



EUROPE

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Pope Francis shuns grand apartment for two rooms

Pope Francis has decided to shun a grand papal apartment on the top floor of the Vatican's Apostolic Palace in favour of a modest two-room residence.

His spokesman said he was "trying out this type of simple living" in a communal building with other priests.

In doing so he has broken a tradition which is more than a century old.

The decision reinforces the newly-elected Pope's austere reputation. As archbishop of Buenos Aires he refused to move into the Bishop's Palace.

Preferring more modest accommodation, he also often cooked his own meals.

Communal meals

Since the reign of Pope Pius X at the beginning of the 20th Century every pope has occupied the palatial penthouse apartment with more than a dozen rooms, staff quarters, a terrace and extensive views over the city of Rome.

But since his election Pope Francis has been living in a simple two-room suite in the Domus Santa Marta - a hotel-style residence built by Pope John Paul II next to St Peter's Basilica.

And he intends to go on living there for the foreseeable future, according to the Vatican spokesman Federico Lombardi.

"This morning he let his fellow cardinals know that he will keep living with them for a certain

period of time," Fr Lombardi said.

He said he could not say whether the Pope would remain in these quarters in the long term.

"It is still a period of getting used to things," Fr Lombardi added.

Pope Francis will continue to use the papal library on the second floor of the Apostolic palace for receiving official guests and will appear on Sundays at the window used by previous popes to address pilgrims in St Peter's Square.

About half the 105 suites in the residence are occupied by Vatican staff, who had to move out of their rooms to accommodate visiting cardinals during the holding of the recent conclave at which Pope Francis was elected.

The Pope will take his meals in the communal dining room together with other visiting clerics and permanent residents.

His simple new communal home contrasts with the much larger accommodation currently being renovated inside the Vatican for the future use of the now retired former Pope Benedict and his staff, reports the BBC's David Willey in Rome.

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