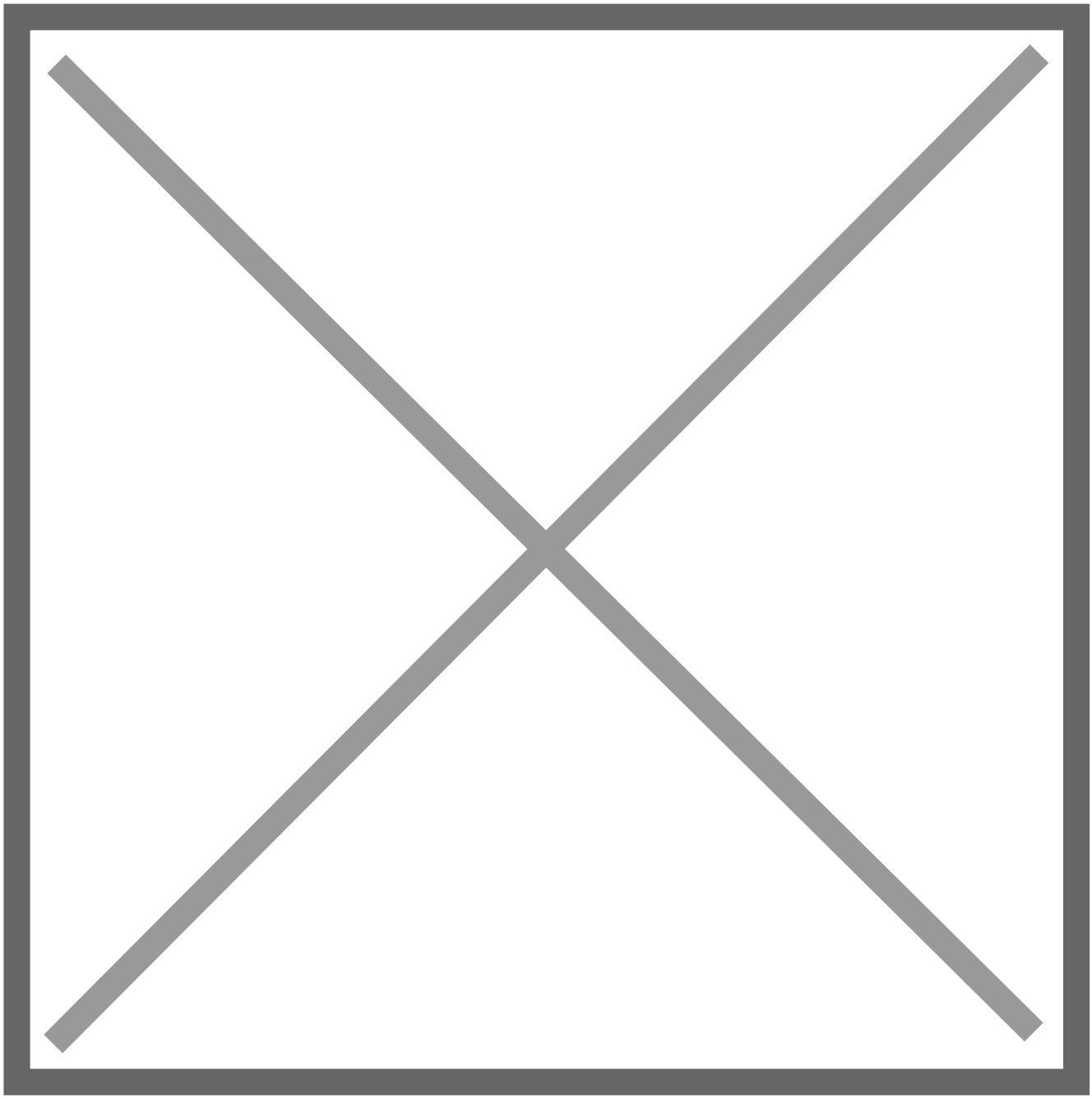
Vatican
Vatican News



Pope Leo XIV and Franciscan friars pray before the tomb of St. Francis in the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, Italy, Nov. 20, 2025. (CNS/Vatican Media)

Courtney Mares

View Author Profile



OSV News

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Assisi, Italy — February 10, 2026

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

The Italian hilltown of Assisi is anticipating a visit from Pope Leo XIV during the special Jubilee Year of St. Francis as the city celebrates the 800th anniversary of the death of its most famous saint.

