Vatican
Vatican News



Pope Francis gives his blessing to the bishops of Spain after a two-hour meeting with them in the Vatican synod hall Nov. 28. Later the same day, the Vatican announced Francis would cancel his Dec. 1-3 trip to Dubai for COP28. (CNS/Vatican Media)



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Pope Francis has canceled plans to travel to Dubai this weekend for a U.N. Climate conference at the advice of his doctors following ongoing health issues, the Vatican announced on Nov. 28.

The pope, who has long prioritized environmental concerns, was scheduled to travel to the United Arab Emirates Dec. 1-3 and was expected to urge world leaders to commit to multilateral action toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The Vatican said the 86-year-old pontiff was forced to cancel his anticipated appearance at the high-stakes COP28 climate summit in Dubai due to ongoing issues related to the inflammation of his lungs, for which he has been undergoing treatment since at least Nov. 25.

The announcement that the pope would no longer make the trip was made early evening on Nov. 28 and just hours after the Holy See Press Office held a briefing for reporters scheduled to be traveling with the pope.

At the time, a Vatican spokesman acknowledged the pope's health difficulties, but said the pontiff had managed to meet with the president of Paraguay and Spanish Catholic bishops in recent days.

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In a brief statement announcing the cancellation, the Vatican said that the pope's "general clinical picture" had improved, but on the advice of his doctors, he would cancel the trip with "great regret."

The pope had been scheduled to deliver a major address in Dubai on Dec. 2, but in his most recent public remarks on Nov. 26, the pope struggled to speak due to apparent respiratory congestion.

In his 10 years as pontiff, Francis has not canceled a previously announced trip abroad. In 2021, he canceled a day trip to Florence, Italy, due to mobility issues. Later that year, he postponed a trip to the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan for related concerns, but that voyage later took place in 2023.

The Holy See, which has formally signed the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, will still have a delegation present during the COP28 meeting, and the Vatican said the pope is considering other concrete ways he can participate in the upcoming discussions.

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