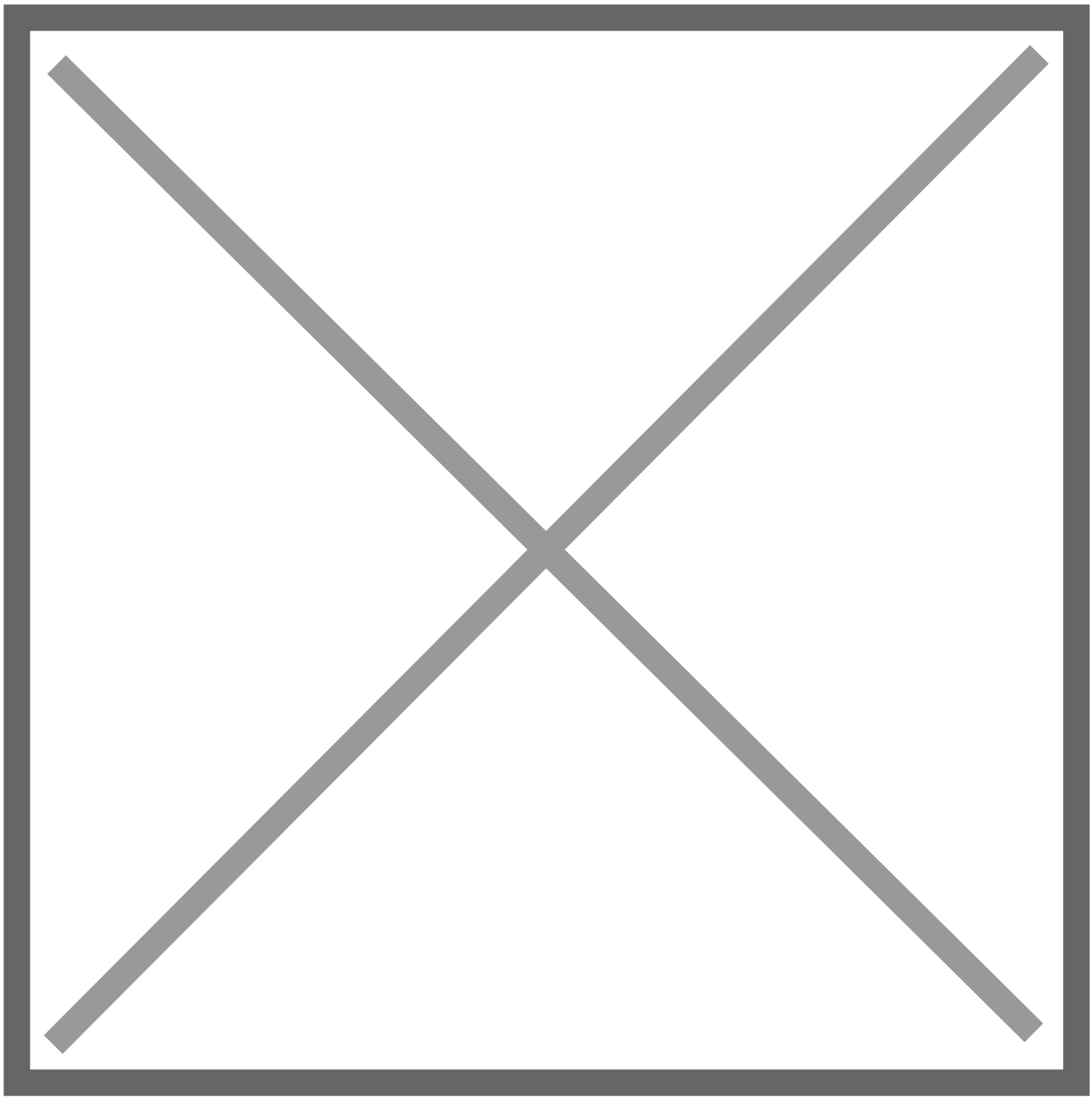
News



The Basilica of St. Francis, site of the saint's tomb, in Assisi, Italy, is seen in this 2007 file photo. (CNS/Long Island Catholic/Gregory A. Shemitz)

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Assisi, Italy — January 13, 2026

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Pope Leo XIV has proclaimed a special Jubilee Year coinciding with the 800th anniversary of the death of St. Francis of Assisi.

