

## **'Well done Leo!' Irish PM praised after powerful speech in front of the Pope**



**Leo Varadkar was praised for delivering a powerful speech in front of the Pope**

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar has been praised after he delivered a rousing speech in front Pope Francis urging him to “use

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his office” to bring “justice, truth and healing” to clerical abuse victims.

Leo Varadkar used his speech to discuss the relationship between church and state, abuse perpetrators, as well as same-sex families.

The Pope travelled to [Ireland](#) on Saturday for a two-day trip, which will see him speak to thousands of people at mass on Sunday.

In his Dublin Castle speech, Irish Taoiseach Leo Varadkar said: “At times in the past we have failed. And there are dark aspects of the Catholic church’s history as one of your bishops recently said.

“In place of Christian charity forgiveness and compassion far too often there was judgement, severity, and cruelty. In particular towards women and children and those on the margins.

“Magdalene Laundries, mother and baby homes, industrial schools, illegal adoptions, and clerical child abuse, are stains on our state, our society and also the church.



**Pope Francis at St Patrick's Hall in Dublin Castle**

“People kept in dark corners behind closed doors, cries for help that went

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unheard.

“Those wounds are still open and there is much to be done to bring about justice and truth and healing for the victims and survivors.

“Holy Father we ask that you use your office and influence to ensure this is done in Ireland and around the world.

“In recent weeks we have all listened to the heartbreaking stories in Pennsylvania, of the unspeakable crimes perpetrated by people within the church and then obscured to protect the institution.

“It was a story that is all too tragically familiar to those of us here in Ireland.”

He added: “As you have said there can only be zero tolerance for those who abuse children or who facilitate that abuse. We must now ensure that from words flow actions.

“Above all Holy Father, we ask that you listen to the victims and survivors, and we know that you will do that and you will bring to it that attributes of compassion and humility and honesty that we all here feel that you embody”.

The Irish Taoiseach was praised on social media for his bold speech.

One online user said: “I wasn't sure he'd do it, but Leo Varadkar has actually told the Pope how we value diversity, LGBT parenting & a woman's right to choose. This is not what I expected. Well done Leo.”

Another added: “What an absolute historical speech by Leo Varadkar.

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## First Message of Pope to the People of Ireland



### Pope Francis inscribes a message to the people of Ireland in the book of honour

Pope Francis began his Apostolic Journey with a brief message in the book of honour at the Presidential Residence Áras an Uachtaráin

Pope Francis' first stop in Ireland was at Áras an Uachtaráin, where he met with Irish President Michael Higgins.

In a brief ceremony, the Holy Father penned a brief message, to the Irish people in the book of honour:

"With gratitude for the warm welcome I have received , I assure you and the people of Ireland of my prayer that the Almighty God may guide and protect you all."

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The Pope paid the courtesy visit to the President, before transferring to Dublin Castle, where he addressed government authorities, leaders of civil society, and members of the diplomatic corps.

In his speech the Pope spoke about the Good Friday Agreement, signed 20 years ago this year, and urged Northern Ireland to get back to business at Stormont and build trust across communities.

He said: “We can give thanks for the two decades of peace that followed this historic agreement, while expressing firm hope that the peace process will overcome every remaining obstacle and help give birth to a future of harmony, reconciliation and mutual trust.”

The pontiff expressed hope for the future in what is an uncertain political and social climate right across the island of Ireland.

## **Clerical sexual abuse victims meet Pope**

The first day of the papal visit on Saturday was dominated by the bitter legacy of historical scandals linked to church abuse and mistreatment.

Pope Francis met early Saturday evening with eight abuse victims in Ireland, during his visit to the country for the World Meeting of Families.

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A statement from the Vatican press office said the pope met “for an hour and a half with eight Irish survivors of clerical, religious and institutional abuse.” “Those present included Mrs. Marie Collins; Rev. Patrick McCafferty, P.P.; Rev. Joe McDonald.

The private engagement in Dublin came hours after Francis expressed "pain and shame" over failures to tackle the scandals.

Some of the survivors who attended the behind-closed-doors meeting said the pontiff employed blunter language with them, apparently using the Spanish word "caca" - Spanish for "shit" - to describe those who covered up abuse.

Abuse survivor Marie Collins, who was at the meeting, told the Press Association: "He was very frank, he listened to us all and he gave us all an opportunity to talk about our experiences."

The Pope in public has begged for God's forgiveness as he called for firm action in pursuing justice for church abuse victims in Ireland.

“With regard to the most vulnerable, I cannot fail to acknowledge the grave scandal caused in Ireland by the abuse of young people by members of the church charged with responsibility for their protection and education,” he said.

“The failure of ecclesiastical authorities - bishops, religious superiors, priests and others - adequately to address these repellent crimes has rightly given rise to outrage and



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remains a source of pain and shame for the Catholic community.

“I myself share those sentiments.”

