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Belfast Leaders Strike Deal To Save Power-Sharing Government



Sinn Féin's Martin McGuinness and the DUP's Peter Robinson during the negotiations. Photo- AP

AFTER MONTHS OF NEGOTIATIONS political leaders in the north of Ireland reached agreement to sustain the troubled unity government in Stormont on Tuesday, December 23.

Politics in the north have been rife with instability for more than two years now.

Last year saw violent clashes between unionist supporters and the police over the decision by Belfast City Council to restrict the number of days the Union flag flies over government buildings. (The number is still more than in most cities in England). Unionists and their supporters also regularly

indulge in civil disobedience in response to rulings made by the Parades Commission to re-route their contentious sectarian marches around nationalist areas. There has been significant disagreement over how to handle legacy issues arising from the Troubles.

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Pope Might Visit Ireland In 2016

APAPAL VISIT TO IRELAND IS looking increasingly likely after the Papal Nuncio indicated that a short trip in 2016 might be possible.

Archbishop Charles Brown ruled out a 2015 visit by Pope Francis but said of a later trip: "I think it is possible".

The New York-born diplomat, who is Dean of the Diplomatic Corps in Ireland, said: "I am sure that Catholics in Ireland, the bishops in Ireland, the priests in Ireland—everyone would be absolutely overjoyed if Pope Francis could come."

In February last year the Seánad made an official invitation to the Pope and this was followed in April by an invitation

from Taoiseach Enda Kenny.

"So we have a groundswell, I think, of support for that idea," said Dr Brown.

"Ireland is very close to the Pope's heart—I have talked to him about this. He really has a great love for Ireland. He has a great love for the Blessed Virgin Mary and he is in tune with that Marian piety of the Irish people."

"So the invitations are coming from Ireland—so encouraging, so beautiful and such a testimony to the Catholic faith of the people in Ireland.

"You mix all of these things together and it makes me hope that a visit could be possible. I think it is possible," he said.



San Diego Irish Help Children In Need, Christmas & Year Round
Full story and pictures on pages 8 and 9 of this edition