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## Pope meets sex abuse victims

by John L. Allen Jr.

NCR Today

By JOHN L. ALLEN JR.

*London*

This afternoon in London, Pope Benedict XVI held a private meeting with five victims of priestly sexual abuse, who were not identified. It was the fifth time Benedict met victims, after previous encounters during trips to the United States, Australia and Malta, and a meeting with Canadian "first nations" victims in Rome.

The following is a Vatican statement released after the meeting.

### **PRESS RELEASE OF THE HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE FOLLOWING THE MEETING OF THE HOLY FATHER WITH VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE BY MEMBERS OF CLERGY**

On Saturday 18 September 2010, in the Apostolic Nunciature in London, the Holy Father met a group of persons who had been sexually abused by members of the clergy.

He was moved by what they had to say and expressed his deep sorrow and shame over what victims and their families had suffered. He prayed with them and assured them that the Catholic Church is continuing to implement effective measures designed to safeguard young people, and that it is doing all in its power to investigate allegations, to collaborate with civil authorities and to bring to justice clergy and religious accused of these egregious crimes.

As he has done on other occasions, he prayed that all the victims of abuse might experience healing and reconciliation, and be able to overcome their past and present distress with serenity and hope for the

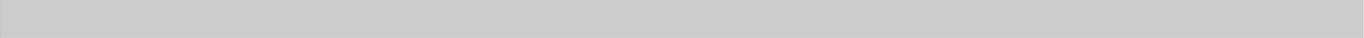
future.

Following this meeting, the Holy Father will address a group of professionals and volunteers dedicated to the safeguarding of children and young people in church environments.

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Prior to the meeting, victims' groups had already been critical of such an encounter. The U.S.-based National Survivor Advocates Coalition urged Catholics in the U.K. "to look for genuine steps to fix a massive problem, not a sleight of hand aimed at a quick news story to give the impression of attention." The Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests denounced "meaningless words and public relations gestures."

*John Allen will be filing reports throughout the Papal visit to the U.K. Sept. 16-19. Stay tuned to NCR Today for updates.*





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