Vatican
Vatican News



New York City Mayor Eric Adams, pictured in a May 1 photo, will meet privately with Pope Francis this weekend. Adams traveled to Rome to take part in the May 10-11 World Meeting on Human Fraternity. (OSV News/Reuters/Mike Segar)



by Christopher White

Former Vatican Correspondent (2021-2025)

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

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

Rome — May 10, 2024

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Ahead of meeting Pope Francis at the Vatican this weekend, New York's Mayor Eric Adams hailed the pontiff as a global "influencer" and one of the few world leaders to help lead during "dark times"

"He is what children would say, he's an influencer. He's a credible messenger," Adams told National Catholic Reporter in a May 10 interview.

The mayor is here in Rome to participate in the World Meeting on Human Fraternity, which is taking place May 10-11 and bringing together some 30 Nobel Peace Prize winners to dialogue with political leaders, community organizers, scientists, economists and others, in hopes of deepening social bonds.

While Adams is not Catholic, he identifies as a Christian and told NCR that he was recently baptized again "to recommit myself to my faith and recommit myself to the work that is needed."

"We separate church and state but you can never separate your heart and your faith and God has placed it on my heart to do this work," he added.

> 'We separate church and state but you can never separate your heart and your faith.'
> —Eric Adams
>
> Tweet this

The 63-year-old mayor — who has led New York since 2022 — is known for peppering speeches with religious language and recently described himself as a "prayer warrior." In 2023, he sparked an outcry among religious leaders and New Yorkers alike when at an interfaith prayer service he seemed to question the separation of church and state.

And here in the Eternal City, Hizzoner isn't backing down on the role that he believes faith can and should play in global affairs.

Ticking off a list of problems facing the world — including the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, and the climate crisis — Adams said "there's one common thread: There's a demonic spirit that has engulfed our planet and people are hurting."

"I don't care what people say, it's time to pray," he insisted. "It's time to go inward. It's time to understand that economic stability is not going to give us joy."



New York Mayor Eric Adams chats with well-wishers after attending the St. Patrick's Day Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City March 17, 2023. While Adams is not Catholic, he identifies as a Christian and told NCR that he was recently baptized again "to recommit" to his faith. (OSV News/Gregory Shemitz)

The pope, he said, recognizes this and by inviting so many leaders to Rome for the Vatican-backed human fraternity conference is holding what the mayor characterized as a "family reunion."

"He's bringing the family to the table, and he's saying to the family that you cannot allow a migrant or an asylum seeker to sleep on your street if you don't see them as your brother," he said. "You cannot allow children to die across the globe because of wars if you don't see them as your children, as your nephew, or your niece."

Adams specifically praised the pope for his efforts to raise awareness about climate change.

"For many years, we ignored climate change," he said. "What the pope is doing with the millions of Catholics across the globe … is forcing Catholics that may have not even engaged in a conversation on climate change to say 'if his Holiness is talking about this, I need to take note of this.' "

"When we have Earth Day, I always say, 'Happy Mother's Day,' because we have two mothers. One gave birth to us and the other sustains us," the mayor added. "And we have been abusive to Mother Earth for a long time, and we can't call ourselves people of faith … if we continue to watch the abuse."

"I don't know of another person of his stature in the faith community that has been so upfront and outfront on this issue," said Adams.

During his past two years on the job in New York, the former police captain has been known as a man about town — quick to give constituents his cell phone number if they approach him on the street, and out into the wee hours of the morning visiting New York's restaurants, theaters and clubs.

Advertisement

His colorful personality and his willingness to challenge institutional norms has met mixed reviews — not unlike the pope's own governance style over the last decade.

"I enjoy so much being among the people," he said, adding that he doesn't travel with a heavy security presence.

"People don't want bureaucracy. They want to make sure that you're committed to the pains that they're feeling," said Adams. "You can't give a person stats. People want to authentically know are you willing to reach out of your comfort zone and lean into what people are feeling."

"And the pope understands that," said the mayor. "I think he's the right leader for the time we're in right now."