Vatican



Pope Francis meets Sept. 28 at the Vatican with bishops from England and Wales. The bishops were making their "ad limina" visits to Rome to report on the status of their dioceses, pray at the tombs of the apostles and meet with a variety of Vatican officials. (CNS/Vatican Media)

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In "this time of turmoil," Pope Francis spent more than two hours with the bishops of England and Wales, encouraging them in turn to spend more time with their priests and faithful, the bishops said in a statement about their "ad limina" visits to the Vatican.

Meeting the bishops Sept. 28, the pope responded to their questions and concerns, and he reflected on the importance of prayer and preaching in the life of a bishop and the need for "paternal closeness to our priests and people, with care and with firm justice," said the statement, which was published Oct. 1.

Bishops are required to make periodic "ad limina" visits to report on the status of their dioceses, pray at the tombs of Sts. Peter and Paul and meet with the pope and the heads of Vatican offices.

Francis "spoke movingly of the wounds inflicted by abuse and neglect, wounds that wreak such harm in the lives of its victims and in the life of the church. Wherever they are found, these are wounds in the body of Christ and are painful to touch," the bishops said in their statement.

Despite the turbulent times, they said, Francis is rooted in and blessed by God. "His peace is secure. His life is serene. We know, because he showed us his heart."

When the bishops asked Francis for a message to bring back to their dioceses, the pope spoke about the importance of joy.

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"He explained that this joy is rooted firmly in our relationship with Jesus," the bishops said. "It is a joy of knowing that he is with us; of knowing the presence of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives, drawing and guiding us toward the will of God; a joy

of knowing our heavenly Father is waiting for us, longing to hold us in his embrace of loving mercy."

"Joy is the source of lasting peace in our hearts and lives, no matter our circumstances," the pope told the bishops.