Vatican

Vatican News



Pope Leo XIV, followed by surgeon Stefano Margaritora, Archbishop Petar Rajič, prefect of the Papal Household, and Commander of the Vatican Gendarmerie Gianluca Gauzzi Broccoletti, leaves Rome's Gemelli hospital on Oct. 17, 2026, after surgery Oct. 13 to remove lung cancer. (AP/Alessandra Tarantino)



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Pope Leo XIV returned to the Vatican four days after undergoing surgery to remove a growth from his lung, sooner than initial forecasts of a weeklong hospital stay.

After blood tests and chest X-rays performed Oct. 17, "the Holy Father has been deemed fit to be discharged," the doctors responsible for treating the pope wrote in a statement. "Tomorrow he will recite the Angelus from the window of the papal apartment," the Vatican later said.

Leo walked out of the hospital shortly after 3:30 p.m. local time. Video of the pope's release showed him smiling and waving to crowds gathered around the hospital entrance, and he stopped to greet other patients on his way out.

Before being discharged from the hospital, Leo celebrated noon Mass at the hospital as he did the previous day, OSV News reported.

On Oct. 13, the pope underwent a successful procedure that discovered a malignant tumor in his right lung and removed its lower lobe. Doctors said there were no complications in the procedure, but further tests are needed to determine if the cancer had spread into his lymph nodes or other parts of his body. The Vatican has not disclosed the status of those tests.

Leo had not been seen in public since he walked into Rome's Gemelli hospital four days ago, waving to well-wishers and TV camera crews before undergoing his operation later that afternoon. The Vatican Oct. 16 published the first photos of Leo since his hospitalization, which show him standing and celebrating Mass in the hospital.

The pope's schedule had been cleared through Oct. 20 to allow for a full week of recovery, but he was already back at work just two days after his minimally invasive operation, meeting with top aides at the hospital.

From the hospital, Leo spoke on the phone with Russian President Vladimir Putin Oct. 17 to express his concern over the humanitarian situation in Oleshky, Ukraine, where some 2,000 civilians have had no access to food supplies amid ongoing fighting in the area. On the call, initiated by the Holy See, Leo "called for a ceasefire to allow the delivery of food and medical assistance, and the voluntary and safe evacuation of the civilian population," the Vatican said.



People crowd a window to watch Pope Leo XIV leave Rome's Gemelli hospital Oct. 17, 2026, after undergoing surgery Oct. 17 to remove lung cancer. (AP/Andrew Medichini)

Leo's hospital dismissal falls within the timeline provided by Dr. Alexis Chidi, a thoracic surgeon at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York, who told the National Catholic Reporter after his operation that her patients who undergo the same procedure as the pope's typically remain in the hospital two to four days for recovery.

Chidi also said that some of her patients with "high-powered jobs" are able to work from the hospital during that time, but that it could take six to eight weeks before they truly feel like themselves again.

Previous popes have appeared from the balcony of the Gemelli hospital during their hospital stays for their customary Sunday address, but the 71-year-old Leo's return to the Apostolic Palace ahead of that public appointment marks a return to normalcy after the pope's hospitalization.

The looming question, however, is whether the pope's 11-day trip to Latin America in early November, involving 12 flights and stops at high-altitude destinations, will proceed as planned. The Vatican published the list of journalists accredited for the trip the day before the pope was due to leave the hospital, a move that could be read as a sign that the trip remains on track.

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This story has been updated with additional information about Pope Leo's release from the hospital.