

Irish welcome him like one of theirs

DUBLIN, Ireland (AP) - An army band belted out "Hey, Look Me Over," and Pope John Paul II moved happily among one third of Ireland's people, gathered since dawn on the green playing fields of Phoenix Park.

From the moment yesterday when he addressed them in Gaelic as "the loyal people of Ireland," he was theirs, a pope to be cheered and whistled at like a pop star or a football hero.

A million and a quarter people, half again as many as Dublin's population, and more than had turned out for any other event, even a war, in the whole history of Ireland, went wild with enthusiasm when the 59-year pontiff told them "like St. Patrick, I have heard the people of Ireland calling to me and so I came to all of you in Ireland."

Normally the pious Irish do not conduct themselves so exuberantly during the sermon at Mass, but it was a story that every schoolboy knew: how Patrick the exiled Roman slave had come back to Ireland to Christianize his people.

Never having seen a pope before on their native soil, the crowds that had been gathering since dawn in Europe's largest park let their feelings match the mood of the smiling red-faced man up on the altar platform.

The band music, like "Moon River" and "He Got the Whole World in His Hands," seemed more in keeping with the state-fair atmosphere of the outdoor papal Mass than did the solemn hallelujah choruses that greeted his orange helicopter as it arrived over the tall elms of the old park.

The weather was just what the nuns had ordered weeks ago with their prayers. A few fleecy clouds, a warm, bright sun that

backlighted the autumn reds and golds of the distant Wicklow mountains and a stiff breeze to rattle the 60 enormous papal banners that flanked the altar.

The airport weather bureau pronounced it the finest Sept. 29 in 30 years. "And so it should be," said Sister Juliana of County Leix, celebrating her 62nd anniversary with the Mercy order, "We have been praying for it two hours a night since the visit was announced.

A sliver of a moon still looked down from a star-flecked sky when Dubliners by the tens of thousands, carrying aluminum chairs and picnic knapsacks began crossing over the dark River Liffey bridges in the direction of the great park.

There was such a rush when the gates opened at 5 a.m. that two teen-agers suffered broken legs and at least a dozen other people sprained ankles scurrying for jetter places in the dim glow of the park's venerable gas lamps.

One man died of a heart attack hours before the pope arrived. A woman in birth pangs was rushed to a maternity hospital, but when it turned out to be a false alarm, she returned to the park in time to catch the pope's passage through the crowd.

"The number of people around here in an advanced state of pregnancy is absolutely ridiculous," complained a young Irish garda — policeman — who had been on duty since 3 a.m. "It would suit them right down to the ground to give birth right in front of the Holy Father. Of course if it was a boy, they'd name him John Paul and he'd have to become a priest."