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Pope meets abuse victims in Germany

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NCR Today

On day two of his Sept. 22-25 trip to Germany, Pope Benedict XVI met a small group of victims of clerical sexual abuse. It was the pope's sixth such meeting, after encountering victims during previous trips to the United States, Australia, Malta and the United Kingdom, as well as a meeting with Canadian "first nations" victims in Rome.

The following is a Vatican statement released after the meeting, as well as a release from the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests in response to the meeting.

Vatican Press Statement

This evening, in the seminary at Erfurt, Pope Benedict XVI met with a group of victims of sexual abuse committed by priests and church personnel. Subsequently he greeted some people who care for those injured by these crimes.

Moved and deeply shaken by the sufferings of the victims, the Holy Father expressed his deep compassion and regret over all that was done to them and their families. He assured the people present that those in positions of responsibility in the Church are seriously concerned to deal with all crimes of abuse and are committed to the promotion of effective measures for the protection of children and young people. Pope Benedict XVI is close to the victims and he expresses the hope that the merciful God, Creator and Redeemer of all mankind, may heal the wounds of the victims and grant them inner peace.

tFrom the Vatican, 23 September 2011.

SNAP Statement

Statement by Emmanuel Henckens of Belgium, member of SNAP, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests:

The Pope's visit will make a handful of wounded individuals feel better for a while. We applaud the victims for having the courage and compassion to try and make a difference.

But the pope's meeting will do nothing to stop priests from molesting kids or bishops from concealing crimes.

The meeting will be one more nice but ultimately meaningless gesture from a man who could easily protect kids but refuses to do so, and who acts like "God's Rottweiler" with dissident theologians but a calm pussycat with complicit bishops and predatory clerics.

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