

**News and Current Events :: 2 Million mourners expected at Pope's funeral****2 Million mourners expected at Pope's funeral - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2005/4/4 19:59**

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At least two million people, and what is expected to be a record showing from heads of state, are likely to make the late Pope's funeral this week the largest ever ceremony of its kind. Vatican officials organising the solemn and highly elaborate ceremony do not believe it can be held before Thursday.

Tony Blair, the Prime Minister, delayed the announcement of a general election, which he was due to make today, for at least 24 hours out of respect for the Pope.

Meanwhile, Clarence House insisted that the royal wedding between Prince Charles and Camilla Parker-Bowles would take place as planned on Friday despite potential clashes with the Pope's funeral.

The Pope's long illness evidently has given the Holy See considerable time to think ahead about how to organise an event that Vatican officials previously considered it bad taste to discuss publicly. The Camerlengo, or chamberlain, Cardinal Eduardo Martinez Somalo, the 78-year-old Spanish prelate in effect in charge of the Vatican until a new pope is elected at the Conclave of cardinals, arranges the funeral in accordance with the Pope's wishes.

He already has formally ascertained the death of John Paul and filled in the death certificate, breaking the pontiff's ring and seal and sealing off his private study and bedroom in his apartment above St. Peter's Square. The Pope's body has been dressed and was displayed to the Vatican diplomatic corps and the Roman Curia, the central government of the Church, before John Paul is laid out in St Peter's Basilica today for the faithful to file past and venerate.