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Pope Francis listens as Ola Källenius, CEO of Mercedes-Benz, presents a new all-electric popemobile during a meeting at the Vatican, Dec. 4, 2024. (CNS/Lola Gomez)

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Pope Francis received a new, emission-free, all-electric popemobile from representatives of Mercedes-Benz, the German car manufacturer that has been supplying vehicles for the popes for nearly 100 years.

"We are overjoyed to be able to fulfill the Holy Father's wish for an electric popemobile and are particularly proud to be able to build the vehicle according to his requirements," Britta Seeger, head of sales and marketing and member of the board of management of Mercedes-Benz Group AG, said in a press release Dec. 4.

It is the first time the company has manufactured an all-electric popemobile and "this cooperation … is a valuable symbol of sustainable change together," she said.

The pope met with the representatives, which included engineers who led the project, in a courtyard at the Vatican. Ola Källenius, Mercedes-Benz CEO, presented the pope with the white and chrome key fob and showed him the vehicle's interior.

The new popemobile sends "a clear call for electromobility and decarbonization," Källenius said.

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A team of specialists worked for a year to complete the handcrafted vehicle, which is based on the new G580 model. It is outfitted with "an electric drivetrain, which was adapted to the particularly low speeds required for public appearances," the press release said.

"The vehicle represents an incredible amount of manual labor and passion — but it's also full of state-of-the-art technology," said Klaus Millerferli, one of the development engineers. "The fact that Pope Francis has invited some of us to hand it over

personally really tops everything off. It's an experience that you'll tell your grandchildren about."

Mercedes-Benz has been manufacturing and supplying vehicles for the popes for nearly 100 years, the company said, starting with a Nürburg 460 Pullman Saloon for Pope Pius XI in 1930.

The German company was awarded the contract, it said, in part because it was able to transfer to a motor-powered vehicle "an important characteristic" then only found in horse-drawn carriages: "the possibility of traveling with two dignitaries and other staff using folding seats."