News
Vatican



Pope Francis greets U.S. Vice President Joe Biden after both spoke at a conference on adult stem cell research at the Vatican April 29, 2016. (CNS/L'Osservatore Romano, handout)



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Pope Francis will meet with U.S. President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden at the Vatican on Oct. 29, the White House confirmed on Oct. 14.

The much-anticipated meeting will mark the first time Biden, only the nation's second Catholic president, has met Pope Francis since assuming office in January.

The meeting between the pope and the president will take place just weeks before the U.S. Catholic bishops are set to vote on a controversial document on the Eucharist, motivated by calls from some conservative bishops for Biden, a weekly Mass attendee, to be denied Communion over his support for legal abortion.

A statement from the White House said the two leaders will discuss "working together on efforts grounded in respect for fundamental human dignity, including ending the COVID-19 pandemic, tackling the climate crisis, and caring for the poor."

Earlier this month, the Vatican's ambassador to the U.S., Archbishop Christopher Pierre had signaled that the meeting would take place and said he expected it would be a productive one.

Despite pressure from some U.S. bishops, last month Francis told reporters that he had never denied Communion to anyone, and while reiterating his opposition to abortion, warned against the politicization of the Eucharist.

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"What should a shepherd do? Be a shepherd and not going around condemning or not condemning," the pope said. "They must be a shepherd with God's style. And God's style is closeness, compassion and tenderness."

Francis also met at the Vatican on Oct. 9 with U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, a pro-choice Catholic politician. In recent months, Pelosi has also been targeted with calls for her to be denied Communion. San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone has been leading a prayer and fasting campaign throughout October to bring about a "conversion of heart" for Pelosi.

Both Pelosi and Biden were on hand for Francis' historic visit to the United States in September 2015 where he addressed a joint session of U.S. Congress. Biden's last meeting with Francis took place at a Vatican conference in April 2016 on cancer research.

Following his meeting with Francis later this month, Biden will travel to Glasgow, Scotland from Nov. 1-2 to participate in the World Leader Summit at the start of the 26th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.