

# il Papa to visit Britain



"I have come for your children"

In a move aimed to "strengthen and confirm" the faith of Catholics in Britain Pope Benedict XVI is to visit the island between September 16th and 19th. This will be the first papal visit since Pope John Paul II's visit in 1982.

Il papa will kick off his visit in Edinburgh with a Royal reception with the Queen in Holyroodhouse Palace. Then he's off to Glasgow and Coventry for a couple of public masses and a prayer vigil in London. He will also be meeting up with the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace and drop in for a spot of prayer with other church leaders at Westminster Abbey. There has been no mention of him meeting with survivors of child sexual abuse at the hands of catholic priests.

Despite their draconian new anti-blasphemy laws il duce, sorry papa, will not be visiting Ireland any time soon. The south's new legislation came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010 and means that blasphemy is now a crime punishable by a €25,000 fine. Perhaps though this isn't a strong enough deterrent to stop the protests by many hundreds of victims of sexual abuse at the hands of the Catholic Church in Ireland and their supporters.

While the Pope rallies reactionary sentiment against homosexuals (who incidentally he has attempted to blame for child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church—Vatican II let them in



you know), attacking the UK equality legislation and Harriet Harman's attempt at strengthening it, he is also seeking to make it easier for homophobic Anglicans to become Roman Catholics.

Il Duce Ratzinger has called on his bishops to fight any measures which may force churches to hire homosexual and transgender employees with "missionary zeal" and, in sentiment that is not out of step for members of far-right and neo-nazi organisations, denounced the drive for equality for homosexuals as a "violation of natural law".

An amendment to the Equalities Bill, which would have clarified which positions and organizations could continue to be closed to gay people, was thrown out by the Lords with the help of eight Anglican bishops who voted against it.

Pro-choice groups, gay rights activists, support groups for those abused by priests, atheists, anarchists, socialists and others will be opposing the visit which is estimated will cost about £20million at a time of devastating cut-backs in public spending. The National Secular Society has called for a coalition of protestors to unite against the visit and has created an online petition for those opposed to the Pope's security bill being footed by the tax payer. We fear that petitions will not be enough to stop the Popes visit – it is a visit that must be met with protests and mobilisations.

Pope Ratzinger is obviously an active opponent of secularism and equality, a man who seeks to perpetuate inequality, prejudice, discrimination and suffering for people who defy "natural law" but is the former member of the Hitler Youth a nazi?

Well while the leader of Opus Dei (then Cardinal) Ratzinger championed the canonization of Spanish fascist priest, Hitler supporter and Opus Dei founder Jose Escriva, who was officially made a saint in 2002. In September 2005, *Pope Benedict* blessed a newly installed statue of the man that Pope John Paul II said possessed Christian virtues to a "heroic degree", at St Peter's Basilica. As Pope, Ratzinger sits at the head of an autocratic institution, from which all power and authority flows down (but seeks to distance itself in relation to any culpability for child sexual abuse on the part of its priests – despite the very clear culpability in an institution that hid offenders and moved them around the world to avoid prosecution and the wrath of their victims). The Vatican itself is a sovereign state and a religious entity; a political, yet religious and hierarchical state that denies homosexuals even the minimum legislative protection found elsewhere in Europe. Nazism was marked out from the rest of fascism by its theories

## Abolish the Church

On Sunday 21st of March mass goers across Ireland heard Pope Benedict XVI's mealy-mouthed words of 'apology' as his pastoral letter was read out by priests in Catholic churches north and south. He apologised for the suffering of victims of paedophile priests, admitting Irish bishops had made "grave errors of judgment" in dealing with them, but did not address well-documented cover-ups by senior clergy. Cover-ups that were ordered by the Vatican, and Ratzinger himself.

Having previously "Upbraided Irish Roman Catholic Bishops", (in the words of the BBC News at the time), for a "failure... for years to act effectively", this is nothing more than a publicity stunt aimed at recapturing the "moral authority" of the church in Ireland. An authority damaged over the years as more and more abuse cases became public knowledge and which should have been smashed to pieces with the publishing of two state-ordered reports. Reports that revealed how abuse was rife in many Irish Catholic-run children's institutions, and how priests who were accused of abuse were just moved by bishops to new parishes.

Child abuse and the protection of abusers is not limited to Ireland. When child sex abuse at the hands of priests hit the news in the USA Ratzinger blamed the state of society - and homosexuals! A 2004 report found evidence in support of almost 7,000 allegations of child sexual abuse in the USA. Today the Churches Chief Exorcist blames Satan himself!

Parishioners in the Bavarian spa town of Bad Tölz learned recently that one of their curates, who had officiated at the children's mass, and had been camping with their sons and daughters, was a convicted paedophile. A paedophile knowingly moved there by Ratzinger's deputy himself.

The head of the Catholic Church in Ireland, Cardinal Sean Brady, is facing calls for his resignation after he confirmed he had interviewed victims of abuse 35 years ago and swore them to secrecy. Brady was involved, in 1975, in silencing two young victims of Ireland's most notorious clerical paedophile. On the 21st he was only one of scores of Catholic clergy making similar announcements in the Netherlands, Austria, Germany and the German-speaking parts of Switzerland and Italy. He was, like many of his co-conspirators, only following Vatican orders. Not that that is any sort of defence for Brady, more an indictment of the Catholic Church as a whole.

The Irish Church has admitted covering up abuse for decades. Files were compiled on more than 100 parish priests accused of sexual abuse - files that were kept secret. Many were simply shifted about and left free to abuse again.

Irish Survivors of Child Abuse founder John Kelly said in response: "We are entitled to expect that the Pope makes those who committed crimes or covered up crimes, including bishops, be made accountable."

This is a naive hope and one that lets the Pope himself off the hook. The Pope himself must be made accountable. The entire Catholic Church has deliberately sought to cover this up - not just particular Bishops. In doing so it has facilitated abusers and allowed them to continue the abuse. Victims had to overcome the insane levels of faith in individual priests as good as holy men, beyond reproach, and the resultant disbelief among other Catholics (including family and friends). Sworn to secrecy they were also threatened with excommunication and damnation. They have had abuse heaped upon abuse. Ratzinger's empty words represent more of the same.

In May 2001 Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger sent a confidential letter to every Catholic bishop. It asserted the church's right to hold secret inquiries. It was clearly designed to prevent the allegations from becoming public knowledge or being investigated by anyone but the Church.

Ratzinger's letter states that the Church can claim jurisdiction in cases where abuse has been 'perpetrated with a minor by a cleric' and that the Church's jurisdiction 'begins to run from the day when the minor has completed the 18th year of age' and lasts for 10 years. It ordered that 'preliminary investigations' be sent to Ratzinger's office, which had the option of referring them back to private tribunals in which the 'functions of judge, promoter of justice, notary and legal representative can validly be performed for these cases only by priests'.

It concluded that 'Cases of this kind are subject to the pontifical secret.' Breach of which carried penalties, including the threat of excommunication (and as a result damnation to hell) for the victim of the abuse.

There is only one appropriate response, the Catholic Church should be abandoned and the hold of its dangerous superstitions uprooted. Our children should be withdrawn from the very real danger it represents to them and in Ireland the Church should be separated from the provision of education. Catholic Maintained schools should be abolished. As a prelude to the abolition of the Church itself.

of an Aryan master race and extreme racism, it is unlikely that il Papa would be comfortable with such a position given the multi-ethnic make-up of his church but it does seem irrefutable that he has sympathies with the extremely conservative and reactionary Catholic fascism of Franco.

In the meantime Irreligious T-shirts have launched a design to campaign against the Popes visit which is available from the Leveller for £12.00.

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