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Vatican abuse commission vows to continue despite Marie Collins resignation

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Irish abuse victim Marie Collins (CNS)

Members of Pope Francis's commission on sexual abuse vowed on Sunday to press ahead with their work even without abuse survivors on the panel following the resignation of a respected child advocate.

The commission wrapped up a plenary on Sunday saying it would "find new ways" to ensure people who were abused by clergy shape and inform its work. But no specifics were announced, and it wasn't clear if survivors would be named as members down the line.

Irish abuse survivor Marie Collins, a founding member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, resigned on March 1, citing what she called "unacceptable" resistance to the commission's proposals from the Vatican's doctrine office, which is responsible for processing cases against abusive priests.

Collins mentioned in particular **the alleged refusal by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith** to implement proposals approved by the Pope and to collaborate with the commission.

In a statement on Sunday, the commission expressed support for Collins and separately, several members said they agreed fully with her criticism of the doctrine office.

"What Marie has said is the truth," Catherine Bonnet, a French child psychiatrist and author on child sex abuse, said. "It is more than the voice of a survivor. She has a general view of what is needed."

Baroness Sheila Hollins, a psychiatrist and specialist in child abuse, said the Church has tended to view the clergy abuse problem from a purely canonical or legal perspective, when in fact a multidisciplinary approach is required to address the lasting trauma suffered by victims.

"Some Church leaders get it, and some Church leaders don't," Hollins said.

Many Vatican cardinals heard as much when the commission co-sponsored a conference on safeguarding children last week that featured Francis Sullivan, who has coordinated the Australian Church's response to a yearslong royal commission inquiry into sex abuse by priests.

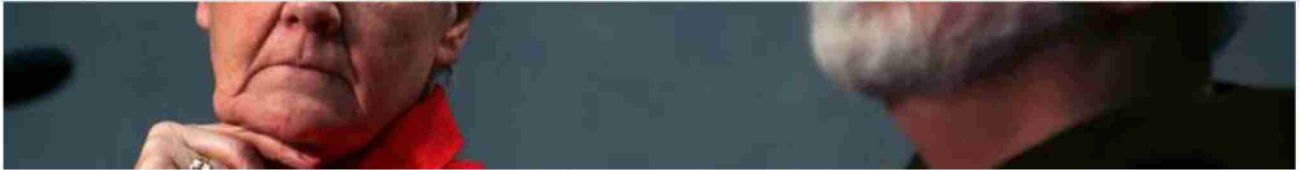
While he didn't mention Collins by name, Sullivan shamed the Vatican for having made it impossible for her and the other survivor on the commission to have a place at the table.

"It's not enough to say, 'We are putting victims first,'" he told the conference. "And it is not enough to say, 'We will listen.' Words are not going to do it. Actions do it."

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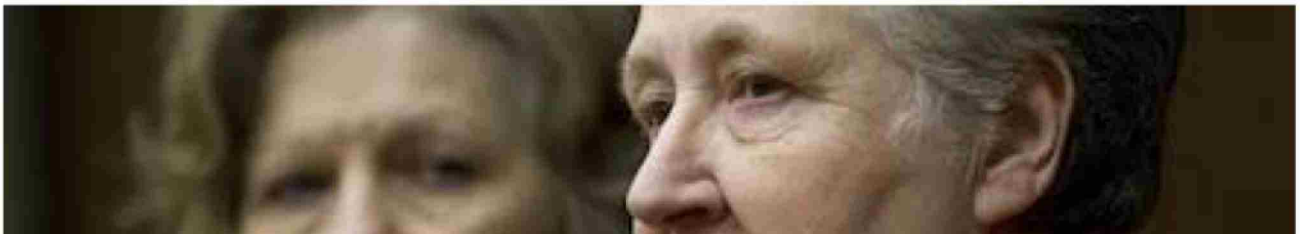
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