## **Pope the star attraction as 82,500 pack Croke Park for Festival of Families**



Pope Francis was given a taste of a very different Ireland to the one his predecessor John Paul II got almost 40 years ago.

It included Irish dancing, classical music, children's choirs as well as testimonies given by families from across the globe.

In turn Pope Francis opened his address to the Festival of Families in Dublin by saying “Dia Daoibh” – Irish for good evening.

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In a light-hearted moment during proceedings, Francis consented to a selfie with a teenager from the Travelling community.

Croke Park stadium was packed with an estimated 82,500 people on Saturday night for the event at which Pope Francis was the star, but he was not the only draw as country stars Daniel O'Donnell I and Nathan Carter thrilled the crowd with their performances.



Pope Francis received an enthusiastic welcome as he arrived in the stadium and then did a lap of the pitch floor in a golf buggy, closely flanked by his security team.

Members of the audience rose to their feet, and some even stood on their chairs, for a better look as he passed giving smiles and waves.

When the Pope took his seat, Cardinal Kevin Farrell offered him the traditional Irish greeting of a hundred, thousand welcomes.



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The pontiff smiled as a group of children performed an Irish dance in front of him, and he exchanged a few words with the youngsters before 500 other children from dance schools around Ireland treated him to a performance of Riverdance.

Co Donegal crooner Daniel O'Donnell was next on stage and brought many in the audience to their feet and dancing with a rendition of Let Your Love Flow.

There were also powerful testimonies from a number of families, including Azeez Al-Kanah who recollected fleeing their home in Iraq after Islamic State invaded the village.

There were also strong words from Missy Collins of the Pavee Point Traveller group, who told the pontiff of the struggle of the Travellers for recognition and the value her community places on the importance of family.

More than 2,000 singers, dancers and performers took part in the festival, which organisers described as a “once-in-a-lifetime theatrical experience”, and it ran an hour over the scheduled finishing time of 8.30pm.

During his address, Pope Francis paid tribute to all those who took part.

## **Pope Francis sends 'warm greetings to the beloved people of Northern Ireland'**

Pope Francis says the people of Northern Ireland are in his thoughts and prayers.

The pontiff made the comment during a visit to the shrine at Knock in Co Mayo.



### **Pope Francis celebrating Mass at Phoenix Park**

Prior to the Pope's visit being announced earlier this year, there had been much speculation Francis would include the north in his trip.

However, despite not crossing the border during his two-day visit, Francis made clear today his affection for the people of the north.

"My pilgrimage to Knock also allows me to address a warm greeting to the beloved people of Northern Ireland," he said.

"Although my journey for the World Meeting of Families does not include a visit to the north, I assure you of my affection and closeness in prayer.

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"I ask Our Lady to sustain all the members of the Irish family to persevere, as brothers and sisters, in the work of reconciliation.

"With gratitude for the advance of ecumenism and the significant growth of friendship and co-operation between the Christian communities, I pray that all of Christ's followers will support the continuing efforts to advance the peace process and to build a harmonious and just society for today's children."

Scores of people from Northern Ireland travelled to Dublin and Knock across the weekend to see Francis.

## **Pope begs for forgiveness at Knock for sins, scandal and betrayal**

On the second day of his historic Irish visit, Francis said the crimes committed by members of the church had left an "open wound".

At an address at the holy shrine of Knock, in Co Mayo, the pontiff said no-one could fail to be moved by stories of young abuse victims who were "robbed of their innocence" and left with "painful memories".

Thousands of pilgrims who braved the rain to see the Pope at a site revered by Irish Catholics applauded as he urged decisive steps to bring truth to the victims.

"None of us can fail to be moved by the stories of young people who suffered abuse, were robbed of their innocence

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### **Pope Francis during a visit to Knock Holy Shrine, in County Mayo**

and left scarred, distanced from mothers, abandoned, and left with painful memories," he said.

"This open wound challenges us to be firm and decisive in the pursuit of truth and justice.

"I beg the Lord's forgiveness for these sins and for the scandal and betrayal felt by so many others in God's family.

