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ROME, JUNE 5, 2006 (Zenit.org).- The program for Benedict XVI's visit to Valencia, Spain, for the 5th World Meeting of Families aims to allow him direct contact with pilgrims.

Pilgrims from all over the world will meet July 1-9 to exchange experiences and to further their understanding of the role of the Christian family. The theme of the World Meeting is "Transmission of the Faith in the Family."

There are four main features to a WMF gathering: an international congress, Eucharistic celebrations (by linguistic groups) for families on pilgrimage, a vigil with families' testimonies, and the closing Mass.

The last two ceremonies will be presided over by Benedict XVI, whose flight, coming from Rome, will arrive at the Valencia-Manises airport on Saturday, July 8, around 11:30 a.m.

After the welcome ceremony and the Holy Father's address, he will be driven in an open vehicle from the airport to the cathedral of Valencia in the city center.

Basilica stop

Benedict XVI will visit the cathedral and the Holy Chalice Chapel. Rita Barberá, mayor of the city, will hand the keys of the city to the Pontiff, who will then go on foot to the Basilica of the Virgin of the Helpless.

After visiting the basilica, the Holy Father will recite the Angelus in the basilica's square. He will then be received in the Archbishop's Palace, residence of Valencia's Archbishop Agustín García-Gasco, where the Pope will reside during his stay in Valencia.

Later Benedict XVI will go to the palace of the autonomous government of Valencia, where he will meet with the Spanish royal family.

On his return to the Archbishop's Palace, Benedict XVI will receive the visit of the president of the country's government.

The Bishop of Rome will then go in an open car to the testimonial meeting, which, beginning at 8 p.m., will gather hundreds of thousands of families at the Puente de Monteolivete in a context of prayer and testimonies. They will alternate with artistic-cultural presentations by artists.

The venue is being made suitable to accommodate more than 1 million pilgrims. Those present will hear the Pope's message and the ceremony will close with a fireworks display.

The Holy Father will return in an open car to the Archbishop's Palace, where he will spend the night.

Closing Mass

Benedict XVI will repeat this itinerary the following day, Sunday, July 9, when he will return in an open car to Puente de Monteolivete, where he will preside over the 9:30 a.m. solemn closing Mass and deliver the homily.

During the Mass, some spouses who have celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary will renew their marriage vows.

At the end of the ceremony, Benedict XVI will lead the recitation of the Angelus.

After taking leave of the pilgrims, the Pontiff will go to the Manises airport where, after the farewell ceremony and the corresponding addresses, his flight will take off around 1 p.m. and head for the Roman airport of Ciampino.

In addition to the International Theological-Pastoral Congress (July 4-7) the World Meeting of Families program indicates the simultaneous celebration of a congress for young people (from 16 to 25 years of age), and another for grandparents.

For the first time at a World Meeting of Families, there will be a fair dedicated solely to families (July 1-7) and the convocation to a family rosary (July 7).

In regard to Eucharistic celebrations by linguistic groups, on Saturday, July 8, beginning at 10 a.m., there will be simultaneous liturgical ceremonies in most of the city's churches.

[See www.wmf2006.org]