

# Archbishop O'Brien to participate in visitation of Irish seminaries

Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien is heading to Rome and Ireland early this year as part of an Apostolic Visitation of Irish seminaries called by Pope Benedict XVI in his March 19, 2010 pastoral letter to the people of Ireland.

Archbishop Timothy Dolan of New York is leading the visitation of seminaries and, with the approval of the pope, invited the Baltimore archbishop to assist.

"The goal is to see how our (Irish) seminaries have been forming candidates for priesthood," Archbishop O'Brien said, "especially in the area of celibacy and to see if what they have been doing can be improved. It's collaborative. It's an attempt to be of help to them."

Catholic News Service reported in November that the visitation of seminaries was expected to make sure screening policies and educational programs to improve child protection were in place in the wake of the child sex abuse crisis in Ireland.

The visitation is part of a larger effort that will also involve four archdioceses and religious orders. British Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, retired archbishop of Westminster, will conduct the visitation of the Archdiocese of Armagh; Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley of Boston will conduct the visitation of the Archdiocese of Dublin; Archbishop Thomas Collins of Toronto will conduct the visitation of the Archdiocese of Cashel; and Archbishop Terrence Prendergast of Ottawa, Ontario, will visit the Archdiocese of Tuam.

Four visitors, including two nuns and two priests, will investigate religious houses in Ireland.

The visitation will examine all aspects of priestly formation and is pastoral in nature, "intended to assist the local Church on her path of renewal," Pope Benedict wrote.

Archbishop O'Brien will accompany Archbishop Dolan and the other members of the visitation team to Rome later this month to visit the Pontifical Irish College. The first

week of February, the team will travel to Ireland to visit St. Patrick's College, Maynooth; St. Malachy's College, Belfast; All Hallows College, Dublin; and Milltown Institute of Theology and Philosophy, Dublin.

The team will conduct one-on-one interviews with present and recent students, faculty and staff.

Archbishop O'Brien, former rector of St. Joseph's Seminary in New York and the Pontifical North American College in Rome, led the Apostolic Visitation of U.S. Seminaries and houses of priestly formation in 2005.

"We've learned a lot from our experience here in the United States from our visitation," he said. "I think there's every reason to hope that they will see that's a very valuable thing."

According to a statement by the Archdiocese of Dublin, "When the visitation is complete, the Holy See, after reviewing all the material submitted by the visitors and offering suggestions for the spiritual renewal of the archdioceses, seminaries and religious houses, will issue a comprehensive summary of the results of the visitation."