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Vatican to brief bishops on abuse

by Francis X. Rocca by Religion News Service

VATICAN CITY -- The Vatican will use online education and other methods to help the world's Catholic bishops and the heads of religious orders deal with clerical sex abuse of minors.

Rome's Pontifical Gregorian University will host a Vatican-sponsored symposium on pedophilia next February, the Italian news agency ANSA reported on Monday.

The symposium will reportedly feature a workshop led by the developers of Virtus, which its makers describe as a "state-of-the-art, web-based platform" that provides "best practices programs designed to help prevent wrongdoing and promote 'rightdoing' within religious organizations."

The product was developed by the National Catholic Risk Retention Group Inc., an Illinois-based company that offers "cost-effective excess liability programs" to Catholic institutions in the U.S.

Monsignor Charles J. Scicluna, the Vatican's chief abuse investigator, and the Rev. Federico Lombardi, director of the Holy See Press Office, are expected to offer more information about the symposium on Saturday.

On May 16, the Vatican gave national bishops conferences one year to prepare "guidelines" on preventing abuse, caring for victims, disciplining abusive priests, and reporting suspected abuse to local police. The guidelines may vary significantly by country, and will not be binding on individual bishops.

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