

Greek Orthodox archbishop to visit pope, announces Vatican

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Archbishop Christodoulos of Athens, spiritual leader of the Orthodox church of Greece, will visit Pope Benedict XVI Dec. 13-16, the Vatican announced.

“The archbishop will be received with warm ecclesial brotherhood and with the honor due to his position as primate of the Orthodox church of Greece,” said the Dec. 4 announcement of the visit.

During the visit, the announcement said, Pope Benedict and Archbishop Christodoulos will participate in a ceremony at Rome’s Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls.

Pope Benedict will give the archbishop “part of the precious chain of St. Paul’s imprisonment,” which is preserved at the basilica built in his honor.

The basilica is built over the traditional site of St. Paul’s burial. The chains believed to have held St. Paul during his imprisonment just before his execution are preserved in the basilica’s Chapel of the Relics.

St. Paul preached in Athens before making his way to Rome, where he was killed.

While Archbishop Christodoulos came to Rome for the April 2005 funeral of Pope John Paul II, the December visit will be his first official visit to the Vatican and his first official meeting with Pope Benedict.