



Conference of Catholic Bishops of India

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CCBI Office Bearers Meet Pope Leo XIV at the Vatican

Vatican City, 31 August 2026: The office bearers of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI) met Pope Leo XIV at the Vatican on Friday, 28 August. The cordial meeting lasted for more than 45 minutes, with discussions focusing on the life, mission and pastoral concerns of the Latin Catholic Church in India.

The delegation was led by Cardinal Filipe Neri Ferrão, President of the CCBI and the FABC and Archbishop of Goa and Daman. He was accompanied by Archbishop Peter Machado, Vice President of the CCBI and Archbishop of Bangalore; Archbishop Vincent Aind, Secretary General of the CCBI and Archbishop of Ranchi and Rev. Dr Stephen Alathara, Deputy Secretary General of the CCBI.

The meeting took place on the Feast of St Augustine, the patron saint of the Augustinian Order to which Pope Leo XIV belongs. The CCBI delegation conveyed its festal greetings and good wishes to the Holy Father.

As a special gift, Cardinal Filipe Neri Ferrão presented Pope Leo XIV with a beautifully crafted oak-wood plaque depicting Jesus Christ surrounded by twelve saints associated with the Church in India. The saints portrayed on the plaque are St Thomas the Apostle, St Bartholomew the Apostle, St Francis Xavier, St Gonsalo Garcia, St Joseph Vaz, St John de Britto, St Devasahayam, St Teresa of Calcutta, St Alphonsa, St Kuriakose Elias Chavara, St Euphrasia and St Mariam Thresia. The intricately wood-carved plaque was crafted by Mr. Raphael, a State Award-winning sculptor from Kerala.

Archbishop Peter Machado and Archbishop Vincent Aind jointly presented the Holy Father with a traditional Indian Kasavu shawl, crafted from fine handloom fabric and adorned with an elegant gold-coloured border. The Office Bearers also presented Pope Leo XIV with a handcrafted Pattu shawl from Kashmir, together with five varieties of fine tea leaves from Darjeeling, Assam and the Nilgiris, symbolising the rich cultural heritage and diversity of India.

Rev. Dr Stephen Alathara presented the Holy Father with copies of the CCBI Pastoral Plan, "Journeying Towards a Synodal Church: CCBI Mission 2033," and the Bhubaneswar Document of the 36th CCBI Plenary Assembly held in 2025. He also presented Pope Leo XIV with a copy of the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Catholic Bible, approved by the CCBI in 2019. The ESV was published by Crossway,

based in Wheaton, Illinois, USA, which is part of the Chicago metropolitan area and close to the Pope's birthplace and home city of Chicago. The presentation thus carried a special significance, linking a Catholic edition of Sacred Scripture with the Pope's own American roots.

"It was a very friendly meeting, and the Holy Father was extremely cordial with us. Pope Leo knows the Church in India well. He had visited India twice, in 2004 and 2006, during his tenure as Prior General of the Order of St Augustine. He appreciated the efforts of the Latin Church in India, particularly the preparation and publication of the Pastoral Plan," said Cardinal Filipe Neri Ferrão.

The meeting marked a significant moment for the CCBI, as it was the first time that its office bearers visited the Holy Father together as a delegation.

The CCBI is the canonical episcopal conference of the Latin Catholic Church in India. It represents 132 Latin dioceses, 217 bishops, 564 religious congregations and nearly 18 million Latin Catholics across the country.

The CCBI's Pastoral Plan, launched in 2024, has provided a common pastoral vision for the Latin Catholic Church in India and has received appreciation both nationally and internationally.