

Obama Visits Beloved Cuban Shrine in Miami

President Barack Obama toured a Catholic shrine beloved by Cuban Americans on Thursday, a nod to his pledge to end more than 50 years of hostilities with Cuba and restore diplomatic relations and commercial ties.

The Cuban exile community in south Florida has been split on Obama's move to normalize relations with Cuba – a deal that Pope Francis and other Catholic officials helped broker.

“The president is visiting the Shrine of Our Lady of Charity in Miami to pay his respects to the Cuban-American diaspora that worship there,” said Bernadette Meehan, spokeswoman for the White House National Security Council, in a statement.

“He will honor the sacrifices that Cuban-Americans have made in their pursuit of liberty and opportunity, as well as their extraordinary contributions to our country,” Meehan said.

The Miami shrine features a replica of a statue of the Virgin Mary known as Our Lady of Charity found floating on the coast of Cuba by fisherman. The original statue is at the shrine of El Cobre near Santiago, Cuba.

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