

Nuncio to Ireland transferred to Czech Republic

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VATICAN CITY -- Pope Benedict has named Italian Archbishop Giuseppe Leanza to be the new nuncio to the Czech Republic, transferring him from his post as ambassador to Ireland.

The Vatican announced the change Sept. 15; it had been rumored for months.

Archbishop Leanza had been nuncio to Ireland since February 2008 and was temporarily called back to the Vatican in late July after Irish government officials publicly criticized the Vatican and accused it of being unhelpful to Irish bishops who wanted to enact stronger measures to protect children in the midst of the clerical sexual abuse crisis.

The diplomatic incident erupted after the publication July 13 of the government's Cloyne Report, examining how the Diocese of Cloyne mishandled accusations of clerical sexual abuse. The report also accused the Vatican of being "entirely unhelpful" to Irish bishops seeking to implement robust abuse policies.

The day after the report's release, Ireland's foreign minister summoned Archbishop Leanza, demanding the Vatican give a formal response to the report.

Foreign Minister Eamon Gilmore told the archbishop that the Vatican had undermined best practice in child-safeguarding within the church by opposing the Irish bishops' 1996 guidelines for handling child sexual abuse and by supporting those within the church who did not want to implement the procedures.

Speaking after the meeting, Archbishop Leanza said he was "distressed ... by the failures in assuring the protection of children within the church despite all the good work that has been done."

The Vatican issued its official response to the report Sept. 3, forcefully denying it undermined the Irish bishops' efforts to protect children.

Archbishop Leanza, 68, has been a Vatican diplomat since 1990 and has served in Haiti, Malawi, Zambia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovenia, Macedonia and Bulgaria.

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