Vatican
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Lights can be seen above the third floor of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican on the evening

Lights can be seen above the third floor of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican on the evening of March 14, the day that Pope Leo XIV moved into his official papal apartment at the palace. The move marks a return to more than 100 years of tradition, following Pope Francis' decision to live at the Vatican's guesthouse during his 13-year papacy. (OSV News/Paulina Guzik)

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Rome — March 14, 2026
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Pope Leo XIV moved into the newly renovated papal apartment in the Apostolic Palace on March 14, taking up residence in the flat that was famously eschewed by Pope Francis.

The Vatican said Leo would be joined by his closest aides in the apartment, located on the third floor of the Apostolic Palace and overlooking St. Peter's Square. The move and the consolidation of Leo's team suggest a new chapter is opening as his pontificate nears the one-year mark.

After he was elected in May, Leo had continued living in his small flat in the Vatican's Palazzo del Sant'Uffizio, the headquarters of the Holy See doctrine office that also has a handful of private apartments for Vatican officials.

Pope Leo XIV answers a question from Elise Allen, senior correspondent at Crux, during an int

Pope Leo XIV answers a question from Elise Allen, senior correspondent at Crux, during an interview at the pope's residence inside the Vatican's Palazzo Sant'Uffizio July 30 (CNS/Courtesy of Crux)

Over the ensuing 10 months, the Vatican undertook extensive renovations to the papal apartment in the Apostolic Palace, which hadn't been used during Francis' 12-year papacy and was in dire need of an update to bring its electric, plumbing and other utilities up to standard.

In recent months, as Leo's move-in date neared, a crane was seen working on the site.

In 1903, St. Pius X became the first pope to live in the apartments overlooking St. Peter's Square. The apartments were completely remodeled by Pope Paul VI in 1964 and have undergone smaller modifications by each pope since, according to *Mondo Vaticano*, a Vatican-published mini-encyclopedia about Vatican buildings, offices and tradition.

On May 11, 2025, Leo removed the seals that had been placed on the door of the papal apartment in the Apostolic Palace on April 21, following the death of Francis.

Leo's new quarters include several rooms, among them the private study — where the pope appears at the window to lead the Angelus prayer in St. Peter's Square every Sunday — a library and a small chapel. According to Italian media, the apartment also includes a home gym.

Francis chose not to live in the apartment because he said he wanted to be surrounded by other people. Instead, he lived in the Vatican's Santa Marta residence, the institutional-style hotel where visiting priests stay and where cardinals are sequestered during conclaves.

Francis' choice was in keeping with his simple taste and disdain for the pomp of the papacy. But the practical effect also meant that the entire second floor of the hotel was turned over to the pope, reducing its capacity for paying guests.

Pope Leo XIV leads the Angelus prayer from the window of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican

Pope Leo XIV leads the Angelus prayer from the window of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican March 1. He has moved into the renovated papal apartment on the third

floor of the Apostolic Palace and overlooking St. Peter's Square. (OSV News/Reuters/Guglielmo Mangiapane)

Leo, history's first U.S.-born pope, has made clear he is more comfortable using the traditional garb and accoutrements of the papacy. His decision to move into the Apostolic Palace has been praised in particular by conservative commentators who see it as a sign of respect for the papacy.

Leo had actually taken formal possession of the residence in the days after his election, walking through the reception rooms and the small chapel reserved for his personal use. It had been sealed as called for by papal protocol, with a red ribbon and wax, after Francis died April 21, even though he had died in his hotel room.

A new chapter as the anniversary approaches

Leo's move signals something of a new chapter in a pontificate that seems to be kicking into gear after a slow and deliberate start.

Earlier this week, Leo made his second big appointment in the Vatican bureaucracy, where several prefects are either at or past retirement age. He named a fellow Augustinian priest, Archbishop Luis Marín de San Martín of Spain, as the new head of the Vatican's charity office.

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Vatican media has reported that Pope Leo will live with his private secretaries, Msgr. Edgard Rimaycuna and Fr. Marco Billeri.

Leo has put together a team of four close aides. They include the two men who most often flank him in public and are his main gatekeepers: his secretary, Peruvian Msgr. Edgard Iván Rimaycuna Inga and the vice regent of the papal household, Fr. Edward Daniang Daleng, a fellow Augustinian priest from Nigeria.

Additionally, Leo has named a former Swiss Guard lieutenant, Anton Kappler, to serve as a second administrative aide in his office, alongside the former gendarme Piergiorgio Zanetti.

In St. Peter's Square on the evening of March 14, it was business as usual as tourists milled around taking in the sights -- mostly unaware that a major shift in the life of the pope was happening nearby. A group of Romans who learned from OSV News that the pope was moving into the apostolic palace that day were very excited to hear the news.

And though Leo's bedroom — for reasons of security and privacy — won't be as public as that of his predecessors, a small light in the palace was visible from the square — an indicator that the space officially is in use once again.

OSV News contributed to this report.

This story has been updated to include additional details about the pope's apartment.