Vatican

Vatican News




The entrance to the "Ultra Visibilia" exhibition on St. Peter's Terrace is shown on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the dedication of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, Monday, Feb. 16, 2026. (AP/Gregorio Borgia)

Nicole Winfield

View Author Profile

Associated Press

View Author Profile

## Join the Conversation

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

Vatican City — February 20, 2026

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

The Vatican is marking the 400th anniversary of the consecration of St. Peter's Basilica with a host of visitor-friendly initiatives, including expanding access to its spectacular terrace and its snack bar in the shadow of Michelangelo's great dome.

The Vatican on Monday outlined its plans to make better use of St. Peter's and better redistribute the millions of people who pass through it each year, while at the same time protecting its artistic treasures.

Among the initiatives are a new online reservation system, to lessen the oftentimes hourslong wait to get into the basilica, and simultaneous translations for Masses in up to 60 languages. In addition, a new permanent exhibition tracing the history of the basilica is opening on the terrace, alongside an expanded snack bar for hungry pilgrims.

Recent reports in the Italian media about a bistro on the basilica's terrace generated no shortage of raised eyebrows, amid questions about whether such a sacred place — the basilica houses the tomb of St. Peter — should be serving pizzas to tourists on the roof.

The existing snack bar is being nearly doubled in size.

Advertisement

Cardinal Mauro Gambetti insisted Monday it was perfectly acceptable to provide a sandwich or drink, alongside bathrooms, to visitors to the basilica, especially those who have exerted themselves to visit the cupola of St. Peter's, which was designed by Michelangelo.

To honor the Renaissance master is a related initiative: a new font available in Microsoft Office, entitled "Michelangelus," is styled using his actual penmanship.

The basilica initiatives, sponsored by Italian energy giant ENI, are being rolled out to commemorate consecration in 1626 by Pope Urban VIII of St. Peter's, which replaced an earlier basilica.