

Tiny T-shirt for a teddy bear pays tribute to pope's U.S. visit

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The first officially sanctioned Washington souvenir for Pope Benedict XVI's upcoming visit to the United States is a tiny T-shirt for a teddy bear.

The white T-shirt, imprinted with the "Christ Our Hope" logo created for the papal trip, will be sold only at six Washington-area Build-A-Bear Workshop stores, where customers can design and stuff their own teddy bears.

The logo was released in December by the U.S. bishops' communications department. Under the message "Christ Our Hope" is an image of Pope Benedict XVI with outstretched arms in front of the dome of St. Peter's Basilica.

Pope Benedict will be in Washington April 15-17 and in New York City April 18-20.

"This is a great way to bring our faith into the secular world and in a family-friendly way," said Susan Gibbs, communications director for the Washington Archdiocese. "It's not often that a parent shopping with her kids can walk into a major mall and buy something that is distinctly Catholic."

Gibbs added that the archdiocese is happy to partner with Build-A-Bear Workshop for the papal visit to Washington, saying the St. Louis-based chain has been "wonderful to work with."

"All of their stores in the Washington region will offer (the) official papal T-shirt for the bears, and will promote it prominently," she added.

The bear shown wearing the souvenir shirt in promotional photos is the Build-A-Bear Workshop mascot, "Bearemy."

Some of the proceeds from the sales of the T-shirt will go toward the Christ Our Hope Foundation Inc., which is financially supporting the papal visit to Washington.

The "Christ Our Hope" logo T-shirt costs \$6. A bear to wear the shirt is sold separately and costs \$10 to \$20.