Vatican



Pope Francis exchanges gifts with Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, head of external relations for the Russian Orthodox Church, during a meeting at the Vatican Aug. 5, 2022. (CNS/Vatican Media)



by Christopher White

Former Vatican Correspondent (2021-2025)

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

August 7, 2022

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

ROME — Pope Francis intends to visit Ukraine prior to his Sept. 13-15 trip to Kazakhstan, according to Ukraine's Vatican ambassador.

In a tweet following his August 6 meeting with Francis, Ambassador Andrii Yurash wrote that Ukraine "for many years and especially since [the] start of war has been waiting for [the] pope and I'll be happy to greet him before his trip to Kazakhstan."

In recent weeks, Vatican officials have signaled that a Ukraine papal visit is in the works — and Francis recently told reporters this when traveling back from Canada on July 29 — though no dates have been announced, nor is it clear how the pope intends to enter the war-ravaged country.

While Francis had previously said he preferred to visit Moscow before going to Ukraine, Russian officials have not expressed any interest in such a visit nor in the Vatican's offers to help mediate an end to the nearly six-month long conflict.

When the pope travels to Kazakhstan, his visit will be primarily to attend the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions. Also confirmed to attend the summit is Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill, a key backer of Russian President Vladimir Putin's war against Ukraine. The pope and Kirill are likely to hold a private meeting during the congress.

This would mark only the second encounter between a pope and the Russian patriarch. Francis and Kirill met previously in Havana, Cuba in 2016.

On August 5, Francis met privately at the Vatican with Russian Orthodox foreign minister, Metropolitan Antonij of Volokolamsk. It marked the first meeting of the two leaders since the minister assumed his new post in June.

Advertisement

While the 85-year-old Francis, who has struggled with mobility issues due to a fracture in his knee, has admitted that he would have to scale back to pace of his

travels, he has also insisted that a Ukraine trip remains feasible.