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Meeting on “The Protection of Minors in the Church” – Inaugural introduction of the Holy Father Francis

At 9.00 this morning, the meeting on “The Protection of Minors in the Church” was inaugurated. It is taking place in the Vatican’s New Synod Hall until 24 February 2019, and will be chaired by the Holy Father Francis.

The meeting is attended by the presidents of the Episcopal Conferences of the Catholic Church, the heads of the Oriental Catholic Churches, representatives of the Union of Superiors General and the International Union of Superiors General, and members of the Roman Curia and of the Council of Cardinals.

After the initial prayer, the Holy Father gave his address, followed by the screening of a video, reports by His Eminence Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle and H.E. Msgr. Charles Jude Scicluna, and the group works.

The following is the Pope’s introduction at the inauguration of the works:

Introduction of the Holy Father

Dear Brothers, good morning!

In light of the scourge of sexual abuse perpetrated by ecclesiastics to the great harm of minors, I wanted to consult you, Patriarchs, Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, and Religious Superiors and Leaders, so that together we might listen to the Holy Spirit and, in docility to his guidance, hear the cry of the little ones who plead for justice. In this meeting, we sense the weight of the pastoral and ecclesial responsibility that obliges us to discuss together, in a synodal, frank and in-depth manner, how to confront this evil afflicting the Church and humanity. The holy People of God looks to us, and expects from us not simple and predictable condemnations, but concrete and effective measures to be undertaken. We need to be concrete.

So we begin this process armed with faith and a spirit of great *parrhesia*, courage and concreteness.

As a help, I would share with you some important criteria formulated by the various Episcopal Commissions and Conferences – they came from you and I have organized them somewhat. They are guidelines to assist in our reflection, and they will now be distributed to you. They are a simple point of departure that came from you and now return to you. They are not meant to detract from the creativity needed in this meeting.

In your name, I would also like to thank the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the members of the Organizing Committee for their outstanding and dedicated work in preparing for this meeting. Many thanks!

Finally, I ask the Holy Spirit to sustain us throughout these days, and to help us to turn this evil into an opportunity for awareness and purification. May the Virgin Mary enlighten us as we seek to heal the grave wounds that the scandal of paedophilia has caused, both in the little ones and in believers. Thank you.
