



Pope Leo XIV delivers a blessing in St. Peter's Basilica, on the occasion of the weekly general audience at the Vatican Aug. 5, 2026. (AP Photo/Gregorio Borgia)

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Pope Leo XIV will meet with survivors of clergy abuse during a four-day trip to France next month that will include a visit to UNESCO headquarters, a meeting with French bishops in Lourdes and an interreligious meeting in the border city of Metz, the Vatican announced on Friday.

The Vatican issued a brief separate statement highlighting the meeting with several abuse survivors and noting that the victims themselves will be involved in preparations for the meeting. The timing and location will be provided at a later date.

Leo met with six abuse survivors during his recent trip to Spain, where the Catholic hierarchy has only recently begun reckoning with its legacy of abuse and cover-up after long dismissing the severity of the scandal.

In France, a 2021 report estimated 330,000 children had been sexually abused over 70 years by church personnel. The pontiff last month signaled commitment to continuing the fight against clergy sexual abuse by appointing French Bishop Thibault Verny to head the Vatican's child protection advisory commission.

The Sept. 25-28 France trip, which was confirmed in May, will be Leo's fourth foreign voyage of the year.

Leo made a day trip to Monaco in March, visited four African nations in April and Spain and the Canary Islands in June. The Vatican also confirmed this week that he will make his first trip to Latin America as pontiff in November, with visits to Uruguay, Argentina and Peru, where he served for over three decades.

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Leo will start his visit Sept. 25 in Paris, meeting with President Emmanuel Macron at the Élysée Palace where he will address authorities, civil society and the diplomatic corps before giving a speech at headquarters of the U.N. culture agency, UNESCO. He will later celebrate vespers at Notre-Dame Cathedral and end the day with a prayer vigil with young people at the national stadium.

Leo is making social inclusion, active participation and new converts central to his program on the second day, when he will visit the Maison Bakhita center for social support and integration before a meeting with a synodal assembly that works to involve laypeople in church matters, as well as recently baptized Catholics.

He travels later in the day to Lourdes, one of Catholicism's most important pilgrimage sites, where he will pray at the Grotto of the Apparitions and meet the staff and sick people of the Accueil Notre-Dame. He closes the visit with one of Lourdes' signature rites: the Rosary and torchlight procession through the sanctuary.

Leo ends his visit in Metz, near the Luxembourg and German border, where he will attend an interreligious meeting in a conference center named for Robert Schuman, a French statesman regarded as one of the founding fathers of European integration. Schuman, a Catholic, was declared "venerable" in 2021, a step in the Catholic sainthood process.

While Leo's predecessor, the late Pope Francis, mostly stayed away from big European centers of Christianity during his 12-year pontificate, Leo appears to be paying more attention to the experience of the European faithful.

Francis visited France twice, but never on a state visit to Paris: He made a day trip to Strasbourg in 2014 to address the European Parliament and Council of Europe. He then visited the port city of Marseille for a conference on migration in 2023.

This story appears in the **Pope Leo in France** feature series. [View the full series.](#)