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Pope apologizes for 'unspeakable crimes' of sex abuse

John L. Allen Jr. | Sep. 18, 2010

Anglican Archbishop Rowan Williams of Canterbury embraces Pope Benedict XVI after an evening prayer at Westminster Abbey in London Sept. 17. (CNS/Reuters)

London -- On day three of Pope Benedict XVI?s four-day visit to the United Kingdom, the pontiff has once again used strong language on the sexual abuse crisis, expressing ?deep sorrow to the innocent victims of these unspeakable crimes.?

The pontiff said he feels "shame and humiliation" because of the scandals, and called upon Catholics to express "concern for the victims and solidarity with your priests."

It marks the second time Benedict has tackled the crisis since taking off on Thursday, when he told reporters aboard the papal plane he feels ?sadness? that the church was ?not sufficiently vigilant, and not sufficiently quick and decisive? in coming to grips with the scandal.

In trying to turn a corner on the crisis, Benedict faces a skeptical British public. A CNN survey conducted by the polling firm Comres just before the pope?s arrival found that 77 percent of all British adults feel he hasn?t done enough to punish abuser priests, along with 56 percent of British Catholics.

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