

Vatican recalls Irish ambassador over abuse report

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VATICAN CITY (RNS) The Vatican has recalled its ambassador to Ireland for "consultations" on the official church response to a government report that tallied how abuse cases were mishandled as recently as two years ago.

The extraordinary move to recall the papal nuncio, Monsignor Giuseppe Leanza, is also meant to show "a certain note of surprise and regret regarding some excessive reactions" to the report, Vatican spokesman Rev. Ciro Benedettini said on Monday (July 25).

The government's Cloyne Report detailed sex abuse in the Diocese of Cloyne as late as 2009.

Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny has criticized what he called the Vatican's "calculated, withering position" on abuse, and accused the church of a persistent culture of "elitism and narcissism."

"The recalling of the nuncio," Benedettini said, is "a measure rarely used by the Holy See" and "denotes the seriousness of the situation, and the desire of the Holy See to deal with it with objectivity and determination."

Such an act, he added, "should be interpreted in line with the Holy See's desire for serious and effective cooperation" with the authorities.

The Irish government's proposed law to mandate the reporting of suspected child abuse -- even if it meant breaching the seal of confession -- also drew criticism from the Vatican.

Monsignor Gianfranco Girotti, head of the Apostolic Penitentiary, the Vatican office that oversees sacramental confessions, called the proposal "absurd" and said Catholic priests would never comply with it.

The penalty for breaching the seal of confession is automatic excommunication, he told the daily *Il Foglio*.