The Apostolic Penitentiary, a Vatican tribunal that deals with matters of conscience, issued a decree published by the Franciscan Friars Jan. 10, declaring a yearlong celebration in honor of the Poverello, or the Little Poor One.

According to the decree, Leo has established that from Jan. 10, following the closing of the church's Jubilee Year, until Jan. 10, 2027, a special Year of St. Francis may be proclaimed, in which every Christian, "following the example of the Saint of Assisi, may himself become a model of holiness of life and a constant witness of peace."

Noting previous jubilee celebrations related to the works of St. Francis — such as the eighth centenary commemorations of the first Nativity scene, as well as his composition of the "Canticle of the Creatures" and his receiving of the stigmata — the decree stated that "2026 will mark the culmination and fulfillment of all previous celebrations."

In its decree, the Apostolic Penitentiary also announced that plenary indulgences will be granted to Catholics "under the usual conditions (sacramental confession, Eucharistic communion and prayer for the intentions of the Holy Father), which can also be applied in the form of suffrage for the souls in Purgatory."

The indulgence will be granted to those who participate in a pilgrimage "to any Franciscan conventual church, or place of worship in any part of the world named

after St. Francis or connected to him for any reason," it stated.

The sick, the elderly and caretakers unable to leave their homes can also obtain a plenary indulgence under the usual conditions "if they join spiritually in the Jubilee celebrations of the Year of St. Francis, offering their prayers to the Merciful God, the pains or sufferings of one's life."

In a statement announcing the decree's promulgation, the Franciscan Friars invited Catholics to take part in the Jubilee celebrations and hope that St. Francis' example would inspire participants "to live with authentic Christian charity towards our neighbor and with sincere longings for concord and peace among peoples."

May this year of St. Francis "be for each one of us a providential occasion for sanctification and evangelical witness in the contemporary world, for the glory of God and the good of the whole Church," the statement read.

In a Jan. 10 letter to the ministers general of the Conference of the Franciscan Family, Leo said St. Francis' message of peace was needed now more than ever.

"In this age, marked by so many seemingly interminable wars, by internal and social divisions that create mistrust and fear, he continues to speak. Not because he offers technical solutions, but because his life points to the authentic source of peace," the pope wrote.

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That peace, the pope added, "is not limited to the relations between human beings," but extends to "the entire family of Creation."

"This insight resonates with particular urgency in our time, when our common home is threatened and cries out under exploitation," he wrote. "Peace with God, peace among human beings, and with creation are inseparable dimensions of a single call to universal reconciliation."

Leo concluded his letter with a prayer to St. Francis, asking the saint's intercession "to give us the courage to build bridges where the world raises up boundaries."

"In this time afflicted by conflict and division, intercede for us so that we may become peacemakers: unarmed and disarming witnesses of the peace that comes

from Christ," the pope wrote.

The pope's letter was read during a Jan. 10 celebration marking the start of the Franciscan Jubilee Year at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels in Assisi, which houses the Chapel of the Transit, marking the site where St. Francis died.

Archbishop Domenico Sorrentino of Assisi, who was present at the ceremony, said the start of the centenary celebration was "an explosion of true joy" that comes from the heart and "from the commitment of each one of us to rediscover Francis in all his dimensions."

"The wish I make to everyone and to the entire Church is to rediscover this saint of ours, to rediscover Jesus, the only source of joy and peace," the bishop said.

Among the notable events taking place in Assisi during the Franciscan Jubilee Year will be the first public display of St. Francis' body.

In October, the Basilica of St. Francis announced that Pope Leo had granted permission to display the saint's body from Feb. 22 to March 26.

According to the basilica's website for the historic event, as of December, some 250,000 pilgrims have so far registered for the veneration of St. Francis' remains.

The overwhelming number of people coming for the public display, the basilica said, is a testament to "the universality of the message of the Saint of Assisi and the timeless appeal of his figure."

A free but mandatory online reservation system has been set up on the centenary website, available in both Italian and English.