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Pope Benedict to meet President Obama July 10

Cindy Wooden Catholic News Service | Jun. 23, 2009

(composite by NCR from CNS photos)

tVATICAN CITY -- Pope Benedict XVI will welcome U.S. President Barack Obama to the Vatican July 10 for an audience scheduled to begin at 4 p.m.

tObama will visit Italy July 8-10 to participate in the Group of Eight summit, a meeting of leaders of the world's wealthiest nations. The meeting will be held in L'Aquila, site of a devastating earthquake in April.

tAfter the G-8 summit, the president and his wife, Michelle, are scheduled to fly to Ghana, arriving late July 10.

tAlthough Pope Benedict usually meets heads of state and government in the morning, the Vatican agreed to host Obama's first visit to the papal palace the evening before he flies to Africa.

tIt is not clear whether Miguel Diaz, a theology professor tapped by Obama to be the new U.S. ambassador to the Holy See, will be present for the meeting. As of June 23, the Senate hearing for the new ambassador's confirmation was not on the public schedule of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

tDiscussions between popes and U.S. presidents usually focus on common concerns regarding world events and the church's concerns over issues or policies with special moral relevance. So in addition to discussing ongoing tensions in the Middle East, especially the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the situation in Iraq, Pope Benedict likely will bring up his concerns regarding abortion policy in the United States and renewed government permission for embryonic stem-cell research.

Yesterday, NCR launched a series of podcast interviews discussing U.S.-Vatican relations. Look at **this page for updates** [1] over the next several days.

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