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## Pope Francis to visit and address the Council of Europe

Strasbourg, 20.11.2014 - Pope Francis will pay an official visit to the Council of Europe on Tuesday, 25 November. Following an invitation by Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland at a private audience accorded at Vatican City, His Holiness will address the Organisation, as it celebrates its 65th anniversary, in a solemn session gathering all its institutions (12.40 pm Strasbourg time).

Pope Francis will be welcomed by Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland, by Prime Minister of Belgium Charles Michel (on behalf of the Belgian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers), by the President of the Parliamentary Assembly Anne Brasseur, by the President of the Congress Jean-Claude Frécon, by the President of the European Court of Human Rights Dean Spielmann, by the Commissioner for Human Rights Nils Muižnieks and by the President of the Conference of INGOs Jean-Marie Heydt.

### **Background**

The last visit by a Pontiff to the Council of Europe was on 8 October 1988, when Pope John Paul II was welcomed on the eve of the Institution's 40th anniversary.

The [Holy See](#) was granted Observer status with the Council of Europe on 7 March 1970, but the co-operation began in 1962.

As a State Party to the [European Cultural Convention](#), the Holy See plays an active role in the cultural work of the Organisation. It also participates in the evaluation and monitoring process of [Moneyval](#).

The Holy See is also member of the following Council of Europe bodies:

- European Commission for Democracy through Law (known as the [Venice Commission](#));
- Council of Europe Development Bank;
- European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (known as the Lisbon [North-South Centre](#)).

### **Further information**

On this special occasion, the Strasbourg Historical Museum has lent the original Council of Europe lectern used by Pope John Paul II in 1988.

The stained glass "*Strasbourg Madonna*" (by Max Ingrand): a reproduction of the gift donated in 1956 by the Council of Europe to Strasbourg and its Cathedral will be shown to Pope Francis.

The tapestry "*Astronomie*" (after a cartoon by Cornelis Schut from the Vatican Museums), a gift donated by Pope Paul VI to the Council of Europe in 1977, will also be displayed.

A special commemorative stamp will be issued by the French postal service on 25 November.

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### **Accreditation Procedure**

The accreditation procedure is closed. A special badge is needed to access Council of Europe premises and press facilities.

Journalists already permanently accredited at the Council of Europe (badge with photo) must confirm their presence by mail to [accreditation@coe.int](mailto:accreditation@coe.int).