

A Plan For  
**PARISH PRAYER AND PREPARATION GATHERINGS**  
The Apostolic Journey of Pope Benedict XVI to The Archdiocese of New York  
April 18 – 19 – 20, 2008

**Theme of Parish Prayer and Preparation Gatherings: CHRIST OUR HOPE**

1. **What Is The Purpose Of These Parish Gatherings?** To provide an opportunity for Archdiocesan Catholics, especially those who will participate in the Papal events in person or by television, to prepare in their own parish for the coming of the Vicar of Christ to New York. Parishes are invited to do this for their people.
2. **How Will This Be Done?** Through a two hour program conducted in the parish, of prayer, study, and conversation about Pope Benedict's Encyclical *Spe Salvi*, with dialogue on the meaning of his visit to the Archdiocese and United States.
3. **Who Would Lead These Parish Gatherings?** Pastors would designate one or two volunteers to attend a workshop and learn how to conduct these sessions in their parishes. These leaders might be deacons, catechists, lay persons in parish ministries, or anyone designated by the pastor. There is no fee. Training will be conducted by the Catholic Charities Department of Social and Community Development staff at five convenient sites:
  - St. Ignatius Loyola, Manhattan            Thursday Feb.21 7pm-9pm
  - Poughkeepsie Catholic Center            Thursday Feb.28 7pm-9pm
  - Blessed Sacrament, Staten Island        Thursday Mar.6 7pm-9pm
  - St. Joseph's Seminary, Yonkers          Thursday Mar.13 7pm-9pm
  - St. Francis of Assisi, West Nyack        Thursday Mar.27 7pm-9pm
4. **When Would A Parish Schedule Its Program(s)?** Good dates would be between Easter Sunday (March 23) and the Pope's arrival in the USA on April 15. Good time(s) would be whenever people can gather: evening, daytime, weekend.
5. **What Would Happen At These Parish Prayer and Preparation Gatherings?** Through prayer, reading and dialogue on the connection between *Spe Salvi* and the Holy Father's visit, participants would explore such topics as:
  - The reasons for the Holy Father's coming to the United Nations and the United States, and the meaning of his visit for our Church, society and culture.
  - How the encyclical *Spe Salvi* and its emphasis on faith-based hope can strengthen our lives and help us build God's Kingdom on earth
  - The places in our lives identified in *Spe Salvi* for the practice of a faith-based hope and how we might enliven hope in these settings.

**6. When Would These Parish Gatherings Be Held?** At times convenient for parishioners (weekday morning or evening, Saturday, Sunday following Masses) during the period following Easter and before the Holy Father's visit.

**7. What Is The Recommended Format For These Parish Gatherings?**

Hospitality/Refreshments when people come in	
Opening Prayer	10 Minutes
Introduction to Session by Leaders	5 Minutes
Group Discussion: Our Hopes for the Holy Father's Visit	15 Minutes
Presentation on <i>Spe Salvi</i>	20 Minutes
Break	
Scripture Reading	5 Minutes
Group Reflection/Discussion	20 Minutes
Questions/ Group Dialogue	15 Minutes
Closing Prayer	10 Minutes
Refreshments	

**8. What Will The Training Session Consist Of?** In each of the five locations, trainers will walk the parish representatives through the recommended format and provide them with tools, guidance and materials, in English and Spanish.

**Basic tools will include:**

1. Fundamentals of group process
2. Basic Insights of *Spe Salvi*
3. Information on the Pope's visit
4. Practical meeting considerations

**Basic materials will include:**

1. Suggested prayers and Scripture readings
2. Agenda\ Outline for the presentation on *Spe Salvi*
3. Questions For Group Reflection/Discussion
4. Personal copy of *Spe Salvi* and excerpts for reprinting

**9. What Should Happen Next To Get This On Parishioners' Schedules?**

- A. The pastor decides to offer this opportunity to his people
- B. He recruits representatives to go, to learn, and to lead
- C. They sign up for training by emailing: [thomas.dobbins@archny.org](mailto:thomas.dobbins@archny.org) or calling Mr. Dobbins at 212 371 1000, ext. 2473.
- D. One or more dates for the parish gathering are chosen and advertised
- E. Parishioners are invited to prepare spiritually for the Pope's visit in a variety of ways, especially including this free local program called:  
**PARISH PRAYER AND PREPARATION GATHERING**