

Pope Francis Ends Visit to Ecuador and Travels to Bolivia



La Paz, July 8 (teleSUR-RHC)-- Pope Francis concluded a four-day visit to Ecuador on Wednesday and traveled to Bolivia, where he was received by President Evo Morales and other officials.

In Ecuador, over a million people enjoyed his visit and enthusiastically crowded the streets he drove through on various occasions. Pope Francis urged on Tuesday the Ecuadorean faithful to “fight for social inclusion” during an outdoor mass in Quito. “There is a need to fight for inclusion of all at all levels, avoiding selfishness, and promoting communication and dialogue,” the pontiff told a huge crowd at the Bicentennial Park.

The pope’s comments come on the heels of right-wing protests in Ecuador following government proposals to raise taxes on inheritance and capital gains. Ecuadorean President Rafael Correa insists the measures are necessary to address the country’s rampant inequality, saying that only the wealthiest two percent of Ecuadoreans will be affected.

Nonetheless, the opposition demonstrations – some of which have turned violent – have continued, in spite of calls from Ecuadorean officials for a national debate on wealth distribution.

In Bolivia, President Morales declared Wednesday a holiday in La Paz, and Thursday, in Santa Cruz, so that people can participate in all of the pope's events. He also imposed a ban on the sale and

consumption of alcohol beverages from Tuesday through Thursday.

In El Alto, a municipality of the capital La Paz, workers continued building a special campus from which the pope will address the country after arriving in the city.

The Pope will tour various main streets of La Paz before arriving at the presidential palace to meet with Morales. He will then go to the Metropolitan Cathedral for more meetings with various society leaders. Later on Wednesday, he will go to Santa Cruz and will stay at the house of the only Bolivian cardinal, Julio Terrazas.

On Thursday, Pope Francis will celebrate a mass at the statue of the Christ the Redeemer where hundreds of thousands of people are expected to attend. At the special campus that is being built for the pope, 700 priests will celebrate masses and will give out the holy host to about 750,000 people.

The head of the Vatican will also hold meetings with Catholic church leaders and will attend the closing ceremony of the II World Meeting of Popular Movements in Santa Cruz. The Pope will continue on to Paraguay on Thursday.

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