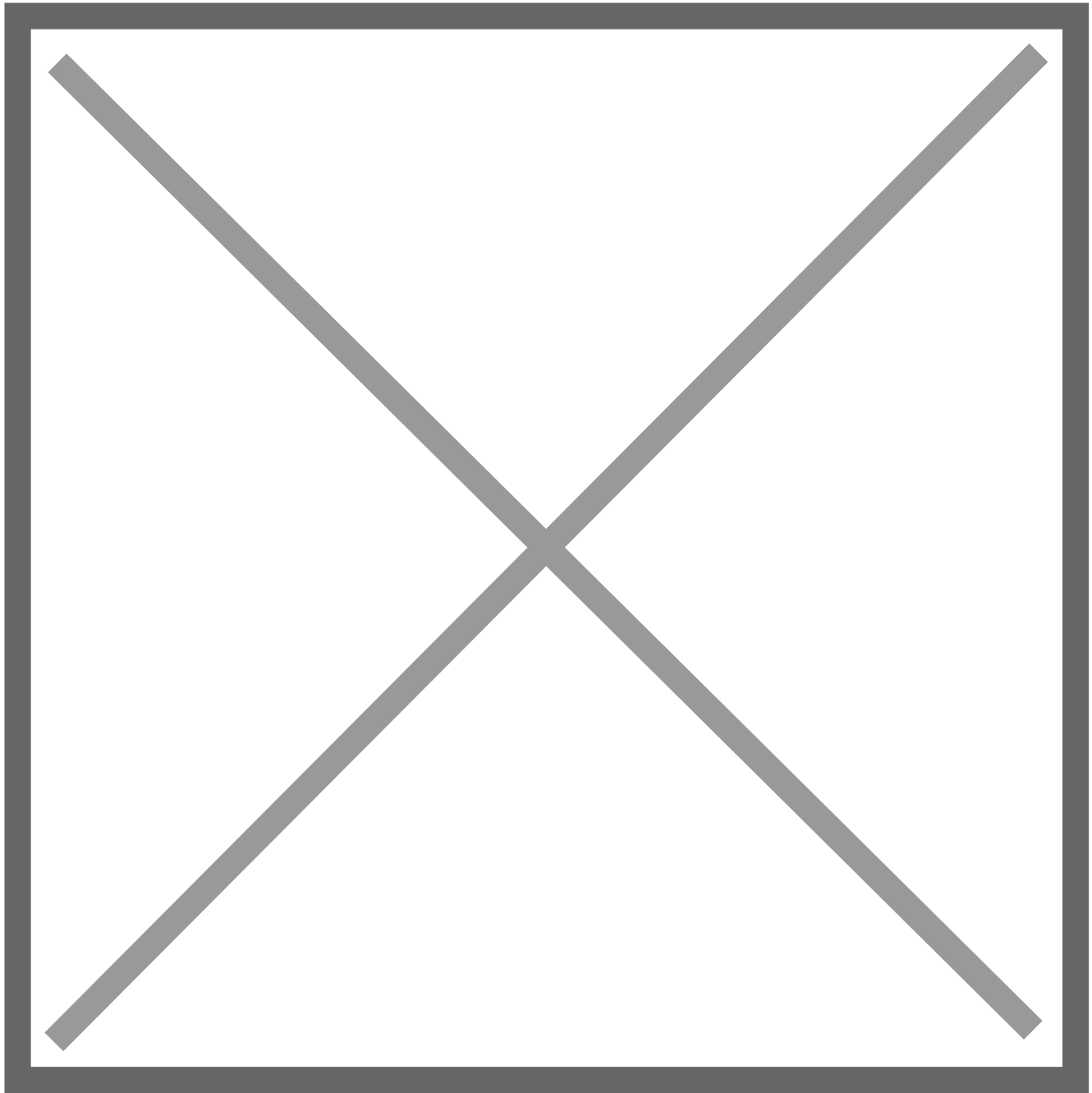
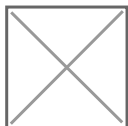


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On Oct. 4, 2026, in Assisi, Italy, clergymen lead a procession as Archbishop Felice Accrocca of Assisi arrives to celebrate a vespers in the lower Basilica of St. Francis in celebration of the 800th anniversary of the death of St. Francis. The feast of the "the Little Poor Man of Assisi" was the culminating event of a yearlong jubilee celebration, which began with the historic exposition of his relics for public veneration. (OSV News/Courtesy of Sala Stampa Sacro Convento Assisi)



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Assisi, Italy — October 6, 2026

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At the stroke of midnight Oct. 4, church bells tolled across the Italian hilltown of Assisi to mark the 800th anniversary of St. Francis' death.

The Oct. 4 feast of the "the Little Poor Man of Assisi" was the pinnacle event amid a yearlong jubilee celebration, which began with the historic exposition of his relics for public veneration.

The feast day celebrations began on Oct. 3 with a night procession and a solemn commemoration of the *Transitus* ("passage"), the traditional Franciscan prayer service in the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels marking St. Francis' transition into eternal life. The basilica houses the chapel where St. Francis died on the night of Oct. 3, 1226.

About 3,000 people took part in the procession on the eve of the beloved saint's feast day, singing hymns and voicing prayers as they retraced the route made by St. Francis' coffin in 1226, walking about 2 miles uphill though the Assisi from the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels to the Basilica of St. Francis where he is currently buried.

The walk ended with a midnight Mass celebrated by Cardinal Ángel Fernández Artime, the pontifical legate for the papal basilicas of Assisi.

Reflecting on the meaning of St. Francis' transitus, Artime told the congregation, "To live well means learning, day after day, to die to ourselves so that we may belong ever more fully to Christ."

"The things we owned, our achievements, the image we projected of ourselves" will not matter in the end, the cardinal said. "Love will remain. Christ will remain. Francis dies poor, but he dies rich in the only wealth that never dies: the Lord."

The following morning, Cardinal Matteo Zuppi, the president of the Italian bishops' conference, presided over a packed Mass in the basilica attended by Italy's President Sergio Mattarella. Assisi's Bishop Felice Accrocca and Arttime were among the Mass' concelebrants.

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In his homily, Zuppi, who just returned from a diplomatic visit to Moscow, said that St. Francis continues to teach us to be peacemakers, bringing the gift of peace "wherever there is violence, hatred and misunderstanding."

The way forward when "we are tempted and seduced by a vulgar, overbearing and deceptive culture of power," the archbishop of Bologna added, is to disarm "our hands and our hearts."

Following the Mass, Italy's president addressed the crowd gathered in front of the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi.

"In these times marked by senseless and cruel wars, by so much violence, manipulation and arrogance, as Leo XIV said a few days ago, our hope is that Francis' sun may illuminate the world, convert minds hardened by hatred, and point the way towards peace, hope and a serene, fraternal life together," Mattarella said.

Br. Marco Moroni, the custos of the Sacred Convent, announced that, together with local authorities a proposal has been made to establish a children's hospice in the region as "a lasting, tangible sign of the centenary."

The celebrations concluded on the evening of Oct. 4 with solemn vespers and a procession led by Accrocca, who imparted a blessing of Italy and the world from the small dome of the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi using the Chartula relic of St. Francis. The Chartula is a small, fragile piece of parchment written on directly by St. Francis of Assisi in September 1224, two years before his death. The parchment contains the "The Praises of God" on one side and "The Blessing for

Brother Leo" on the reverse.

The Jubilee Year proclaimed by Pope Leo XIV celebrating the 800th anniversary of the death of St. Francis of Assisi will continue until Jan. 10, 2027.