Vatican

Vatican News



Pope Francis, who is continuing to recover from pneumonia and a long hospitalization, blesses a baby as he makes a surprise visit to St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, April 10, 2025, in this screengrab taken from a handout video. (OSV News/Reuters/Luiz Gil)

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Vatican City — April 11, 2025
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Pope Francis' surprise visit to St. Peter's Basilica to pray and see ongoing restoration work is a clear sign that his condition is improving, the Vatican press office said.

The 88-year-old pope, pushed in a wheelchair by his nurse and using a nasal cannula to deliver supplemental oxygen, entered the basilica just before 1 p.m. April 10. Vatican News said he went to the basilica to pray at the tomb of St. Pius X.

The Vatican press office said April 11 that the pope had asked his assistants to take him to the basilica to pray, and they did so.

Pope Francis, who is continuing to recover from pneumonia and a long hospitalization, makes

Pope Francis visits St. Peter's Basilica, surprising tourists and pilgrims. (OSV News/Luiz Gil, Handout via Reuters)

"He was happy to pray in the basilica and to encounter people," the press office said.

Tourists, pilgrims and even priests who minister in the basilica were taken by surprise.

"So much emotion," Msgr. Valerio Di Palma, one of the canons of the basilica, told Vatican News. "My vision blurred with tears, and I couldn't even take a picture."Of course, others present in the basilica did take photos and videos on their phones and posted them to social media, capturing him blessing a baby and chatting with a young boy.

Francis was not wearing his white cassock or white zucchetto. Instead, his head was bare, and he wore black trousers and a white shirt. He had a striped blanket draped over his chest and arms.

The pope was released from Rome's Gemelli hospital March 23 after 38 days of treatment for breathing difficulties, double pneumonia and an infection of his airways.

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His doctors said they released him with a recommendation that he spend two months convalescing, avoiding large groups. For his first two weeks back at the Vatican, he stayed close to his room and office in the Domus Sanctae Marthae where he lives. He concelebrated Mass each morning with his secretaries, did physical and respiratory therapy and paperwork.

Two weeks after his release from the hospital, the pope surprised people attending the closing Mass of the Jubilee of the Sick and Health Care Workers April 6 in St. Peter's Square by arriving at the end of the Mass, wishing people "a happy Sunday" and thanking them for their prayers.

Francis met April 7 with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, and with Britain's King Charles III and Queen Camilla April 9.

The meeting with the British royals lasted 20 minutes, and the pope did not use or need supplemental oxygen during that time, the press office said, adding that the pope has been able to go longer periods without such assistance.

In the days after meeting the king and queen, the press office said, the pope met with: Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra, the substitute for general affairs in the Secretariat of State; Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the Vatican foreign minister; Archbishop Luciano Russo, head of the secretariat's section for diplomatic personnel; and heads of several Roman Curia offices.

The press office also announced April 11 that Argentine Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, vice dean of the College of Cardinals, would preside over the Vatican celebration of Palm Sunday Mass as Francis' delegate.

A source said the pope's presence at the liturgies of Holy Week and Easter would depend both on his condition and the weather.

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