

Pope Francis to address top European Institutions

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European Parliament in Strasbourg - EPA

(Vatican Radio) Pope Francis will travel to Strasbourg to address the European Parliament and the Council of Europe on November 25, 2014.

A statement released by the Vatican Press Office on Tuesday revealed that Pope is scheduled to travel to the French city of Strasbourg, where he will visit the European Parliament and the Council of Europe.

The European Parliament is the only directly-elected EU body and one of the largest democratic assemblies in the world. Its 751 Members are there to represent the EU's 500 million citizens. They are elected once every five years by voters from across the 28 Member States.

The invitation to the European Parliament was extended by President Schulz during his official visit to the Vatican on October 11, 2013. On this occasion the Pope will address the Members during a formal session.

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It includes 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Pope Francis' official visit to the Council of Europe follows an invitation by Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland at a private audience in the Vatican on 20 September, 2014.

The Pope will address the Organisation, in a solemn session, as it celebrates its 65th anniversary.

The last visit by a Pontiff both to the European Parliament and to the Council of Europe was in October 1988.

Answering questions by journalists during the press conference to present the programme of the Pope's visit to Strasbourg in November, the director of the Vatican Press Office, Father Federico Lombardi SJ, said the Holy Father intends to undertake an Apostolic Journey to France during the year 2015.

Radio Vatican