

## **In Ireland, Pope Francis decries failure of bishops in abuse scandal**

Dublin, Ireland, Aug 25, 2018 / 05:19 am (CNA) - In Ireland on Saturday, Pope Francis said the anger of Catholics at bishops' failure in response to the sexual abuse crisis is appropriate and that he shares those feelings.

“With regard to the most vulnerable, I cannot fail to acknowledge the grave scandal caused in Ireland by the abuse of young people by members of the Church charged with responsibility for their protection and education,” he said to Irish authorities Aug. 25.

“The failure of ecclesiastical authorities – bishops, religious superiors, priests and others – adequately to address these repugnant crimes has rightly given rise to outrage, and remains a source of pain and shame for the Catholic community.” He added: “I myself share those sentiments.”

In his first official speech of the apostolic voyage to Ireland for the World Meeting of Families, the pope said he hopes the “failings of many” will underscore the importance of protecting children and vulnerable adults by all of society.

He referenced the words of his predecessor, Benedict XVI, who in a letter to the Catholics of Ireland recognized the gravity of the situation of child sex abuse and demanded “truly evangelical, just and effective” measures in response to the betrayal of trust.

Speaking off-the-cuff, the pope added that Benedict's involvement continues to push Church leaders to “remedy past mistakes and adopt stringent rules to ensure that they do not happen again.”

Francis said his **recent letter** to the Church affirmed a greater commitment “to eliminate this scourge in the Church; at any cost – moral and suffering.”

He said he is “very conscious” of the circumstances of the most vulnerable and emphasized the goodness of the child, which he said is “a precious gift of God, to be cherished, encouraged to develop his or her gifts, and guided to spiritual maturity and human flourishing.”

“All of us are aware of how urgent it is to provide our young people with wise guidance and sound values on their journey to maturity,” he stated.

In his speech, the pope also spoke out in defense of the “right to life” of the unborn, criticizing the materialistic “throwaway culture” which makes people indifferent to the poor and to the most defenseless.

He also pointed out that the “Christian message” has been a vital part of Ireland, shaping the thought and culture of the people. It is his prayer, he said, that as the country listens to the contemporary political and social discussion, it will not forget its Christian heritage.

Speaking about his reason for being in Dublin, the World Meeting of Families, he called it “a prophetic witness” to the rich heritage of ethical and spiritual values, which it is a duty to cherish and protect. He said the Church wants to support people as they try to respond, “faithfully and joyfully to their God given vocation in society.”

There are many difficulties faced by families today – nevertheless, they are “are the glue of society,” he said, and should not be taken for granted.

The World Meeting of Families, he explained, “is not only an opportunity for families to reaffirm their commitment to loving fidelity, mutual assistance and reverence for God’s gift of life in all its forms, but also to testify to the unique role played by the family in the education of its members and the development of a sound and flourishing social fabric.”

Calling the entire world a type of family, he said bonds of common humanity should drive us to take care of the weakest among us, even though we are often left feeling powerless in the face of “persistent evils,” such as racism, ethnic hatred, violence, and contempt for human dignity.

Among these is also the refugee crisis, he said, calling it “perhaps the most disturbing” challenge to consciences. “How much we need to recover, in every instance of political and social life, the sense of being a true family of peoples!” he urged.