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Francis: Pedophile Priests Cause “Shame” for the Church

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Francis also expressed his “closeness” with those whom he called “my Islamic brothers” regarding the tragedy that occurred in Mecca on Thursday, where at least 717 people died in a stampede during the annual Muslim hajj.

The pontiff prayed vespers – the traditional evening prayers – before a large audience of U.S. clergy and Catholic faithful and acknowledged that “you have suffered much because of the shame caused by so many brothers who have wounded and scandalized the Church (by abusing) its most helpless children.”

The pontiff, speaking in Spanish, said that he knows of the suffering the “People of God” have endured because of these acts, which he called “crimes” earlier this week at a meeting with U.S. bishops.

“I accompany you in this time of sadness and difficulty, (and) I thank God for the service you are doing in accompanying the People of God,” Francis told the assembled clergy in the majestic New York cathedral.

The pope on Wednesday urged everyone to work to ensure that acts of pedophilia by clergy never occur again, as they had during what he termed “dark moments” in recent years in this country, although he did not specifically cite any cases of the sexual abuse of minors by priests.

The pope alluded to the instances of pedophilia committed by members of the U.S. clergy after

recalling that priests and other religious workers in this country “in the field of education alone have had a fundamental role.”

And that, he said, has “helped parents in the work of giving their children the food that nourishes them for life.”

The Argentine pontiff referred specifically to the contributions of St. Isabel Ana Seton, the co-founder of the first free Catholic school for girls in the United States, and to St. Juan Neumann, the founder of the first Catholic educational system in this country.

On Friday, the pope will deliver a speech at the United Nations before some 150 heads of state and government, who will gather there to approve the new global development agenda.

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