

## Brazil's Lula Goes to Pope's Funeral with Ecumenical Delegation

Contributed by Newsroom  
Thursday, 07 April 2005

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and his delegation, which includes two former presidents, have left Brazil to Rome, where they will attend the funeral of Pope John Paul II, tomorrow, in the Vatican.

The President and his group departed Brasília at 7 am. The plane should arrive in Rome at 11:30 PM (local time), after a technical scale in Recife, in the state of Pernambuco. The Pope's funeral is scheduled for 10:00 am, this Friday 8th, at the St. Peter's Basilica.

In the Brazilian delegation accompanying the President, there are representatives of the Legislative and the Judiciary, leaders of several religious creeds, in addition to former Presidents Fernando Henrique Cardoso and José Sarney.

Three former Brazilian presidents will present at the funeral when Cardoso and Sarney are joined in Rome by Itamar Franco, the ex-president who became Brazil's ambassador in Italy.

The President Lula will be accompanied by First Lady Marisa Letícia, Minister of Foreign Relations, Celso Amorim; the Presidency's chief of cabinet, Gilberto Carvalho and Aloizio Mercadante, the leader of the government in the Senate.

The Brazilian delegation is still composed by Supreme Justice Nelson Jobim; president of the Senate, Renan Calheiros and speaker of the House, Severino Cavalcanti.

Outside the official delegation will also be in the presidential plane several catholic leaders: the general secretary of CNBB (National Conference of Brazilian Bishops), Don Odilon Pedro Scherer; CNBB's political adviser, Father José Ernanne Pinheiro and Brasília's archbishop, Don João Bráz de Avis.

Lula's entourage is quite ecumenical: among his 13-people delegation, the Brazilian President is taking Rolf Schynemann, a Lutheran pastor and vice-president of the National Board of Christian Churches; rabbi Henry Sobel from the São Paulo Israelite Congregation; sheik Armando Hussein from the oldest Brazilian mosque; and ialorixá Areonilthes Conceição Chagas, better known as Mother Nitinha, who at 77 is the oldest and most respected mãe-de-santo (religious leader) of Brazil's African-inspired candomblé.

BrZ