



Press Release - English

Unique Worldwide Education Initiative Against Sexual Abuse of Minors. Letter of appreciation from Pope Francis Catholic Church Takes Responsibility: Successful Graduation of International Experts in Safeguarding of Minors

- Graduation ceremony and presentation of the final papers of the students at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Piazza della Pilotta, 00187 Rome, on June 14th, 2016 at 10:30 am
- 19 Graduates of the new Diploma of Advanced Studies "Safeguarding of Minors" of the Centre for Child Protection from the Pontifical Gregorian University successfully finish their degree
- Renowned international guests will join the graduation ceremony: Annette Schavan (Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany at the Holy See), Johannes-Wilhelm Rörig (Independent Representative of the Federal Republic of Germany for Sexual Abuse of Minors), Father Fernando Domingues MCCJ (Secretary General of the Pontifical Society of St. Peter the Apostle)
- An enrolment is requested at: <u>p.pegoraro@unigre.it</u>

Rome, June 14, 2016 –An official graduation ceremony will honor the first class of the Diploma of Advanced Studies "Safeguarding of Minors" at the Pontifical Gregorian University on June 14th, 2016, at 10:30 AM. The one-term qualification programme educates international students as prevention experts to counteract sexual abuse of minors. This unique worldwide initiative was started as a part of the proactive prevention strategy of the Catholic Church in February 2016.

Pope Francis wrote a personal letter to the president of the Centre for Child Protection (CCP), expressing his gratitude to the professors and graduates of the course: "First of all I want to thank you and your entire faculty for this commitment to the prevention of sexual abuse of minors. You have undertaken great efforts for the prevention and healing of minors who have been sexually abused. I extend my greetings to those who complete the programme. I wish you courage and patience; be brave and committed. I assure you that you will receive many signs of gratitude. I pray for you and I ask you to do the same for me."

The CCP of the Pontifical Gregorian University awards the diploma. The CCP is an institution of the Catholic Church advocating safeguarding measures and protection for minors and people in need around the world.

Cardinal Filoni, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, also commends the initiative of the CCP: "The prevention of sexual abuse of minors is a priority for the entire Church. In a special way we want to put our efforts into the young Churches, in order that everything possible is being done to counter this sad phenomenon in schools, kindergartens, universities and parishes. For this reason the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples is very pleased to support the educational and scientific efforts of the Centre for Child Protection."



With regard to its international approach, the academic vice-rector of the Pontifical Gregorian University and president of the CCP, Father Hans Zollner SJ, noted: "Our graduates originate from 15 countries and four continents. Among many of these countries child protection is underestimated. Especially in these countries we need well-educated prevention experts within Church and society to improve the protection of minors."

The diploma course for safeguarding includes six modules, which are delivered using an interdisciplinary and interactive method. Professors of the CCP and the Pontifical Gregorian University as well as renowned visiting scholars teach a variety of topics. In these modules, students coming from both ecclesial and secular realities learn to recognize evidence for sexual abuse, to set up prevention measures, and to deal with victims of abuse. The programme was coordinated and taught by Prof. Dr. Karlijn Demasure, executive director of the CCP, and Dr. Katharina A. Fuchs.

"Since 2010 the Catholic Church in Germany has been speaking out against sexual abuse of minors and has already started an impressive variety of advanced education strategies. I am delighted that the Catholic Church is now proactive in an international context to better protect minors", asserted Johannes-Wilhelm Rörig, the German Representative of Abuse Victims, commenting on the efforts of the Church.

The diploma course in advanced studies started in February 2016 and will be offered once a year. Every graduation class will consist of 18-20 students. Applications for the diploma course 2017 can be submitted until June 30th, 2016. More information is available at http://childprotection.unigre.it

The Centre for Child Protection (CCP) of the Institute of Psychology of the Pontifical Gregorian University was founded in January 2012 and is part of a global initiative of the Catholic Church for the prevention of sexual abuse of minors. Since successfully completing the pilot phase, the CCP has had its headquarters in Rome. In addition to training programmes for the prevention of sexual abuse, the CCP conducts interdisciplinary research and doctoral programmes and organizes international conferences on safeguarding of minors.

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