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## Cuba Rising Author Predicts Pope to Visit Cuba

Cuba expert Jonathan Showe, responding to questions at a recent World Affairs Council meeting interview, said “Serious discussions between Havana and the Vatican are likely to result in a visit to Cuba by Pope Benedict in the coming year.” Showe, author of the recent book *Cuba Rising: An American Insider’s Perspective* has been to Cuba over 80 times. He stated that President Raul Castro and Cuba’s Archbishop Jaime Ortega met mid-May about the proposed visit.

“Cuba was visited by Pope John Paul in 1998, resulting in reduced restrictions on the Church by Fidel Castro,” Showe said. Long closed churches were allowed to reopen, Christmas was recognized and the church has enjoyed a resurgence in the past 12 years.

Further relaxations such as permission to have more priests and the reopening of parochial schools are high on the Vatican’s agenda, according to discreet sources. And how does Cuba gain? Showe stated, “Cuba has been predominantly Catholic for over 500 years. A visit by the Pope would help unify Cuba’s people who are enduring a struggling economy and bring focus to Cuba which is widely expected to re-invent itself on the world stage in the post-Castro era.”

Showe believes that an official announcement may be imminent.

For a direct interview or contact with author/Cuba expert Jonathan Showe:  
(831) 277-3277  
info@CubaRising.net