Vatican
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People wait for Pope Benedict XVI to pass outside St. Antonio Church in Luanda, Angola, Marc

People wait for Pope Benedict XVI to pass outside St. Antonio Church in Luanda, Angola, March 22, 2009. Pope Leo XIV is expected to visit the African country, although no date has been set. (CNS/Reuters/Alessandro Bianchi)



by Justin McLellan

Vatican Correspondent

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jmclellan@ncronline.org
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Pope Leo XIV will travel to Angola in 2026, the Vatican's ambassador to the southern African nation said, adding yet another destination to the still-emerging slate of papal travel plans for the year.

The Vatican has not officially confirmed the visit, and no dates or program details have been announced. But if the trip goes forward it would mark Leo's first visit to Africa as pope and could be his first international journey of the year.

Since his election in May 2025, Leo has made one international trip, to Turkey and Lebanon in November 2025, and was largely confined to Rome to preside over

events associated with the 2025 Holy Year.

"Pope Leo XIV intends to visit the African continent, and Angola is also included on the itinerary for this trip," Archbishop Kryspin Witold Dubiel, papal nuncio to Angola, said during a Jan. 13 news conference in Luanda.

"We do not have details right now about the exact date or program," he added. "I hope that the Holy Father's visit can be an occasion to rediscover the values that guide the Angolan people, and that those values can be shared with the diverse communities that live and work throughout the world."

Pope Benedict XVI was the last pontiff to visit Angola, traveling to the country in 2009.

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According to Angola's 2014 census, 41% of the population identifies as Catholic, while 38% is Protestant. The country, a former Portuguese colony, gained independence in 1975 after a prolonged anti-colonial struggle that lasted more than 13 years.

News of the pope's possible Angola visit follows comments earlier this month by Cardinal José Cobo Cano of Madrid, who said preparations are also underway for a papal trip to Spain in 2026 with potential stops in Madrid, Barcelona and the Canary Islands, a migrant hotspot.

While Leo has spoken openly of his desire to visit Africa early in his pontificate, Angola had not previously been mentioned as a possible destination. The pope had said he hoped to travel to Algeria to visit sites associated with St. Augustine of Hippo, the spiritual inspiration for the Augustinian religious order to which he belongs.

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