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The world's largest painting of Pope Benedict XVI arrives in Washington, DC

A 14 ft. portrait painting of "Pope Benedict XVI at Prayer with the Holy Theologians" from the National Museum of Catholic Art and History in NYC has arrived at the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center in Washington, DC for the pontiff's visit.

/24-7PressRelease/ - April 11, 2008 - The painting, "larger than life", by Texan born, Mexican-American artist Fred Villanueva, was commissioned by Christina Cox, Founder and Executive Director of the National Museum of Catholic Art and History in NYC, and set up in the main hall at the Pope John Paul II Center for the Inter-religious Dialogue event on April 17th. It will be the first and only painting His Holiness will see upon his arrival when meeting with the most important religious leaders of Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, and Jews from all over the world.

Villanueva thought that making the visit of Pope Benedict should be "muy grande"! Having grown up in Texas, where everything is "bigger and better", and inspired by Mexican mural painting as well as German Neo-Expressionism, Villanueva has decorated the building wall in contemporary vivid colors. The painting underscores the cultural, artistic, and spiritual contributions of the largely Roman Catholic Mexican, Hispanic and Latino community of America for the Holy Father by depicting Saints from all over Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa, alongside the work of the greatest painters in history. "My hope is to enkindle and enlighten through painting", said Villanueva, who now lives and works in New York City.

Italian born NMCAH art curator Mariavelia Savino knew that Pope Benedict's writings focus on Saints, theologians and Christian mystics. Mariavelia researched devotional images for the artist's first sketches. "Everyone knows that Saints create miracles and restore your faith. The Holy Father surrounded with St. Augustine, St. Catherine, St Theresa of Avila, St Thomas Aquinas and so many others is bound to be a success with the Pope's meeting because all the theologians are beside him. In the painting he is at prayer asking for world peace."

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