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Pope Leo XIV opens the door to the papal apartment in the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican Ma

Pope Leo XIV opens the door to the papal apartment in the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican May 11. A newspaper account says Leo will invite Augustinians as housemates. (CNS/Vatican Media)



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Pope Leo XIV is expected to bring Augustinian friars with him when he moves into the papal apartment of the Apostolic Palace in the autumn, the Italian daily La Repubblica reported. The decision reflects his determination to preserve the communal life of his religious order even after his election to the papacy.

"The idea is not yet official but should become a reality in the fall," La Repubblica said Aug. 19.

Leo had been expected to move into the papal apartment, a tradition that had been broken by Pope Francis, but word of friars joining him had not previously been reported.

The Italian daily said that workers are renovating the third floor of the Apostolic Palace to accommodate the housemates. The work has delayed the pope taking up residence, the newspaper said. Ten rooms have so far been refurbished, including the study used for the Sunday Angelus, the Pope's bedroom, a reception room and a chapel.

Work has been slowed by structural problems, the paper reported. Damp patches, first noted when Pope Benedict XVI occupied the apartment and worsened during the 12 years Francis had not used the space, led to repairs to the plumbing system. A redesign has also extended the timeline.

It's unclear when workers will finish work on the apartment and when Leo plans to move in.

Pope Leo XIV leads Sunday Angelus from the window of the Apostolic Palace.

Pope Leo XIV leads Sunday Angelus from the window of the Apostolic Palace overlooking St. Peter's Square at the Vatican July 27. (CNS/Vatican Media)

The new configuration will not only house the pope and Leo's secretary, Fr. Edgar Rimaycuna, but will also provide space for several Augustinian friars. "The idea is to create a small community of three or four Augustinians who would share daily life with their brother, the Pope," La Repubblica reported.

The friars most likely to live with the pope are those already serving in the papal sacristy: an Italian, a Filipino and a Nigerian. According to the same report, Leo already regularly lunches with them, maintaining a habit of community life. The Augustinians of Sant'Anna parish, based at the Vatican gate, are not expected to be included. Other candidates could come from the Augustinianum, the order's general curia, located a short distance from the Apostolic Palace.

Leo has said repeatedly that he does not intend to abandon the Augustinian way of life. "I will have to give up many things," he told his confreres on May 13, a few days after his election. "My life has changed, but I will never give up being an Augustinian."

Then known as Robert Prevost, the future pontiff lived for years at the Augustinianum, a few steps from the Vatican, where he followed the religious order's strict routine of prayer, Mass and shared meals. Even after becoming cardinal, he

would notify the superior of the house if he was absent, a custom of monastic life. Shortly after his election as pope, he advised his brothers "to always live close to one another, as St. Augustine wanted."

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Every pontiff has shaped his own lifestyle in the Apostolic Palace or beyond. John Paul II received guests continuously with the assistance of his secretary, Fr. Stanislaw Dziwisz, who later became archbishop of Krakow, Poland, and then a cardinal.

Benedict lived in relative seclusion, surrounded by members of Memores Domini, consecrated lay women who ran the household, and Msgr. Georg Gaenswein, his personal secretary, and modified the apartment to accommodate his personal library. After resigning from the papacy, Benedict moved into a monastery in the Vatican gardens.

Francis opted out of staying in the Apostolic Palace, choosing instead the Casa Santa Marta residence, where he rotated secretaries and maintained an open-door approach.

"An Augustinian cannot renounce community life, not even as Pope," La Repubblica concluded.

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