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Britain’s King Charles III and Queen Camilla greet Pope Francis during a visit at the Vatican Ap

Britain’s King Charles III and Queen Camilla greet Pope Francis during a visit at the Vatican April 9, 2025. (CNS/Vatican Media)

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Pope Francis met privately with King Charles III and Queen Camilla on Wednesday at the Vatican during the royal couple's four-day state visit to Italy and on the occasion of their 20th wedding anniversary, the Vatican announced.

It was the first known meeting since the pope’s return to the Vatican after five weeks in the hospital for life-threatening double pneumonia. Francis had planned to have an audience with Charles, but the official state visit to the Vatican was postponed due to the pope’s health.



Britain's King Charles III arrives for an official dinner at the Quirinale Presidential Palace. (AP/Andrew Medichini)

The pope issued a new invitation for a private audience, but it was subject to his health and only confirmed April 9. The midafternoon visit lasted about 20 minutes and included a private exchange of gifts. Discussions continue about a future visit by the monarch to the Vatican.

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A Vatican statement said the pope wished Charles and Camilla a happy anniversary, and the king and queen in return wished the pope a speedy recovery. Buckingham Palace said "their majesties were delighted the pope was well enough to host them, and to have had the opportunity to share their best wishes in person.''

In a photo released by the Vatican on Thursday, Camilla is seen shaking the pope's hand as a smiling Charles holds a red gift box. The pope, seated as he greets the royal couple, is not wearing nasal tubes. The Vatican has said that his reliance on supplemental oxygen is decreasing, and that he can spend short periods of time without the tubes.

The royal couple previously saw Francis during an April 2017 visit to the Vatican. King Charles, then Prince of Wales, also met Pope Francis during the 2019 canonization of St. John Henry Newman.

The pope has been convalescing at the Vatican since March 23 and made an appearance to the faithful in St. Peter’s Square on Sunday. He was pushed in a wheelchair, wearing nasal tubes for supplemental oxygen, and wished the crowd a good Sunday from the front of the altar before being greeted by participants in the Mass, some of whom leaned to kiss his hands.

During the Italian trip, King Charles and Queen Camilla also marked their 20th wedding anniversary, which was to include a state dinner April 9 hosted by President Sergio Mattarella at the Quirinale palace.



Britain's King Charles III and Queen Camilla arrive for an official dinner with Italy's President Sergio Mattarella at the Quirinale Presidential Palace in Rome, Wednesday, April 9, 2025. (AP/Andrew Medichini)

The Vatican press office had said April 8 that the pope was just beginning to receive a few visitors. He previously had been spending his days only with his personal secretaries and the medical personnel caring for him.

The king and queen's brief meeting with the pope April 9 was not initially listed on the full schedule that had been planned for their state visit.

According to the itinerary originally released by Buckingham Palace, the king and queen were to have attended "a service in the Sistine Chapel, focused on the theme of 'care for creation,' reflecting Pope Francis' and his majesty's long-standing commitment to nature."

Charles was on his first trip abroad this year after being taken to hospital over side effects related to his ongoing cancer treatment.

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Earlier on Wednesday, Charles stressed the need for close ties between Italy and the UK in a historic speech in the Italian parliament, calling for unity in defense of common values at a time of war in Europe.

Charles, the first British monarch and fourth foreign leader to address a joint session of the Italian parliament, highlighted the long history between the U.K. and Italy and their shared culture, going back to the ancient Romans.

“Our younger generations can see in the news every day on their smartphones and tablets that peace is never to be taken for granted,” Charles said.



Britain's King Charles III and Queen Camilla met with Pope Francis at the Vatican on April 9 during a four-day state visit to Italy. (AP/Vincenzo Livieri, pool photo)

The British king was on the third day of his visit to Italy, seen as part of an ongoing effort by London to strengthen ties with its European allies amid global turbulence and rising instability.

“Our countries have both stood by Ukraine in her hour of need and welcomed many thousands of Ukrainians requiring shelter,” he said in his speech, warning that images of wars were now reverberating again across the continent.

Charles also spoke passionately in his address about threats facing the planet, recalling another speech he gave in Italy 16 years ago and how the “warnings” he made at the time about the urgency of the climate challenge were “depressingly being borne out by events.”

He noted extreme storms “normally seen once in a generation” are now an issue every year, and “countless precious plant and animal species face extinction in our lifetimes”.

Sections of the speech were delivered in Italian, with the King prompting the applause of Italian lawmakers when he noted: “And by the way, I hope I’m not ruining Dante’s language so much that I’m no never invited to Italy again.”



Tenor Andrea Bocelli, right, with his wife Veronica Berti as they arrive for an official dinner with King Charles III and Queen Camilla on April 9, 2025. (AP/Andrew Medichini)

The queen marked her anniversary by wearing her wedding dress, which had been modified by its designer Anne Valentine, with additional embroidery by King’s Foundation artisan Beth Somerville. The garment was originally worn for the civil

ceremony, when Camilla paired the outfit with a hat made of natural straw, overlaid with ivory French lace designed by Philip Treacy.

On her wedding day, Camilla later wore a separate chiffon dress embroidered pale blue and gold coat for the wedding blessing at St George’s Chapel, Windsor.

Danica Kirka and Giada Zampano of the Associated Press and OSV News contributed to this article.

This story appears in the **Pope Francis' health crisis** feature series. View the full series.