

International Virtual Symposium on Preventing and Healing Child Sexual Abuse: HARVARD/VATICAN

Harvard University and the Vatican organize a public, interfaith symposium to address the health and spiritual wellbeing of victims of childhood sexual abuse

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[The Human Flourishing Program](#) at Harvard University's Institute for Quantitative Social Science, in partnership with the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, will convene public health

professionals, religious leaders, and abuse survivors from across the world for a free, public, interfaith symposium to improve the health and spiritual wellbeing of victims of childhood sexual abuse, trafficking, and exploitation.

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Informed care is essential to healing for those who experienced child sexual abuse, otherwise we run the risk of doing more harm than good”

Jennifer Wortham, Dr.PH

"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 Executive Director of the Initiative on Health, Religion, and Spirituality, "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."



April 8 World Day Logo



The Human Flourishing Program

at Harvard's Institute for Quantitative Social Science

The Human Flourishing at Harvard University Logo

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](#).

The event, "Faith and Flourishing: Strategies for Preventing and Healing Child Sexual Abuse," addresses:

- 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

The aim is to increase the capacity of policy makers, health care professionals, and religious and spiritual leaders to implement effective child sexual abuse prevention and healing programs in their communities. A list of speakers, partners, and more can be found on the symposium website.

Additionally, this event will promote the ongoing effort to establish April 8 as a World Day Preventing and Healing Child Sexual Abuse. We invite all members of the media, health care professionals, and religious leaders to recognize this day and register for this landmark conference.

The symposium is organized in partnership with the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard University's Institute for Quantitative Social Science, the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, Harvard Divinity School, and the Catholic Project at the Catholic University of America.

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