

# Pope to visit Fatima shrine in Portugal next May

VATICAN CITY – Pope Benedict XVI plans to visit the shrine of Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal next May, Portuguese bishops announced.

The pope will preside over ceremonies May 13, the date of the first apparition of Mary to three shepherd children in 1917. No other details of the papal program were immediately available, according to Vatican Radio.

The trip is the second papal foreign visit announced for 2010. Pope Benedict will travel to Malta in April, and was also expected to visit Great Britain, perhaps in the fall.

“We are certain that the Portuguese people, regardless of their ideology or religion, will welcome this person who has been and remains a prophet of such fundamental and urgent causes as peace and freedom, dialogue, justice and fraternity,” said a statement signed by Archbishop Jorge da Costa Ortiga of Braga, president of the Portuguese bishops’ conference.

As a cardinal, Pope Benedict led an international pilgrimage to Fatima in 1996. Pope John Paul II visited Portugal three times.