

Pope calls Irish church leaders to Vatican to discuss abuse report

VATICAN CITY – Pope Benedict XVI has asked the president of the Irish bishops' conference and the archbishop of Dublin to come to the Vatican to discuss "the painful situation of the church in Ireland" following a report detailing the church's failures in addressing clerical sexual abuse.

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman, said the pope's meeting with Cardinal Sean Brady of Armagh, Northern Ireland, president of the Irish bishops' conference, and Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin would take place Dec. 11.

The spokesman said the meeting would include the nuncio to Ireland, Archbishop Giuseppe Leanza, and the heads of several Vatican offices dealing with sex abuse and related issues.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, led by U.S. Cardinal William J. Levada, has a special section that deals with priests accused of sexual abuse. The promoter of justice in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Monsignor Charles Scicluna, handles the cases brought against allegedly abusive priests. Officials of the congregations for Bishops and for Clergy also were expected to participate.

Father Lombardi said the pope wanted to discuss and have Vatican officials evaluate the findings of the so-called Murphy Report, which was released Nov. 26.

The report by the independent Commission of Investigation, headed by Judge Yvonne Murphy, looked specifically at the handling of some 325 abuse claims in the Archdiocese of Dublin during the period from January 1975 to May 2004.

"The Dublin Archdiocese's preoccupations in dealing with cases of child sexual abuse, at least until the mid-1990s, were the maintenance of secrecy, the avoidance of scandal, the protection of the reputation of the church and the preservation of its assets," said the report. "All other considerations, including the welfare of children and justice for victims, were subordinated to these priorities. The archdiocese did

not implement its own canon law rules and did its best to avoid any application of the law of the state.”

The report said church officials and police colluded in covering up instances of child sexual abuse by clergy.

The release of the report resulted in calls for the resignations of bishops who were serving during the period covered by the report and for further investigations and prosecution.

Bishop Donal Murray of Limerick, the only still-active bishop listed in the Murphy Report, was said by several sources to be already in Rome to meet with Vatican officials.

Irish press reports said Bishop Murray was expected to resign in the wake of the Dublin report’s criticism of his “inexcusable” handling of an investigation of a pedophile priest.