

PRESS RELEASE

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Harvard, The Catholic University of America Host International Virtual Symposium on Preventing and Healing Child Sexual Abuse

April 7, 2021: Global speakers and participants will participate in a virtual international symposium “Faith and Flourishing: Strategies for Preventing and Healing Child Sexual Abuse” hosted by Harvard University and the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. The event begins on April 8, marking the first [World Day for Child Sexual Abuse Prevention, Healing, and Justice](#), established by child sexual abuse survivors and advocates.

This landmark event will feature 73 speakers from 23 countries around the world. Faith leaders, public health practitioners, policy makers, child welfare advocates, and those working in education settings, the criminal justice system, health care organizations and the public health sector with an interest in child sexual abuse prevention and healing are encouraged to attend. The event is free and open to the public. More than 1300 global participants are currently registered.

"From a public health perspective, religious leaders are increasingly seen as a powerful force for shaping behaviors and perceptions," said Jennifer Wortham, Research Associate at the Human Flourishing Program, and Founder of the April 8 World Day, "but not all religious leaders are prepared to support the complex psychosocial needs of this vulnerable population. Without effective training, tools, and resources these efforts run the risk of doing more harm than good."

Said Cardinal Seán O'Malley, President of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors: "Spiritual and physical healing go hand in hand. That is why all religious leaders, child welfare advocates and health professionals must not only seek the best training, but be accountable for building interdisciplinary bridges to address the global crisis of child sexual abuse together."

Child sexual abuse is a serious public health problem with significant adverse impacts to the health and wellbeing of those who have been victimized. One in four girls and one in 13 boys experience sexual abuse as a child, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). The symposium will take place April 8-10, 2021, during [National Child Abuse Prevention Month](#) and Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

Participants will have the opportunity to view a series of on-demand presentations during this three day event by global leaders and experts in the field of child sexual abuse, and access evidence-informed tools, training materials, and multi-media resources for healing and prevention, focusing on the following:

- the prevalence of child sexual abuse and its effect on the mind and body
- its impact on one's relationship with their faith and with others
- effective strategies for prevention of sexual violence against children
- how to care and advocate for survivors

A list of speakers, partners, and more can be found [on the symposium website](#).

Event registration can be found at <https://hfh.fas.harvard.edu/Symposium-On-Child-Abuse>.

The symposium is organized in partnership with The Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities, Arigatou International, The New York Board of Rabbis, The Center for Child Protection at the Gregorian Pontifical University and the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, and all the organizations, staff and volunteers who supported this program.