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**BACKGROUND**

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**Ad Limina Visit to Rome – Canadian Bishops 2006**

In September 2006, the Ontario Catholic Bishops, including Cardinal Ambrozic, and his auxiliary bishops from the Archdiocese of Toronto, will meet in Rome for their *ad limina* visit with Pope Benedict XVI. The *ad limina* visit is scheduled from September 1-11, 2006, and will include meetings with the Holy Father.

**Definition**

The “ad limina” visit refers to the obligatory visit, every five years, by the ordinaries (bishops) of dioceses to the Holy See and takes its name from the ancient practice of pilgrimages *ad limina apostolorum* - to the thresholds (or tombs) of Sts. Peter and Paul in Rome.

In the Archdiocese of Toronto, this visit by Cardinal Ambrozic and the auxiliary bishops is a visible sign of communion with the Holy See while providing an opportunity for him to report on the condition of the Archdiocese of Toronto to the Holy Father. This five-year report, called the Quinquennial Report, is based on questions sent from Rome on behalf of the various Congregations (Vatican departments) and gives a detailed accounting of statistics and information pertaining to the Archdiocese of Toronto and the role of the Catholic community within our geographic region.

**The Visit**

Ordinarily, Bishops make their *ad limina* visits in groups, with the bishops of a country or ecclesiastical province traveling to Rome and meeting with the Pope together. This will vary depending on the logistical size of a country and its bishops’ conference.

During an *ad limina* visit the bishop is required to take part in the following:

- Personally visit the tombs of Sts. Peter and Paul, for prayer and reflection.
- The bishop has a discussion with the Holy Father on the state of the diocese based on the written report, which was submitted earlier in the year.

## History

Throughout history it has been customary for bishops to visit the Pope personally when circumstances required it however, guidelines binding a bishop to visit on a regular basis evolved slowly, and the first recorded happenings are found in the ancient practice of celebrating twice a year provincial councils of the bishops of Italy. From various Papal decrees and from the eleventh century onward, the custom gradually evolved of visiting the thresholds of the apostles at stated times, either personally or by a substitute. Pope Sixtus V, in 1585, set clear guidelines of expectations for *ad limina* visits when he issued the Constitution “Romanus Pontifex”, which for over three hundred years formed the norm for visits *ad limina*.

The guidelines that are used today regarding an *ad limina* visit are found in the Decree of the Consistorial Congregation, issued by order of Pius X (December 31, 1909). The decree states that every bishop must render to the pope an account of the state of his diocese once every five years. The quinquennial periods began in 1911 and as every diocese in the world would be included in the five year cycle, the following schedule was implemented:

- Year one** – Bishops of Italy and of the islands of Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily, and Malta.
- Year two** – Bishops of Spain, Portugal, France, Belgium, Holland, England, Scotland and Ireland.
- Year three** – Bishops of Austro-Hungarian and German Empires and the remainder of Europe.
- Year four** – Bishops of all America.
- Year five** – Bishops of Africa, Asia, Australia, and the adjacent islands.