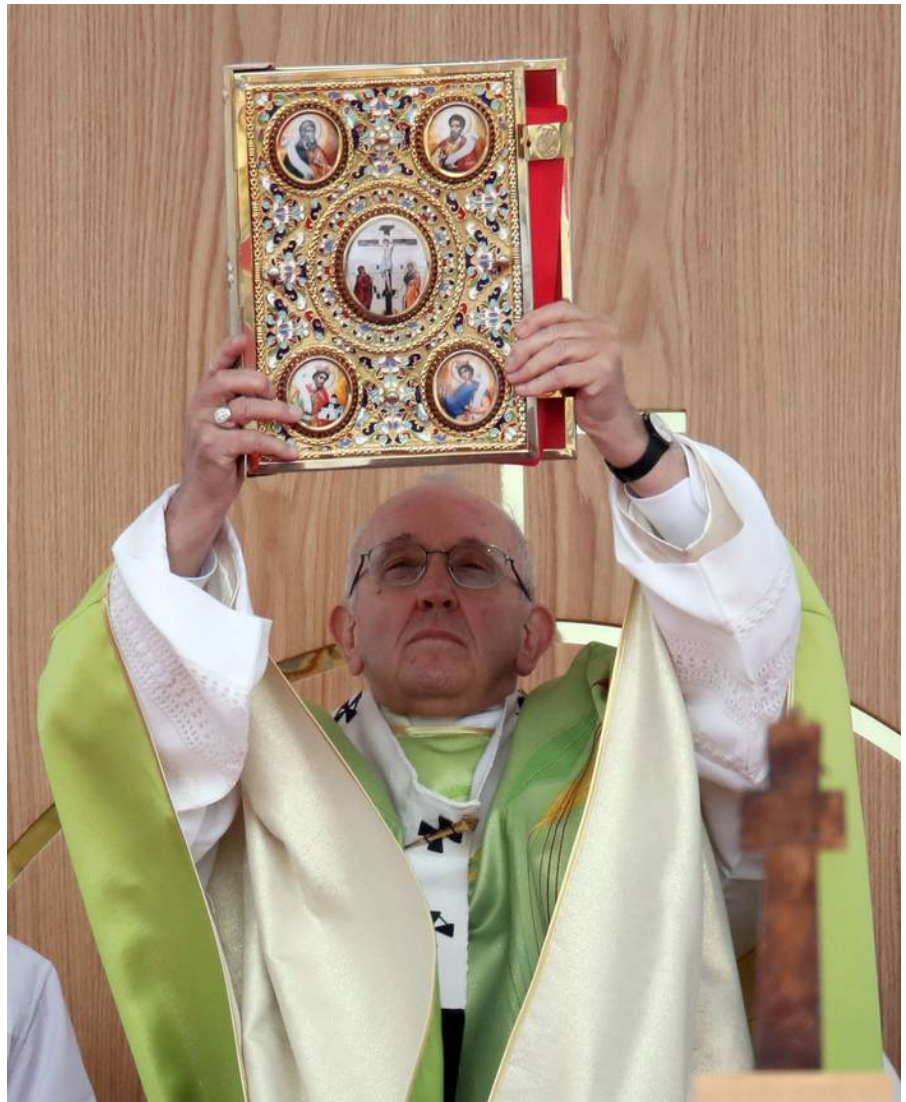
The engagement at Knock came ahead of a huge outdoor Mass in Dublin's Phoenix Park, for which half a million people had tickets.



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## **Pope asks for forgiveness for abuses committed by church members**

The Pope has asked for forgiveness for the crimes of church figures in Ireland as he laid bare a litany of abuse and mistreatment meted out to victims.



Addressing a large crowd at an open air Mass in Dublin, as his historic visit to the country drew to a close, Francis said the church hierarchy had been guilty of cover-ups and failing to show compassion.

Praying for the strength to achieve justice for the victims, the Pope referred to his private meeting with eight abuse survivors on Saturday evening, explaining that he wanted to take up what they had said to him.

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“We ask forgiveness for the abuses in Ireland, abuses of power, of conscience, and sexual abuses perpetrated by members with roles of responsibility in the church,” he said.

“In a special way, we ask pardon for all the abuses committed in various types of institutions run by males or female religious and by other members of the church, and we ask for forgiveness for those cases of manual work that so many young women and men were subjected to. We ask forgiveness.”

The reverberations of a litany of clerical sex crimes have cast a shadow over the first papal visit to Ireland since 1979. The Pope’s plea for forgiveness rang out around Phoenix Park as elsewhere in Dublin survivors and campaigners protested at his visit.

A vigil for the victims was also held at the site of the mother and baby home in Tuam, Co Galway, where a mass grave containing around 800 babies not afforded proper burials was recently uncovered.

***We ask for forgiveness for some of the church hierarchy who did not take charge of these situations and kept quiet. We ask for forgiveness - Pope Francis***

The Pope told the pilgrims who braved the rain and a three kilometre hike to reach Phoenix Park: “We ask forgiveness for the times that, as a church, we did not show the survivors of whatever kind of abuse the compassion and the seeking of justice and truth through concrete actions. We ask for forgiveness.

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### **An aerial view of the crowd at Phoenix Park**

“We ask for forgiveness for some of the church hierarchy who did not take charge of these situations and kept quiet. We ask for forgiveness.

“We ask for forgiveness for all those times in which many single mothers were told that to seek their children who had been separated from them, and the same being said to daughters and sons themselves, that this was a mortal sin.

“This is not a mortal sin. We ask for forgiveness.”

The pontiff ended the prayer by asking: “Give us the strength to work for justice. Amen.”

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His words were met with applause by the massive crowd of faithful.

The Papal Mass in Dublin came hours after the Pope called for firm action in pursuing justice for church abuse victims.

On the second day of his visit, he said the crimes committed by members of the church had left an “open wound”.

