

Australian Ambassador to Holy See Laying Groundwork for Pope's Visit

There is much work to be done but we are doing everything we can to ensure Pope Leo's visit to Australia in 2028.

That was the message from Australia's Ambassador to the Holy See, The Hon Keith Pitt, to a gathering of international journalists in Rome.

The former Federal Government Minister said while the official invitation for the Holy Father to attend the International Eucharistic Congress in Sydney in September 2028 has been extended by Prime Minister Albanese and Australian Catholic Church leaders, there is still much work and diplomatic discussions to be had before finalisation of the visit and schedule.

"Are we prepared right now? Not yet but we certainly will be," Ambassador Pitt said.

"The last Papal visit to Australia was in July 2008 when Pope Benedict XVI visited Sydney to celebrate World Youth Day, so Sydney is well capable and equipped to welcome Pope Leo to the International Eucharistic Congress."

The Congress is a large-scale gathering of clergy, religious, and laity to publicly witness and celebrate the central doctrine of the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. Australia has hosted the international congress twice previously. Sydney hosted the 29th Congress in 1928. It was the first one held in the Southern Hemisphere, concluding with a procession of more than 500,000 people through the streets of Sydney to St Mary's Cathedral. Melbourne hosted the 40th Congress in 1973.

A former electrical engineer, Bundaberg sugar cane farmer, and National Party member for Hinkler, Queensland, Pitt was appointed Ambassador to the Holy See in February 2025.

The start of his term was delayed by the illness and death of Pope Francis. He presented his credentials to Pope Leo XIV in June 2025 but admits he is still "making adjustments".

"I am probably more comfortable in shorts and thongs than formal attire," he said.

"I am a work in progress but one thing I am sure about is the impact of the Catholic Church many people perhaps don't realise. It is more than 'just a religious' institution.

"A lot of work goes on behind the scenes."

Pitt was addressing about 30 international journalists from 18 countries at the week-long Church Up Close seminar "Covering Catholicism in the Age of Leo XIV at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross.