

# Synod, saints, shroud all on papal calendar for 2010

VATICAN CITY - As Pope Benedict XVI says goodbye to 2009, his 2010 calendar is already being filled.

On the horizon for the next 12 months are four papal trips; a Middle East Synod of Bishops; the expected publication of a document on the Bible and the second volume of "Jesus of Nazareth;" a major gathering of the world's priests; a pilgrimage to the Shroud of Turin; a probable consistory and several likely canonizations and beatifications - including that of Pope John Paul II.

In April Pope Benedict marks five years in office, and the event will no doubt be marked by modest festivities and lots of analysis on the accomplishments and priorities of the German pontiff, who turns 83 the same month.

Several of his endeavors are works in progress, like the ongoing negotiations with the traditionalist Society of St. Pius X and the effort to bring its leaders back into full communion. No breakthrough is guaranteed in 2010, but Vatican officials say that, at the very least, the picture should be much clearer as twice-a-month meetings proceed.

January brings traditional papal liturgies and meetings, including an encounter Jan. 11 with the diplomatic corps accredited to the Vatican. Six days later, Pope Benedict will visit Rome's synagogue for the first time, an event that has added drama since the pope's recent decision to advance Pope Pius XII's sainthood cause.

The new year also means a new slate of "ad limina" visits by groups of bishops around the world. Although the visits traditionally are made every five years, the interval has grown longer recently, and it now appears that U.S. bishops, who last came in 2004, will not be making their "ad limina" visits until 2011 - or even later.

The pope's second volume on the life of Jesus is expected to be released in the spring, although translations may take a little longer. It's expected to cover Christ's childhood, passion, death and resurrection.

Pope Benedict will make at least four foreign trips in 2010: to Malta in April, to the Marian shrine at Fatima in Portugal in May, to Cyprus in early June and to England in mid-September. The fact that all four will take place in Europe or the Mediterranean gave rise to a rumor that the pope has decided not to make any more long-distance trips – a rumor that informed Vatican sources said was completely untrue.

During his visit to the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, the pope will present the working document for the Synod of Bishops on the Middle East, which will take place Oct. 10-24 at the Vatican. Joining him on Cyprus will be church leaders from places like northern Africa, the Holy Land and Iraq.

The pope is still putting the finishing touches on a document from a previous synod, the 2008 assembly on the Bible. That text is expected in the first half of the year.

Pope Benedict is scheduled to make four trips in Italy in 2010, including a visit in early May to see the Shroud of Turin, which many believe is the burial cloth of Christ. In early October, he makes a one-day visit to Palermo, Sicily, to address a meeting of families and youths.

Beatifications and canonizations will loom large on the papal calendar in 2010. Romans are already planning for the possible beatification of Pope John Paul II in October – presuming that a miracle will be attributed to his intercession sometime during the next several months. On his September trip to England, the pope is expected to preside over the beatification of Cardinal John Henry Newman, the influential 19th-century theologian and former Anglican.

Among those due to be canonized by the pope sometime in 2010 is Blessed Mary MacKillop, the Australian founder of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart.

Pope Benedict will close the Year for Priests in June, presiding over a worldwide congress of priests in Rome June 9-11 on the theme “Fidelity of Christ, Fidelity of the Priest.” The program includes an evening gathering with the pope and the priests in St. Peter’s Square.

Consistories to create new cardinals are always tough to predict, but most insiders

expect Pope Benedict to hand out red hats sometime in 2010. Given the limit of 120 cardinals under age 80 and eligible to vote in a conclave, the pope would have at least 12 vacancies to fill by the middle of the year, and 19 if he waits until mid-November.

There's already a lot of speculation about which U.S. prelates, if any, would be named a cardinal. While most point to the archbishops of New York and Washington as likely candidates, it should be remembered that both archdioceses still have cardinals under the age of 80. Both Washington Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick and New York Cardinal Edward M. Egan are retired from their posts as archbishops.

In addition, the number of U.S. voting-age cardinals is at a record high 13, which will dip to 11 by the end of 2010.

Among those most certain to be on the next list of new cardinals is U.S. Archbishop Raymond L. Burke, head of the Vatican's highest tribunal, whose job title foresees that he be named a cardinal.