

## **Nuncio to Irish Catholics: Pope knows abuse scandals made lives tough**

Michael Kelly | Catholic News Service | Feb. 20, 2012

**DUBLIN** -- Pope Benedict XVI is acutely aware that recent years have been tough for Irish Catholics as a result of the clerical sex abuse scandals, said the new apostolic nuncio to Ireland.

Speaking during a Mass to mark his formal welcome as Pope Benedict's representative in Dublin on Sunday, U.S. Archbishop Charles Brown said the pontiff understands "that these recent years have been difficult for Catholic believers in Ireland."

Brown said the pope was "scandalized and dismayed as he learned about the tragedy of abuse perpetrated by some members of the clergy and of religious congregations. He felt deeply the wounds of those who had been harmed and who so often had not been listened to."

Brown, a former official in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, said, "I can tell you from my personal experience that he [Pope Benedict] has always had -- and he continues to have -- a great love for the people of Ireland and a high regard for the Catholic Church in Ireland, with its history of missionary richness and tenacious faith."

Referring to the pontiff's previous role as head of the doctrinal congregation, Brown insisted that, "from the beginning, Pope Benedict was resolute and determined to put into place changes which would give the church the ability to deal more effectively with those who abuse trust, as well as to provide the necessary assistance to those who had been victimized.

"Pope Benedict has been relentless and consistent on this front, and I assure you that he will continue to be," he said.

A series of recent independent inquiries uncovered decades of abuse and cover-ups of sexual abuse within the church and in church-run institutions. One judicial report accused the Vatican of being "entirely unhelpful" to Irish bishops trying to deal with abuse.

Last July, Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny delivered a speech accusing the Vatican of adopting a "calculated, withering position" on clerical sex abuse. The Vatican then recalled and reassigned Archbishop Brown's predecessor, Archbishop Giuseppe Leanza.

In opening remarks at the Sunday Mass, Dublin Archbishop Diarmuid Martin said Irish Catholics welcomed "the help of Pope Benedict in leading our wounded church toward repentance and healing."

"We desire to work together to build a different, more humble church, but also a renewed church, confident of the contribution of the teaching of Jesus Christ for the Ireland of tomorrow," he said.

Brown, a native New Yorker, recalled how his ancestors emigrated from Ireland to the United States

"possessing little more than the treasure of their Catholic faith, which they, through the generations, have passed on to me."

"Were it not for the faith of Ireland, I would not be a Catholic today," he told the congregation, which included government ministers, representatives of other Christian denominations and members of the diplomatic corps.

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