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Pope Francis delivers his speech during his weekly general audience in the St. Peter's Square at the Vatican, Wednesday, March 13, 2024. Pope Francis says he has no plans to resign and isn’t suffering from any health problems that would require doing so, saying in a new memoir he still has "many projects to bring to fruition." Francis, 87, made the comments in an autobiography, “Life: My Story Through History,” which is being published Tuesday, March 19, 2024, the 11th anniversary of his installation as pope. (AP/Andrew Medichini)

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Pope Francis says he has no plans to resign and isn't suffering from any health problems that would require doing so, saying in a new memoir he still has "many projects to bring to fruition."

Francis, 87, made the comments in an autobiography, "Life: My Story Through History," which is being published Tuesday, the 11th anniversary of his installation as pope. Extensive excerpts were published Thursday in the Italian daily Corriere della Sera.

In the memoir, written with Italian journalist Fabio Marchese Ragona, Francis traces key moments of his life and their intersection with world events (World War II, Argentina's military dictatorship and Vatican intrigue) and how they together inform his priorities as pope.

Significantly, he addresses recurring speculation about his health problems, criticism from conservatives and what both may mean for the future of his pontificate. Such questions have always surrounded the papacy but the prospect of a papal resignation only became a reality with the late Pope Benedict XVI 's historic 2013 retirement.

Francis, who had part of one lung removed as a young man, has been battling bronchitis, the flu and a cold on and off this winter and for the past two weeks has asked an aide to read most of his speeches. He had a chunk of his large intestine removed in 2021 and was hospitalized three times last year, including once to remove intestinal scar tissue from previous surgeries to address diverticulosis, or bulges in his intestinal wall.

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In his memoir, he stressed that the papacy is a job for life but that “if a serious physical impediment” occurs, he has already penned a letter of resignation that is being held in the Secretariat of State.

“But this is, I repeat, a distant possibility, because I truly do not have any cause serious enough to make me think of resigning,” he said. “Some people may have hoped that sooner or later, perhaps after a stay in the hospital, I might make an announcement of that kind, but there is no risk of it: Thanks be to God, I enjoy good health, and as I have said, there are many projects to bring to fruition, God willing."

Francis acknowledged that critics inside the Vatican and out have accused him of destroying the papacy and have tried to block the reforms that he was mandated by cardinals to enact as a result of his 2013 election.

“There was a strong desire to change things, to abandon certain attitudes, which, sadly, have proved difficult to eradicate,” he said. “Needless to say, there are always some who wish to put the brakes on reform, who want things always to stay as they were during the days of pope kings.”

In the memoir, Francis doubled down on his recent decision to allow Catholic priests to bless same-sex couples and denied that the criticism that erupted could split the church. Africa’s bishops as a whole, as well as individual conservative bishops around the world, have said they would not follow the new directive.

“I just want to say that God loves everyone, especially sinners. And if my brother bishops, according to their discernment, decide not to follow this path it doesn’t mean that this is the antechamber to schism, because the church’s doctrine is not brought into question,” Francis said.

He reaffirmed his support for civil unions while ruling out gay marriage, saying “it is right that these people who experience the gift of love should have the same legal protections as everyone else.”

He reasoned that Jesus spent time with people who lived on the margins of society “and that is what the church should be doing today with members of the LGBTQ+ community.”

“Make them feel at home, especially those who have been baptized and are in every respect among God’s people," he said. "And those who have not been baptized and

would like to be, or who would like to be godfathers or godmothers: let them be welcomed, please; let them follow a careful pathway to personal discernment.”