (CNS/screengrab from Vatican Media video)

The international coalition of survivors and human rights advocates works to end clergy abuse, enforce accountability and promote justice and truth, according to its website, ecaglobal.org.

The group's major initiative is a "zero tolerance" policy that would mandate: church personnel to report abuse to civil authorities; immediately remove accused clergy pending investigations and provide victims with access to information and files related to their cases.

Ending Clergy Abuse members shared the Zero Tolerance Initiative with the pope during the meeting, "emphasizing the importance of consistent global standards, survivor-centered policies," the press release said.

Tim Law, Ending Clergy Abuse co-founder and a board member from the United States, said during a news conference after the meeting that Leo acknowledged "there was great resistance" to the idea of a universal zero-tolerance law, according to The Associated Press.

However, Law said he told the pope the coalition wanted to work with him and the Vatican to help the idea gain traction, the AP reported.

"Our goal is not confrontation, but accountability, transparency, and a willingness to walk together toward solutions," Law said in the press release. "The Church has a moral responsibility to support survivors and prevent future harm."

Janet Aguti, Ending Clergy Abuse board vice president, said in a statement, "We came not only to raise our concerns, but also to explore how we might work together to ensure the protection of children and vulnerable adults around the world," adding that collaboration is possible "and necessary."

"I left the meeting with hope," Aguti, a Ugandan survivor, said at the news conference, according to Reuters. "It is a big step for us."

Matthias Katsch, a co-founder and board member from Germany, said at the news conference that the pope seems to still be "in a phase where he is trying to find out how to best address these issues," Reuters reported. "The times where a pope is saying one sentence and everything is settled is over."

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The meeting came after the Ending Clergy Abuse sent a letter to Leo after his election in early May. "In a gesture of openness, Pope Leo XIV responded positively, welcoming the opportunity for a direct and respectful conversation about the path forward," the group said in its press release.

The six board members attending the meeting also noted "the emotional significance of the dialogue," the statement said.

"The board concluded the meeting by emphasizing the urgent need for continued dialogue, compassion, and collaborative action to build a future where safety, accountability, and dignity are not only upheld but where the voices of survivors

lead the way," it said.

When he served as bishop of Chiclayo in Peru, Leo, who is a canon lawyer, had set up a commission to deal with abuse cases in his diocese.

He had told the Peruvian newspaper, La República, in 2019 that, "We reject cover-ups and secrecy" because they "cause a lot of harm."

"We have to help people who have suffered due to wrongdoing," he had told the paper.

Pope Francis and Pope Benedict XVI had also met with abuse victims during their pontificates.

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