Vatican
Vatican News



Pope Francis, who is recovering from pulmonary inflammation, meets with Paraguay's President Santiago Peña Palacios in the Domus Sanctae Marthae at the Vatican Nov. 27. Despite health issues, Francis is expected to travel this week to U.N. climate summit. (CNS/Vatican Media)



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Despite health setbacks in recent days, Pope Francis — who has made combating climate change a priority of his decadelong papacy — will press ahead with plans to travel to Dubai Dec. 1-3 to address the annual United Nations climate summit.

Matteo Bruni, spokesperson for the Holy See Press Office, told reporters at a Nov. 28 press conference that the pope's plans to attend the COP28 climate summit in the United Arab Emirates are still on.

Bruni said that the pope — who has canceled several appointments due to an inflammation of the lungs and has been receiving antibiotics intravenously — had still managed to meet at the Vatican with the president of Paraguay on Nov. 27 and with the Catholic bishops from Spain on Nov. 28, despite recent health concerns.

Francis, who will turn 87 on Dec. 17 and is now one of the oldest popes in history, travels with a doctor and nurse on all international trips, and Bruni said that no extra precautions are being taken at this point prior to the pope's Dec. 1 departure.

During his two-night stay in Dubai, the pope's schedule will be relatively light compared to typical itineraries for papal trips.

On the morning of Dec. 2, he will address the full assembly of the climate summit, followed by an afternoon of private bilateral meetings with various world leaders. On Dec. 3, he will join interfaith leaders to inaugurate the conference's first ever "Faith Pavilion" before returning to Rome.

Francis' health has drawn close attention since the Vatican announced on Nov. 25 that the pope had a "slight flu" and that he had undergone outpatient hospital testing "to exclude the risk of pulmonary complications."

On Nov. 26, the pope did not recite the traditional Sunday Angelus prayer from the window of the Vatican's apostolic palace, but instead from a chapel inside Casa Santa Marta, the residence inside the Vatican where he has lived since his election

as pope in 2013.

During the Angelus, the pope said he was suffering from inflammation of the lungs and largely relied on a Vatican official to read his prepared remarks. The prepared text included reflections about the ongoing climate crisis and stated that Francis would proceed with plans to attend the Dubai COP28 summit later this week.

During the brief, 15-minute live broadcast, the pope sounded congested and struggled at times to speak. Bandages were visible on his right hand, and on Nov. 27, the Vatican confirmed that the pope was receiving antibiotics intravenously to treat his condition, which they said was improving.

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Since the beginning of his papacy, Francis has elevated environmental concerns more than any other pontiff in history.

In 2015, he released "*Laudato Si*', on Care for Our Common Home," a landmark encyclical on the environment, which endorsed the scientific consensus on the need for global efforts to confront climate change and warned that humanity was creating a world of "debris, desolation and filth."

The encyclical was specifically timed to influence the historic COP21 climate summit held in Paris that same year.

Earlier this year, the pope released a follow-up to that document warning that responses to the looming climate catastrophe "have not been adequate." In the 11-page letter, titled *Laudate Deum*, Francis praised the momentous agreements made in Paris in 2015, but said the accord lacked the necessary monitoring and enforcement means.

He dedicated a large portion of the text to urging world leaders to join together in collective action at the upcoming COP28 climate conference.

"If there is sincere interest in making COP28 a historic event that honours and ennobles us as human beings, then one can only hope for binding forms of energy transition that meet three conditions: that they be efficient, obligatory and readily monitored," he wrote on Oct. 4. "This, in order to achieve the beginning of a new

process marked by three requirements: that it be drastic, intense and count on the commitment of all."

Now, despite his age and wariness regarding his current health condition, he intends to make that case in person later this week.

This story appears in the **COP28 Dubai** feature series. View the full series.