

## Features

# Lovely huggly: Embracing saint Amma has held 32m in her arms



Comforting ... Amma clasps Irish Sun reporter Larissa in a warm and loving hug

Crispin Rodwell



Loving embrace ... Amma spreads her affection far and wide

Crispin Rodwell



Healing hugs ... Amma consoles millions

By **LARISSA NOLAN** Published: 8 hrs ago

**SHE travels the world bringing comfort and consolation to millions — all with**

And yesterday, Amma — known as the Hugging Saint — brought her message of love to the people of Ireland.

Up to 10,000 flocked to Dublin's National Show Centre to be held by Amma, who hugs everyone. Even the Irish Sun.

And in return we got a loving embrace from the woman who has held **32 MILLION** people.

This is her fourth visit to Ireland, where Amma always attracts enormous crowds. And this year was busier than ever — with all the recession in the country, it seemed like everyone wanted a free hug.

Born Mata Amritanandamayi in Kerala, her nickname Amma means 'Mother' and she calls all those she hugs her children. The Indian guru believes she was born to comfort people in need or despair.

And it was clear that her Irish devotees feel the same as men, women and children from all walks of life queued for hours to be hugged by her.

Amma, 59, says: "As long as there is enough strength in these hands to reach out to those who come to me, to place a hand on a crying person's shoulder, to console or wipe away tears, I will do it."

There is no charge for entry and all donations go to her charity projects.

Wearing a white sari and sitting on a big, soft chair, Amma drew person after person to her bosom.

With a big radiant smile, she comforted them one by one. Kneeling before her, they cried with happiness as she held them close.



Everyone wants a piece ... Amma's hugs are in demand

When it came to my turn, Amma flashed me her beaming smile and pulled my head to her chest.

She whispered: "Child, child, child" into my ear, kissed me and smiled. Curiously, she called me back afterwards to give me her own prayer bead necklace.

I didn't feel a sense of enlightenment — but it did feel really good.

Everyone could do with a hug from Amma.

She is in the National Show Centre again today.