



Thousands have marched in London to protest against the Pope's visit. Organisers of the Protest the Pope event said they wanted to highlight his stance on controversial subjects, including the ordination of women.

Sex abuse and Catholic opposition to contraception have also been criticised. Organisers of the protest say 20,000 people took part in the rally; however, police say they are unable to confirm this figure. The march proceeded from Hyde Park Corner through central London to Whitehall where a rally was held with speakers including gay rights activist Peter Tatchell.

The event took place as Catholics gathered in Hyde Park for an evening prayer vigil led by the Pope. Among the protesters was comedian Al Murray. He said: "Like a lot of people I am a perplexed that it is a state visit.

"The Pope's opposition to condoms kills people. It is all very well him lecturing us on morals but he should look at his own organisation's view." Speakers at the rally included the human rights lawyer Geoffrey Robertson and atheist scientist and author of *The God Delusion*, Richard Dawkins.

At the rally, Mr Robertson said: "We are here today to celebrate our faith in liberty of conscience; our faith in equality; our faith in human rights.

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