



PRESS RELEASE

Vatican City, March 15, 2024.

**Statement by Cardinal Seán O'Malley OFM. Cap.,
President, Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors on the
Appointment by Pope Francis of Secretary and Adjunct Secretary of the
Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors**

Today's announcement by the Holy Father, Pope Francis, of the appointment a Secretary and an Adjunct Secretary of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors marks a further important step in making our Church an ever-safer place for children and vulnerable persons. I thank Bishop Ali Herrera and Ms. Teresa Morris-Kettelkamp for their willingness to serve the Holy Father and the Church at this important time in the life of the Commission.

Coming from different backgrounds and possessing unique gifts in safeguarding, Bishop Ali and Teresa share a common passion for the well-being of children and vulnerable people, with lifetimes of service to the Church in this important area. They bring both stability to the Commission's agenda and a high degree of professionalism to their new roles.

Bishop Ali is currently the longest serving member of the Commission and has been an advocate for child protection in Latin America for many years. As Secretary General of the Bishops' Conference in his native Colombia, he recently oversaw the finalization of updated national guidelines. After a career in law enforcement at the highest levels, Teresa ran one of the largest national safeguarding offices in the Church in the United States.

As Members of the Commission for many years, they reflect a strong focus on continuity of the work and agenda of the Commission since its expansion in 2022. They are well known among the community of safeguarding professionals, and I am confident they will bring a team-based approach to our common work since the Commission was formally incorporated into the Roman Curia by the Holy Father in the Apostolic Constitution, *Praedicate Evangelium*.

A huge debt of thanks is owed to Fr. Andrew Small, OMI, our outgoing Secretary, who was appointed in 2021 to help the Commission realign itself as it became part of the Roman Curia with a new and challenging mandate. With vision and tenacity, Fr. Small has helped realize several important initiatives that the Commission has embraced. Additional staff and new offices have allowed the Commission to expand its welcome and outreach to victims and survivors, their families and communities as well as church leadership which has greatly impacted access to information about safeguarding at a local level.

Evidence of this was visible at the Commission's most recent Plenary with the presentation of the *Pilot Annual Report on Safeguarding Policies and Procedures in the Church* and the updated Universal Guidelines Framework, two key instruments for our work moving forward.

I have known Fr. Andrew for some twenty years. Following the terrible earthquake that struck Haiti in 2011, Fr. Andrew helped establish a new and accountable form of solidarity with the Church in Haiti that has helped rebuild the Church in that country over the past ten years. He has brought similar energy and ingenuity to the work of Commission, particularly through the establishment of the Memorare Initiative which provides capacity building in safeguarding to poorer parts of the Church, and which received encouragement from our Holy Father in his address to the Commission last week. Many people will benefit from his efforts for years to come and for which we are grateful.

In his recent address to the Commission, Pope Francis affirmed the expanded mandate and the direction of the Commission. With today's announcement, the Commission continues on this path of making safeguarding a stable part of every aspect of the Church's life and ministry.