



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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Apostolic Trip of His Holiness Francis in Ireland for the World Meeting of Families in Dublin (25-26 August 2018) – Meeting with the Bishops at the Convent of the Dominican Sisters

Meeting with the Bishops at the Convent of the Dominican Sisters

At the end of the Holy Mass celebrated in *Phoenix Park*, the Holy Father Francis transferred to the Convent of the Dominican Sisters for the meeting with the bishops.

Upon arrival, the Pope was received by H.E. Msgr. Eamon Martin, Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of All Ireland and President of the Irish Episcopal Conference.

After greetings from H.E. Msgr. Martin, the Holy Father addressed the bishops present.

Before taking leave of the bishops, Pope Francis posed for a group photograph with the Dominican religious sisters in the courtyard in front of the Church.

The following is the Holy Father's address to those present at the meeting:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear Brother Bishops,

As my visit to Ireland comes to a close, I am grateful for this chance to spend a few moments with you. I thank Archbishop Eamon Martin for his gracious words of introduction and I greet all of you with affection in the Lord.

Our meeting tonight takes up the fraternal discussion we shared in Rome last year during your visit *ad Limina Apostolorum*. In these brief remarks, I would like to resume our earlier conversation, in the spirit of the World Meeting of Families we have just celebrated. All of us, as bishops, are conscious of our responsibility to be

fathers to God's holy and faithful people. As good fathers, we want to encourage and inspire, to reconcile and unify, and above all, to preserve all the good handed down from generation to generation in this great family which is the Church in Ireland.

So, my word to you this evening is one of encouragement for your efforts, in these challenging times, to persevere in your ministry as heralds of the Gospel and shepherds of Christ's flock. In a particular way, I am grateful for the concern you continue to show for the poor, the excluded and those in need of a helping hand, as witnessed most recently by your pastoral letters on the homeless and on substance misuse. I am also grateful for the support you give to your priests, whose hurt and discouragement in the face of recent scandals is often ignored or underestimated.

A recurrent theme of my visit, of course, has been the Church's need to acknowledge and remedy, with evangelical honesty and courage, past failures with regard to the protection of children and vulnerable adults. In recent years, you as a body have resolutely moved forward, not only by undertaking paths of purification and reconciliation with victims of abuse, but also, with the help of the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Church in Ireland, by establishing a stringent set of norms aimed at ensuring the safety of young persons. In these years, all of us have had our eyes opened to the gravity and extent of sexual abuse in various social settings. In Ireland, as elsewhere, the honesty and integrity with which the Church chooses to confront this painful chapter of her history can offer an example and a warning to society as a whole.

As we mentioned in our conversation in Rome, the transmission of the faith in its integrity and beauty represents a significant challenge in the context of Ireland's rapidly evolving society. The World Meeting of Families has given us great hope and encouragement that families are growing more and more conscious of their own irreplaceable role in passing on the faith. At the same time, Catholic schools and programmes of religious instruction continue to play an indispensable role in creating a culture of faith and a sense of missionary discipleship. I know that this is a source of pastoral concern for all of you. Genuine religious formation calls for faithful and joyful teachers who are able to shape not only minds but also hearts in the love of Christ and in the practice of prayer. The formation of such teachers and the expansion of programmes of adult education, are essential for the future of the Christian community, in which a committed laity will be increasingly called to bring the wisdom and values of their faith to their engagement in the varied sectors of the country's social, political and cultural life.

The upheavals of recent years have tested the traditionally strong faith of the Irish people. Yet they have also offered the opportunity for an interior renewal of the Church in this country and pointed to new ways of envisioning its life and mission. "God is eternal newness" and he impels us "constantly to set out anew, to pass beyond what is familiar, to the fringes and beyond" (*Gaudete et Exsultate*, 135). With humility and trust in his grace, may you discern and set out on new paths for these new times. Surely, the strong missionary sense rooted in the soul of your people will inspire creative ways of bearing witness to the truth of the Gospel and building up the community of believers in the love of Christ and zeal for the growth of his kingdom.

In your daily efforts to be fathers and shepherds to God's family in this country, may you always be sustained by the hope that trusts in the truth of Christ's words and the certainty of his promises. In every time and place, that truth "sets free" (*Jn* 8:32); it has a power all its own to convince minds and draw hearts to itself. Whenever you and your people feel that you are a "little flock" facing challenges and difficulties, do not grow discouraged. As Saint John of the Cross teaches us, it is in the dark night that the light of faith shines purest in our hearts. And that light will show the way to the renewal of the Christian life in Ireland in the years ahead.

Finally, in the spirit of ecclesial communion, I ask you to continue to foster unity and fraternity among yourselves and, together with the leaders of other Christian communities, to work and pray fervently for reconciliation and peace among all the members of the Irish family.

With these thoughts, dear brothers, I assure you of my prayers for your intentions, and I ask you to keep me in your own. To all of you, and to the faithful entrusted to your pastoral care, I impart my Apostolic Blessing, pledge of joy and strength in our Lord Jesus Christ.
