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Pope Leo XIV speaks to visitors in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican as they gather to pray the

Pope Leo XIV speaks to visitors in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican as they gather to pray the Angelus prayer Jan. 11, the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. The pope prays the Sunday Angelus from the penultimate third-floor window of the Apostolic Palace. (CNS/Vatican Media)



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Nearly nine months after his election, Pope Leo XIV is finally moving home. But, perhaps taking a page from his predecessor, he will not reside in the traditional papal apartment that has housed most modern popes since 1870.

Instead, according to the Italian daily La Repubblica, Leo will live in a newly prepared suite above the papal apartment, created from former staff and guest quarters and set to include a small chapel and a workout area.

Described as an "attic" above the *Terza Loggia*, the top floor of the Apostolic Palace where the papal apartments are located, the pope's quarters will also include a bedroom, a detached bathroom, kitchen and a small terrace.

The pope's brother, John Prevost, told the National Catholic Reporter in October that Leo was having gym equipment installed in his living space and that he often prepares his own dinner, hence the need for a kitchen.

The apartment will be decorated modestly, primarily in white and with basic furniture, La Repubblica reported. Two other rooms are being created in the suite for the pope's private secretaries: Msgr. Edgard Rimaycuna and Fr. Marco Billeri.

For privacy and security reasons, the pope's bedroom will not face St. Peter's Square, as was the case with the traditional papal apartments. Instead, the suite is in a section of the Apostolic Palace above the Vatican Bank, away from the square.

Leo was previously reported to be bringing housemates into the Apostolic Palace from the Augustinian religious order, which holds community life as a central tenet of its spirituality, but members of the Augustinians have since denied that move. Leo often visits and shares meals with the small Augustinian community living in the Apostolic Palace and which oversees the papal sacristy.

In recent weeks, cranes have been seen outside the Apostolic Palace, prompting speculation that final work on the pope's residence is nearing completion and that his move is imminent.

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The last known renovations to the papal apartment were completed after St. John Paul II's death in 2005. New electrical wiring and plumbing was put in when Pope Benedict XVI inherited the apartment as well as a custom-fitted private library for the bookish pope.

That Leo won't be living in that more recently renovated apartment could explain why it has taken so long to prepare his living quarters. The suite now being prepared for Leo was created from smaller apartments built in 1939 to house members of the pope's household staff and guests.

Since his election, Leo has continued to live in the room he occupied as a cardinal in apartments for Vatican officials inside the "Holy Office," the building that houses the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. He has typically spent Tuesdays lakeside at what has historically been the papal summer residence in Castel Gandolfo outside Rome.

Francis famously skirted the papal apartment to live in the Vatican guesthouse built to host cardinals during a conclave, Casa Santa Marta, for his 12-year pontificate.

While some had hoped Leo's move to the Apostolic Palace signaled a return to tradition, his decision to take up what were the guest quarters above the papal apartment suggest a more nuanced message from Leo: a nod to pre-Francis era papal customs, imbued with the freedom his predecessor carved out to break from the norm.

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