

Villanova University, the Pope's Alma Mater, to Unveil First-Ever Pope Leo XIV Sustainability Medal Recipient in Rome

Sept. 14 press conference at the Vatican will also preview the 2026 Villanova University International Sustainability Conference, 'Responding to the Cries of the Earth and the Poor'

Rome, Italy (Sept. 10 2026) – Villanova University will hold a **press conference on Monday, September 14, from 12:00 to 1:30 p.m. CEST** (6:00 to 7:30 a.m. ET), to announce the inaugural recipient of the Pope Leo XIV Sustainability Medal. The event, taking place in the Sala San Pio X (S. Pio X Hall) of the Vatican, will also highlight the upcoming 2026 Villanova University International Sustainability Conference, "Responding to the Cries of the Earth and the Poor." Representatives from Villanova University and the Holy See will come together to discuss the Medal and the conference, which will focus on some of today's most pressing environmental and social challenges.

Taking part in the event will be Cardinal Michael Czerny, SJ, Prefect Emeritus of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development; The **Rev. Peter M. Donohue, OSA, PhD**, President of Villanova University; and **Manuela Priesemuth-Payan**, PhD, Villanova Faculty Director for Ethics and Social Responsibility, Villanova School of Business. The press conference will be moderated by **Alessandro Gisotti**, Vice Director Editorial of the Dicastery for Communication.

During the event, Villanova University will unveil the vision behind the new Medal and reveal the identity of its inaugural recipient. It will also preview the upcoming **2026 Villanova University International Sustainability Conference, "Responding to the Cries of the Earth and the Poor."** **Pope Leo XIV** will officially present the Medal on **October 13** at **Borgo Laudato Si'** in the **Pontifical Gardens of Castel Gandolfo**, during the Conference.

About the Pope Leo XIV Sustainability Medal

The Pope Leo XIV Sustainability Medal is intended as an enduring recognition of individuals from any field or discipline whose leadership reflects a holistic approach to sustainability. Laureates are selected for work that integrates care for the environment, social justice, protection of vulnerable communities, and responsible economic stewardship.

Presented every two years during the Villanova University International Sustainability Conference, the Medal seeks to inspire leadership, encourage innovation and promote collaboration in building a more just and sustainable world.

Villanova University, an Augustinian Catholic institution, shares a special connection with the Holy Father. Pope Leo XIV, then Robert Prevost, earned a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from Villanova in 1977, and the University later awarded him an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree in 2014.

About the 2026 Villanova University International Sustainability Conference

The **2026 Villanova University International Sustainability Conference**, “*Responding to the Cries of the Earth and the Poor*”, will bring together approximately 300 academics, researchers, Church representatives, foundations, and leaders from the public and private sectors in Rome from Oct. 12–15. The Conference is presented with the support of the **Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development** and the **Laudato Si' Center for Higher Education** (Centro di Alta Formazione Laudato si').

Grounded in the convergence of ecological degradation and social inequality, the conference will foster interdisciplinary collaboration and explore how research, ethics and lived experience can contribute to more just and sustainable communities. On Oct. 13, participants will gather for a morning program and lunch at the Augustinianum in Rome before traveling to Borgo Laudato si' in the Pontifical Gardens of Castel Gandolfo for a visit and the inaugural presentation of the Pope Leo XIV Sustainability Medal.

More information about the conference is available [HERE](#).

ACCREDITATION PROCEDURE

Journalists and media operators who wish to participate in person must apply, no less than 24 hours before the event, through the [Holy See Press Office online Accreditation System](#) available at: press.vatican.va/accreditamenti

Those who are unable to attend in person and wish to follow the press conference online may register via Zoom at the following link: <https://spc-va.zoom.us/j/88341653401?pwd=gC0F4C48EmmFaGdBkYA7VeEmmBsEHa.1>

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Sustainability at Villanova University In 2007, Villanova University President the Rev. Peter M. Donohue, OSA, PhD signed the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment. In 2018, the Villanova Sustainability Leadership Council was established to develop a 10-year actionable and measurable plan to guide the University's comprehensive effort to support the planet and its people and to ensure prosperity for all. By committing the University to the [Laudato Si' Action Platform](#) and developing a customized Laudato Si' Plan, Villanova University is taking decisive and unflinching action to build a better future. At the core of all sustainability activities, both large and small, is the University's vision to establish an ethos of sustainable living. As an Augustinian Catholic institution, Villanova is committed to generating and advocating sustainable action to help create a future that provides enough, for all, forever.

About Villanova University Since 1842, Villanova University's Augustinian Catholic intellectual tradition has been the cornerstone of an academic community in which students learn to think critically, act compassionately and succeed while serving others. There are more than 10,000 undergraduate, graduate and law students in the University's six colleges—the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the Villanova School of Business, the College of Engineering, the M. Louise Fitzpatrick College of Nursing, the College of Professional Studies and the Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law. Ranked among the nation's top universities, Villanova supports its students' intellectual growth and prepares them to become ethical leaders who create positive change everywhere life takes them. For more, visit www.villanova.edu

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