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Pope writes to Irish Catholics

by Dennis Coday

NCR Today

Here's a quick round up of reports on Pope Benedict's pastoral letter to Irish Catholics issued this morning. *NCR* senior correspondent John Allen called the letter Benedict's "most comprehensive statement yet on the sexual abuse crisis."

From the Associated Press:

Asked why there were no punitive provisions contained in the letter, Vatican spokesman the Rev. Federico Lombardi noted that the letter was pastoral, not administrative or disciplinary in nature, and that any further measures concerning resignations would be taken by the competent Vatican offices.

Benedict's letter addressed only the scandal in Ireland, not the other cases of abuse which have recently come to light in other countries across Europe, including in the pope's native Germany.

Lombardi acknowledged the other cases but said the Irish scandal was unique in its scope and in what the Vatican has already done, noting that the pontiff last month met with Ireland's bishops. But he said that obviously the letter could be read to apply to other countries and individuals.

From Ireland OnLine

The Catholic of Primate of All-Ireland Cardinal Seán Brady will make a statement on the letter later.

Speaking during Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral in Armagh this morning Cardinal Brady asked people to read the letter with an open heart and an open mind.

The Archbishop of Dublin said the letter was not a final word but a further step in the process of renewal

and healing in the Catholic Church in Ireland.

In a statement, Diarmuid Martin welcomed the Pope's expression of apology and his recognition of the suffering and betrayal experienced by survivors.

From The Irish Times

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In an address to parishioners following Mass in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh this morning, Cardinal Seán Brady said he was "deeply grateful to the Holy Father for his profound kindness and concern.

"It is evident from the pastoral letter that Pope Benedict is deeply dismayed by what he refers to as "sinful and criminal acts and the way the Church authorities in Ireland dealt with them?" he said.

Dr Brady was applauded by the congregation after revealing the contents of the pope's message.

Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin also welcomed the letter, describing it not as a final word but as "a further step in the process of renewal and healing in the Catholic Church in Ireland following the crisis of the sexual abuse of children within the Church in Ireland."

Dr Martin said the pope acknowledged the suffering and betrayal experienced by survivors of clerical abuse. "The pope recognises the failures of Church authorities in how they dealt with sinful and criminal acts," he said.

Since the letter was promised on December 11th last, when Cardinal Brady and the Dr Martin went to Rome following publication of the Murphy report, there have been extensive revelations of alleged child sex abuse by Catholic priests in Germany, Austria, Brazil, Italy and the Netherlands.

Ireland's RTE News has the full text of Cardinal Brady's address.

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