



# Pope Francis Apologizes to Indigenous Peoples for 'Grave Sins' of Colonialism

Speaking in Bolivia, Pope Francis apologized to Indigenous Peoples of America for the Catholic Church's role in the 'grave sins' of colonialism.

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In a landmark speech, Pope Francis apologized on Thursday for the “grave sins” of colonialism against Indigenous Peoples of America in a speech to grassroots groups in Bolivia.

“Some may rightly say, ‘When the pope speaks of colonialism, he overlooks certain actions of the church,’ ” the Pope said, according to *The New York Times*. “I say this to you with regret: Many grave sins were committed against the Native people of America in the name of God.”

He didn't stop there.

“I humbly ask forgiveness, not only for the offense of the church herself, but also for crimes committed against the native peoples during the so-called conquest of America,” [The New York Times](#) reported.

He spoke to a crowd of more than 1,500 at the World Meeting of Popular Movements, standing side-by-side with Bolivian President Evo Morales, the Andean nation's first indigenous president.

Although Latin American church leaders have issued apologies in the past, this one went further and was much more targeted, the [Associated Press](#) reported. Previous apologies had not been directed at Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, AP said.

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The Catholic Church was one of many Christian denominations that ran boarding schools in Canada and the U.S. designed to “kill the Indian in the child” by taking kids from their families, cutting them off from their culture and educating them in the ways of the European-minded settlers. The Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission on June 2 came out with a report calling such practices “cultural genocide” and recommending that Prime Minister Stephen Harper ask the Pope for an apology. Though Harper met with Pope Francis and mentioned the report, he did not specifically request the apology, and the Pontiff’s words in Bolivia did not reference the TRC document.

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Many have called for him to outright rescind the Doctrine of Discovery, which paved the way for centuries of oppression against Indigenous Peoples.

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The Pontiff is touring South America for eight days, with stops in Ecuador, Bolivia and Paraguay. He has come out strongly against the environmental ravages and social injustice of climate change, and in Thursday’s speech he continued in that vein, by calling leaders who do not defend Mother Earth “cowards.” He also said they are committing “a grave sin,” AP said.

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