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## POPE OPENS NEW CHAPTER FOR CHURCH IN UK

### **On Day 3, UK Trip Turns Personal, Pastoral**

By Edward Pentin

LONDON, SEPT. 18, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- If the first two days of the papal visit were mostly related to matters of Church and state, today this momentous apostolic voyage turned much more personal and pastoral.

Benedict XVI began this morning by travelling to Archbishop's House in Westminster and receiving in private audience Britain's prime minister, David Cameron, his deputy, Nick Clegg, and the leader of the opposition, Harriet Harman.

The Holy Father offered his condolences to Cameron on the recent loss of his father, spoke to each of the politicians for about 20 minutes and gave them a medal of his pontificate. Reports say that Cameron, an Anglican, gave the Pope a first edition copy of Cardinal Newman's "Apologia Pro Vita Sua," printed in 1864, along with a newspaper cutting describing a service that the cardinal gave in Edgbaston in Birmingham.

The audiences, which followed last night's working dinner between Vatican and government officials at Lancaster House, effectively marked the end of the visit's state component -- at least until tomorrow's farewell.

At 10 a.m., the Holy Father celebrated Mass at the Cathedral of the Most Precious Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ in Westminster. The liturgy in this great Byzantine-style cathedral, which was only consecrated in 1910, was so impressive that some of the faithful were moved to tears.

The Holy Father expressed "deep sorrow" for sexual abuse by priests, and called them "unspeakable crimes" that have brought "shame and humiliation" upon the Church. He also spoke about them within the context of Christ's suffering, offering a powerful explanation of the Eucharistic sacrifice. "In the life of the Church, in

her trials and tribulations, Christ continues, in the stark phrase of Pascal, to be in agony until the end of the world." The Pope then referred to the "mystery of Christ's precious blood" represented by martyrs throughout history.

Father Jonathan How, a spokesman for the bishops' conference, told me the Pope wanted to place Christ's suffering in the context of the abuse scandal. "If we feel shamed and humiliated by [the abuse], we are only sharing in what the victims and Christ experienced," he said.

Invigorating faith

Many had come from all over Britain for the Mass and the Vigil held later in Hyde Park. Dan Williams from Cardiff said it was a "once in a lifetime" opportunity and that he hoped it would "bolster the faith" in the country. Billy Macauley, who had followed the Holy Father from Glasgow, said the Pope's visit was a "great blessing" and the Mass in Bellahouston Park was "very powerful."

"It's hard to imagine what it's like for every word to carry so much meaning for people so we pray that the Holy Father remains guided by the Holy Spirit and stays strong in the faith," he said.

After Mass, some 2,500 youngsters from dioceses in England, Wales and Scotland gathered on the piazza outside the cathedral. "First and foremost," the Pope said, "[I ask you] to look into your own heart. Think of all the love that your heart was made to receive, and all the love it is meant to give. After all, we were made for love."

The Pope also took a moment to greet the people of Wales, saying he was sad not have been able to visit the country but assured the Welsh people of his "deep love" and "constant closeness" in prayer.

While in the cathedral, he blessed a mosaic of St. David, Wales's patron saint, by lighting a candle of the statue of Our Lady of Cardigan.

As had been expected, the Holy Father also met five survivors of clerical abuse today: Three of the victims were from Yorkshire, one was from London and one was from Scotland, and the meeting was held in Westminster. A source close to the victims told the BBC they spent between 30 and 40 minutes with the Pope, "quite a significant length of time," he said, and "longer than the prime minister got."

After a short rest, the Pope resumed his intense and undoubtedly tiring schedule to visit an old people's home run by the Little Sisters of the Poor. "Life is a unique gift, at every stage from conception until natural death, and it is God's alone to give and to take," he said "One may enjoy good health in old age; but equally Christians should not be afraid to share in the suffering of Christ, if God wills that we struggle with infirmity."

Moment to remember

Around 6.30pm, as the sun was setting, the Pope made what I, and I'm sure many Britons, will remember for many years to come: a popemobile journey through the heart of London. The Mall, the long boulevard leading up to Buckingham Palace that is so synonymous with empire, pageantry and poignant moments in the country's history, was decorated from beginning to end with enormous Vatican flags and Union Jacks.

Everyone cheered, admittedly in a rather typically British reserved fashion, as the popemobile passed, surrounded by a team of bodyguards walking briskly. Many of the crowd then ran to keep up with him as he drove a mile or so further to Hyde Park for a Vigil on the eve of Cardinal Newman's beatification.

The Pope then led tens of thousands of faithful in a beautiful Vigil ceremony of prayer and adoration in a large, cordoned off corner of Hyde Park. Sadly, because of so many concerns over security, only ticket holders were allowed in, leaving tens of thousands outside, forced to watch the proceedings on screens from the other side of a large temporary wall.

In his address, the Pope spoke about all that young Catholics can learn from Cardinal Newman. He also referred to the example of Catholic martyrs, adding that although today Catholics are not hanged, drawn and quartered for their faith, they are often "dismissed out of hand or ridiculed." We must withstand this, he added, by believing that the "kindly light of faith" will show us the way.

Again people of all ages and cultures were present, and even youngsters wearing "hoodies" -- usually a mark of rebellion against authority -- were deep in prayer.

For me personally as a British Catholic, to see the Vicar of Christ passing such familiar landmarks as Horse Guards Parade, Buckingham Palace and the Mall and then leading the Benediction in Hyde Park was an almost surreal experience and something I personally never imagined I'd see.

Perhaps more than the speech in Westminster Hall yesterday, it was during these moments that it seemed to

me the Catholic Church had once again truly become acceptable in Britain, that a new chapter for British Catholics had begun, and the country's troubled past with the Church -- an institution to which this country owes its deepest cultural roots -- had finally come to an end.