

# *Final Stage of Works for Pope Francis' Mass in Havana*

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Havana, August 25 (RHC)-- At least 50 workers are in the final stages of building the altar where Argentinian-born Pope Francis will celebrate Mass at the Plaza de la Revolución in Havana during his four-day visit to Cuba in September.

Tens of thousands of Cubans are expected to attend three Masses in Havana, Holguin and El Cobre, in Santiago de Cuba during the Pope's visit. Some 1,000 pilgrims from abroad also are expected in Cuba.

Salvador Prats, General Director of Havana's Empresa de Producciones Metálicas, said the work is at 90 percent after 38 days working between 10 and 12 hours a day.

Workers have already built the main platform, the sacristy, a platform for the chorus and the symphonic orchestra as well as two others for the press with capacity for 400 journalists.

Prats also said workers will assemble 60 audio points and three giant posters, two in Cuba's National Theater and one in José Martí National library. Some 4,000 chairs will be placed for special guests.

Rolando Suarez, an attorney for the Cuban Conference of Catholic Bishops, is coordinating the logistics for international pilgrims and organizing buses and other transportation for Cubans from around the country who want to attend the Masses and take part in other activities during the Pope's visit.

The first Latin American Pope will visit Cuba from September 19th to the 22nd. He will officiate a Mass on September 20th in Havana.

Pope Francis plans an encounter with 30 people from each of Cuba's provinces at Santiago's Cathedral of Our Lady of Assumption before leaving Cuba to continue his trip to Washington -- where he will meet with President Barack Obama at the White House and address a joint session of Congress -- New York and Philadelphia.

Pope Francis had a key role in encouraging a rapprochement between Cuba and the United States. The two countries re-established diplomatic relations and opened respective embassies on July 20th for the first time in more than 50 years.

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