

Countdown to the visit of Pope Francis to the United States: Part 2: Remembering past papal visits



Just nine days until Pope Francis arrives in the United States:

The excitement continues to build for this historic apostolic visit.

Part of the anticipation has sprung from the sharing of memories by those who have participated in papal visits of the past. Pope Francis is the fourth pontiff to visit our nation. His visit will mark the tenth papal visit.

[Quick notes on past papal visits:](#)

1. Pope Paul VI was the first pope to visit the United States and the United Nations in 1965;
2. Pope St. John Paul II visited the U.S. seven times:
 - a. 1979: Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Washington and Des Moines, Iowa;
 - b. 1981: Anchorage, Alaska;
 - c. 1984: For several hours in Fairbanks, Alaska where he met with President Reagan during a layover;
 - d. 1987: Miami, Columbia, South Carolina, New Orleans, San Antonio, Phoenix, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Detroit;
 - e. 1993: Denver for World Youth Day;
 - f. 1995: Newark, New Jersey, New York, Baltimore;
 - g. 1999: St. Louis;
3. Pope Benedict XVI visited Washington, DC and New York in April of 2008.
Read more about these papal visits and the meetings with the U.S. president in my March 27, 2014 edition of:
[“Catholic Throwback Thursday: Looking back at the eight meetings of popes and presidents on American soil”](#)

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Looking back to the historic 1995 visit of Pope St. John Paul II to Baltimore:
The 1995 visit of Pope St. John Paul II to our Premier See is among the highlights of the history of the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

My memories:

“The Vicar of Christ had come to us!”

“There are moments that you know have become etched in your memory forever. That’s how I feel every time I look back on the 1995 visit of Pope St. John Paul II to my hometown of Baltimore.

A Religion teacher at John Carroll at that time, I was part of the committee that coordinated the service of our youth as city ambassadors and parade honor guard. After my early bird service that morning, I met up with my family at Camden Yards for the Mass.

The excitement of the crowds to see the Holy Father was palpable. I will never forget the cries of joy throughout the stadium when it was announced on the JumboTron that his TWA Shepherd One plane was landing at BWI. We all watched the live video coverage as the plane landed, followed by greetings from a welcoming entourage, and the escorted motorcade procession driving north on I-95 toward us. All eyes were on the JumboTron screen.

When the popemobile entered the stadium and drove slowly along the warning track around the perimeter of the field, there were tears of joy amid the deafening applause. Chants of “John Paul Two, we love you!” filled the air. This was far bigger than any rock concert or public gathering that I have ever seen in person or on television. The Vicar of Christ had come to us!

As the Holy Father celebrated Mass with Cardinal Keeler and the throngs of cardinals, bishops and priests, I was overcome with incredible gratitude at being

able to witness our Church history in the making.

Undoubtedly, Baltimore, the premier see of Catholic faith in our nation, would never be the same. And I will cherish these memories and those precious hours that I spent in the presence of a saint for all my days.

Pope St. John Paul II, pray for us!"