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Pope Francis meets briefly with U.S. Vice President JD Vance, and his translator, in the papal residence, the Domus Sanctae Marthae, at the Vatican April 20, 2025. The Vatican said the meeting was an opportunity to exchange best wishes for Easter. (CNS /Vatican Media)



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Pope Francis met briefly with U.S. Vice President JD Vance on Easter Sunday in the first in-person encounter between one of the world's leading champions of migrants and one of America's fiercest anti-immigrant campaigners.

The much-anticipated meeting comes after a series of clashes between Vance, who converted to Catholicism in 2019, and U.S. church leaders. Vance has previously attempted to use Catholic theology to justify the Trump administration's mass deportation plans, earning him a rare rebuke from the pope.

The April 20 encounter between two leaders took place at the conclusion of Vance's three-day visit to Rome, where he had previously attended the Vatican's Good Friday Passion service and met with the pope's top diplomats on Holy Saturday.

The Vatican did not offer a read-out of the meeting, only issuing a brief statement to say that the two met briefly just before 11:30am local time at the Casa Santa Marta, the Vatican guesthouse where Francis resides, to exchange Easter greetings.

In video footage released from the encounter, Vance tells the pope that he prays for him every day.

Prior to departing the Vatican, the pope gave Vance three chocolate Easter eggs for his three children that are traveling with him, along with rosaries and a Vatican necktie.

The meeting took place while the Vatican's Easter Sunday Mass was ongoing in St. Peter's Square.

Cardinal Angelo Comastri, retired archpriest of St. Peter's Basilica, served as the main celebrant of the Mass, in lieu of the pope. Francis is currently convalescing following a five-week hospitalization for double pneumonia, although he has made a number of surprise public appearances during this time.

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On April 9, Francis also met privately with the United Kingdom's King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

Austen Ivereigh, one of Francis' leading biographers, told the National Catholic Reporter prior to the meeting, that "It is understood that any head of state that wants to meet the pope, he will receive them."

Given the fact that Vance is not a head of state, the pope's ongoing recovery and his limited public schedule, Ivereigh said "It would be more of a statement if the pope met him [Vance], than if he didn't meet him."

During his 12-year-papacy Francis has met with American presidents and vice-presidents of both major political parties.

In 2016, the pope joined forces with then-Democratic Vice President Joe Biden for a joint effort at the Vatican to push for greater cancer research. And in 2020, he held a nearly-hour-long private meeting with Republican Vice President Mike Pence at the Vatican's Apostolic Palace.

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