



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DIPLOMACY IN ACTION

U.S. Relations With the Holy See

Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs

Fact Sheet

October 31, 2013

More information about the Holy See is available on the [Holy See Page](#) and from other Department of State publications and other sources listed at the end of this fact sheet.

U.S.-HOLY SEE RELATIONS

The Holy See is the universal government of the Catholic Church and operates from Vatican City State, a sovereign, independent territory. The Pope is the ruler of both Vatican City State and the Holy See. The Holy See, as the supreme body of government of the Catholic Church, is a sovereign juridical entity under international law. The United States and the Holy See consult and cooperate on international issues of mutual interest, including human rights, inter-religious understanding, peace and conflict prevention, development, and environmental protection.

The United States maintained consular relations with the Papal States from 1797 to 1870 and diplomatic relations with the Pope, in his capacity as head of the Papal States, from 1848 to 1868, though not at the ambassadorial level. These relations lapsed in 1870 with the loss of all papal territories during the unification of Italy. From 1870 to 1984, the United States did not have diplomatic relations with the Holy See. Several U.S. presidents, however, designated personal envoys to visit the Holy See periodically for discussions of international humanitarian and political issues. In 1984, a revised Concordat was signed defining the relations between the government and the church within Italy. The United States and the Holy See announced the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1984.

U.S. Assistance to the Holy See

The United States provides no development assistance to the Holy See.

Bilateral Economic Relations

The United States has no significant trade or investment with the Holy See.

The Holy See's Membership in International Organizations

The Holy See and the United States both are members of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The Holy See also is an observer to a number of international

organizations of which the United States is a member, including the United Nations, Organization of American States, and World Trade Organization.

Bilateral Representation

The U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See is [Kenneth F. Hackett](#); other principal embassy officials are listed in the Department's [Key Officers List](#).

The Holy See maintains an Apostolic Nunciature, the equivalent of an embassy, in the United States at 3339 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20008, tel. (202) 333-7121.