

Vatican abuse summit: Web-based 'Center for Child Protection' launched

John L. Allen Jr. | Feb. 9, 2012 NCR Today

ROME -- As the final act of a four-day Vatican summit on the sexual abuse crisis, a new internet-based 'Center for Child Protection' was unveiled this afternoon in Rome, designed to educate priests, deacons, and other church personnel in fighting child abuse.

According to German Deacon Hubert Liebhardt, an educational scientist who serves as director of the new center, its aim is 'to promote a culture of vigilance in Catholic environments.'

With a budget of \$1.6 million over its first three years, the center will provide on-line training and certification programs in German, English, Italian and Spanish. It's a joint project of the Jesuit-run Gregorian University in Rome, the Munich archdiocese, and the University of Ulm in Germany.

Information on the center can be found here: www.elearning-childprotection.com

The launch of the center formed the conclusion of the Feb. 6-9 Vatican summit, titled 'Towards Healing and Renewal.' It brought together more than 100 bishops and religious superiors from around the world to discuss the church's response to the clergy abuse scandals.

Liebhardt explained that the on-line curriculum will be composed of roughly 30 hours of training, with topics ranging from detecting warning signs of abuse to reporting requirements in various countries. After examinations and other forms of assessment, church personnel who complete the training will receive a certificate from the Gregorian.

Speaking at the launch this afternoon, Cardinal Reinhard Marx of Munich, who contributed part of the financing for this week's summit, said the impetus came out of the massive sexual abuse crisis that rocked the Catholic church in Germany in 2010.

'2010 was the worst and most bitter year of my life,' Marx said.

'The realization of [the extent] of sexual abuse and the mistreatment of children in the church profoundly shocked many in the world, and it shocked me.'

Out of that experience, Marx said, he concluded that the crisis is 'an opportunity for renewal,' and this center is 'one part of that renewal, of the way the church has to go in the future.'

'This historical hour,' Marx said, 'is practically forcing us to take attitude of simultaneous humility and action.'

In terms of what that broad renewal might look like, Marx phrased it in terms of 'regaining authenticity and credibility.'

“Appearance and reality must not be allowed to fall apart,” Marx said. “Our words and our actions must go together.”

“The center of it all is not the survival of the church, or its outward significance, or its political influence,” he said. “It’s the question of whether it fulfills its mission of showing people the way to God.”

Marx noted that the Catholic church has a reputation of being strongly pro-life, and that’s as it should be, he said. Yet the launch of the Center for Child Protection, Marx said, is a reminder that the church’s commitment to life must be comprehensive.

“It’s the whole of life that needs education, protection and love,” he said.

Marx said one thing seemed clear as a result of not only his experience in Germany, but also the discussions at this week’s symposium: “The work of dealing with the abuse crisis is far from over,” he said.

Source URL (retrieved on 07/21/2017 - 15:48): <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/vatican-abuse-summit-web-based-center-child-protection-launched>