

# Aide Explains Pope's Surprise Plan to Visit Spain

## Says Pontiff Aims to Further Dialogue With Artists

VATICAN CITY, MARCH 8, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Benedict XVI's unexpected acceptance of invitations to visit Barcelona and Santiago de Compostela in Spain this year reveals something about his goals, the Vatican spokesman said.

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, director of the Vatican press office, stated this Sunday on the latest edition of Octava Dies.

The Holy See recently announced these additions to the Papal agenda, which was somewhat unexpected and "last minute," given the preparation entailed in such events, the spokesman explained.

He noted that this trip to Spain, which will take place in November, highlights two "fascinating" goals that the Pope has decided to highlight: furthering the dialogue between art and faith and underlining the Christian roots of Europe.

Father Lombardi stated that it will leave an important mark on this pontificate.

"We thought the agenda of the Pope's international trips for 2010 was defined with the usual number of four and, all of a sudden, with a surprising decision, Benedict XVI has accepted two other invitations to Spain," the priest said.

He continued: "The number of trips, in addition to Malta, Portugal, Cyprus and Great Britain, thus increases to five: the Mediterranean and the Middle East, the Iberian Peninsula and northern Europe.

"They are not enormous distances, but very different environments. We will have the opportunity to listen, to participate and to learn."

## Pilgrimage

Speaking about the upcoming trip to Barcelona for the consecration of the Sagrada Familia Church on Nov. 7, the spokesman affirmed that this building's "original synthesis of art and faith born from Gaudi's genius will give the Pope a precious occasion to continue the discourse of dialogue with art, proposed intensely by him in the recent meeting with artists in the Sistine Chapel."

He noted that the archbishop of that city, Cardinal Lluís Martínez Sistach, stated that the church is "of artistic, biblical, theological, spiritual and catechetical significance, unique in the world."

"Santiago de Compostela," Father Lombardi continued, "goal of the journey of pilgrims that for centuries have arrived there from so many countries and different directions, is a place where it is demonstrated that the subject of Europe's Christian roots is not an abstract theory.

Rather, he said, this pilgrimage site, which the Holy Father plans to visit Nov. 6, manifests "the concrete experience of all kinds of people, of the most diverse origins, who converge moved by a common spirituality."

The spokesman concluded that these in these two visits in Spain, "Pope Benedict XVI continues his pilgrimage, to speak of God to every man of our time willing to seek his face."

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