Vatican

Vatican News



Pope Francis arrives for his weekly general audience in the Pope Paul VI hall at the Vatican, Wednesday, Dec. 6, 2023. (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini)

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Rome — December 6, 2023

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Pope Francis said Dec. 6 he was feeling "much better" after a two-week bout of bronchitis but again asked an aide to read his remarks.

Francis, who had part of one lung removed as a young man, told his weekly general audience that he still gets tired if he speaks too much.

Francis, who turns 87 on Dec. 17, came down with the flu on Nov. 25 and was forced to cancel a planned trip to Dubai to participate in the U.N. climate conference. He later revealed he had been diagnosed with an acute case of infectious bronchitis that made breathing difficult.

It was the second time this year he has had a serious case of bronchitis; in spring he was hospitalized for three days to receive intravenous antibiotics.

Francis walked onto the stage of the Vatican audience hall with his cane Dec. 6 and smiled broadly at the cheering crowd. He appeared in good spirits and received several prelates who came to speak to him individually at the end of the audience.

Explaining why he would ask his aide to read his remarks, he said: "I'm much better, but I get tired if I speak too much.

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Francis then made a brief appeal asking for prayers for all those who are suffering from war, including people in Ukraine, Israel and Gaza.

"War is always a defeat," he said. "No one wins, everyone loses. The only ones who win are the weapons makers."

To spare him from temperature changes that might aggravate his condition, Francis has delivered his weekly Sunday blessing for the past two weekends from the Vatican chapel rather than the open window of his studio overlooking St. Peter's Square.

Nevertheless, the Vatican has confirmed Francis would participate in his annual visit to pray before a statue of the Virgin Mary at Rome's Piazza di Spagna on Dec. 8 to mark an important Catholic feast day and officially kick off the Christmas season in

Rome.

The Vatican said Francis is also planning to add on a visit that day, the Immaculate Conception, to Rome's St. Mary Major basilica to pray before one of his favorite icons of Mary.