

## **Marie Collins, Featured Speaker**

In March 2014 Pope Francis appointed Marie Collins to his new Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. Its first meeting took place in Rome in May 2014.

She has spoken out for many years on the need for change in the Catholic Church, better protection of children and justice for clergy sexual abuse survivors. A victim of this abuse while a patient in a Dublin children's hospital, she suffered for many years with depression, anxiety, panic attacks, and agoraphobia. Her abuser was brought to justice in 1997.



Collins helped the Archdiocese of Dublin set up its Child Protection Service in 2003, when she became a founding director of the advocacy and counseling support group for abuse survivors called One in Four (Ireland). She was a member of the Lynott Committee (2003/04), which drafted the Catholic Church's all-Ireland child protection guidelines, "Our Children Our Church."

Along with other survivors, Collins lobbied the Irish government to set up a Dublin Archdiocese commission of investigation to look into the handling of abuse cases in the diocese. The Murphy Commission issued its report in November 2009.

Collins was a founding member of the Irish depression support group "Aware" and set up and volunteered for many years on their phone helpline. With other survivors, she helped prepare the Liturgy of Lament and Repentance for Clerical and Religious Sexual Abuse, which was held in St. Mary's Pro Cathedral in Dublin on Feb. 20, 2011, in the presence of Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin and Cardinal Sean O'Malley, archbishop of Boston.

In 2012 Collins gave her name to a new charity in Britain, The Marie Collins Foundation, and became a trustee. The charity helps those abused or exploited via the internet, mobile phone and such devices.

She has contributed chapters to the books *The Dublin/Murphy Report: A Watershed for Irish Catholicism* and *Dark Night of the Catholic Church: Examining the child sexual abuse scandal*. She was invited to speak about her experience as a victim of sexual abuse by a priest before Catholic Church leaders from around the world at the Vatican-sponsored symposium on child sexual abuse "Toward Healing," held at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome in February 2012.

---