

Baltimore's presence will be felt during pope's April visit

As the United States prepares for its first papal visit in nine years, members of the Archdiocese of Baltimore are busy planning their own involvement for Pope Benedict XVI's trip to Washington, D.C., and New York April 15-20.

Events run the gamut from school service projects in honor of Pope Benedict XVI to prayer services for the pontiff.

Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien, who was a former rector of the Pontifical North American College in Rome in the early 1990s and often saw then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger walking from his offices across the square at St. Peter's, will attend the prayer service with Pope Benedict at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., April 16. The archbishop will also participate in the Mass at Nationals Park in Washington on April 17.

In New York, Archbishop O'Brien will join U.S. cardinals for dinner with the pope on April 18, and on April 19 he will participate in the Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral and a youth event at St. Joseph Seminary in Yonkers. Additionally, he will participate in the April 20 Mass at Yankee Stadium.

Archbishop Pietro Sambi, the pope's representative to the United States, said the main reason the pope is coming to the U.S. is to celebrate major birthdays in the American church, such as the 200th anniversary of the Diocese of Baltimore's elevation to archdiocesan status. The dioceses of New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Bardstown (now Louisville, Ky.), will celebrate 200 years since being named dioceses.

Cardinal William H. Keeler, retired archbishop of Baltimore, will join other U.S. cardinals for lunch with the pope on April 16 in Washington and a dinner on April 18 in New York. He will attend the papal Mass at Nationals Park April 17 and the meeting with representatives of other religions at the John Paul II Cultural Center in Washington, D.C., that same day. He will also participate in the meeting with

representatives of other Christian denominations at St. Joseph Church in New York April 18.

Bishop W. Francis Malooly, western vicar, Bishop Denis J. Madden, urban vicar, and Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski, eastern vicar, will each attend the April 16 prayer service with the pope at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, as well as a variety of other events.

Seminarians from St. Mary's Seminary, Roland Park, and Mount St. Mary's, Emmitsburg, will attend the Mass at Nationals Park on April 17.

School children from across the archdiocese are making everything from bookmarks to birthday cards for the pope. Many plan to watch televised coverage of the event and to use the pontiff's visit as a talking point in religion class.

Dr. Ronald J. Valenti, Baltimore superintendent of Catholic schools, will attend the pope's April 17 address at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., along with superintendents from other U.S. dioceses and the more than 200 heads of U.S. Catholic colleges and universities. Father Brian Linnane, S.J., president of Loyola College in Maryland, Baltimore; Mary Pat Seurkamp, president of College of Notre Dame of Maryland, Baltimore; and Thomas H. Powell, president of Mount St. Mary's University, Emmitsburg, will also attend.

St. Benedict, Baltimore, will hold an all-day prayer service April 16, from 8 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament will take place and the congregation will pray for the welfare of the pope on his visit. Mass will follow at 6:30 p.m.

Comcast and Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) have partnered to offer Comcast Digital Cable customers the opportunity to view coverage of the papal Mass taking place at Nationals Park in Washington, D.C., on April 17 and the Mass taking place at Yankee Stadium in New York City on April 20, through Comcast's video on demand.

Customers can view these Masses at no additional charge by tuning to Channel 1 on the Digital Cable lineup or pressing the ON DEMAND button on their remote control, then clicking on "Get Local" and selecting the "Papal Mass" folder.