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U.S. President Joe Biden meets with Pope Francis Oct. 29 at the Vatican. (CNS/Vatican Media)



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October 29, 2021

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ROME — U.S. President Joe Biden says that Pope Francis told him he was a "good Catholic" and that he should keep receiving Communion during their private meeting at the Vatican on Oct. 29.

Biden told reporters that the two men did not discuss the issue of abortion, an issue that has proven to be a flashpoint between the weekly massgoing president and the country's Catholic hierarchy.

"No it didn't. It came up — we just talked about the fact he was happy that I was a good Catholic and I should keep receiving communion," he said in response to questions about his time with the pope. Neither the White House statement nor the official Vatican communique made any mention of abortion or Communion.

The president's off-the-cuff remarks came during a photo spray as he met Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi at Rome's Palazzo Chigi, the official seat of the Italian government.

Some conservative Catholic bishops have called on Biden to be denied Communion over his support for legal abortion, an approach Francis has cautioned against. The U.S. bishops will meet in Baltimore next month where they will vote on a document on the Eucharist, and some prelates specifically want it to single out pro-choice Catholic politicians.

When asked by reporters whether he and the pope discussed the U.S. bishops's conference, Biden demurred and said it was a "private conversation."

During their meeting — which broke records for a seemingly unprecedented amount of time together — Biden praised Francis as "the most significant warrior for peace I've ever met." Later, he told reporters that the two men prayed together for peace in the world.

Biden's archbishop in Washington, Cardinal Wilton Gregory, has stated on numerous occasions that despite the president's disagreement with the church on the issue of abortion, he would not deny him Communion.

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A version of this story appeared in the **Nov 12-25, 2021** print issue under the headline: Biden: Francis told me to keep receiving Communion.