"We are already looking forward to Pope Leo's visit in the coming year," Archbishop Domenico Sorrentino, the apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Assisi-Nocera Umbra-Gualdo Tadino and Foligno, said at a Feb. 3 press conference in Rome.

"We have made the request, but we have not yet received a response regarding the date," he said. "However, we are extremely confident that he will not fail to come."

More than 350,000 pilgrims have already registered to venerate the relics of St. Francis, which will be displayed from Feb. 22 to March 22 in front of the altar of the Lower Church of the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi.

Sorrentino suggested several possible dates for the papal visit. One option is mid-May, when Assisi's Sanctuary of the Renunciation will celebrate the anniversary of its inauguration. The sanctuary, part of Assisi's Church of St. Mary Major, marks the site where St. Francis renounced his worldly possessions. It is also the location of the tomb of the recently canonized St. Carlo Acutis, whose death 20 years ago is also being commemorated this year.

A more likely timeframe is October, when Assisi will celebrate the feasts of both St. Francis and St. Carlo Acutis. Oct. 27 will also mark the 40th anniversary of the Spirit of Assisi, the landmark interreligious gathering organized by St. John Paul II, the

archbishop noted.

"So Pope Leo will have plenty of choices if he wants to choose significant dates or if he wants to choose a date of his own," Sorrentino said. "And any day of the year he will certainly not only be welcome, but it will be a great joy for us and for the world."

The visit is not expected until after March 25, when Archbishop Felice Accrocca will be installed as the new bishop of Assisi. Leo accepted 77-year-old Archbishop Sorrentino's resignation in January after he served 20 years as the bishop of Assisi. Accrocca, currently archbishop of Benevento, is known for his expertise on St. Francis.

"It was a great grace to be for 20 years, bishop of Assisi," Sorrentino told OSV News.

"I won't rest in my retirement," he added. "When we are in the footsteps of these saints, like St. Francis, like also this young St. Carlo Acutis, we cannot rest. We must work for the world."

Advertisement

Leo has proclaimed a special Jubilee Year of St. Francis running until Jan. 10, 2027, offering a plenary indulgence to pilgrims who visit Franciscan churches or places of worship connected to the saint.

Leo previously made a brief visit to Assisi on Nov. 20 to address the Italian bishops' conference, during which he prayed privately at St. Francis' tomb.

"It is a blessing to be able to come here today to this sacred place," the pope said during that visit. "As we approach the 800th anniversary of St. Francis's death, we have the opportunity to prepare to celebrate this great, humble, and poor saint at a time when the world is searching for signs of hope."

Sorrentino emphasized the spiritual significance of the jubilee year at a press conference for the "Francis of Assisi and Carlo Acutis for an Economy of Fraternity" award.

"St. Francis guides us to Jesus, Carlo guides us to Jesus," the archbishop said. "They point to Jesus, almost as if two saints are stepping aside so that Jesus and the Gospel can come back into view at a time when Jesus and the Gospel have been

forgotten."

The award provides financial support for integral development projects that benefit the poor, with the Diocese of Assisi awarding 50,000 euros ($59,510) to the winner. The 2025 award went to "Project HOPE" from India, which provides economic empowerment to deafblind and vulnerable youth and disadvantaged women under the guidance of Caritas Goa. The deadline to apply for the prize is Feb. 28.

South Korean Cardinal Lazarus You Heung-sik, prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for the Clergy, also spoke at the press conference.

"Together with young entrepreneurs from around the world, we envisioned a different economy, one that gives life rather than kills, includes rather than excludes, humanizes rather than dehumanizes, cares for creation rather than plunders it," You said.

"Today, 800 years after the death of Francis and 20 years after the death of Carlo, we see the great tree growing from the testimony of the self-denial of these two saints."