

5 Books, a Flower and a Rock: The Significance of President Trump's Gifts to Pope Francis

President Donald Trump had a 30-minute audience with Pope Francis on Wednesday, during which the past tension between the two leaders seemed to melt away.

The White House has not yet provided a readout of the meeting, but reports from the press pool following the president suggest they discussed a wide range of issues, particularly the president's effort to build a broad coalition to promote peace. Video cameras captured the events, although the meeting was held behind closed doors.

Watch the video above for details.

The president and the pope exchanged gifts during the visit. The president received three personally signed documents from the pope, which are customary gifts:

- *Amoris Laetitia: The Joy of Love*, a book written by the pope that focuses on several issues of contemporary morality and Catholic church practice, which has seen some controversy over its application;
- *Evangelii Gaudium: The Joy of the Gospel*, a book written by the pope regarding "the church's primary mission of evangelization in the modern world," which some have called his "manifesto for church reform" and
- *Laudato Si: Praise Be to You*, a book written by the pope that is highly critical of "consumerism," irresponsible development in the world and environmental degradation that he believes has led to "climate change."

The president, in exchange, presented the pope with five books, a flower and a rock:

- The books: A signed first-edition set of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s *Stride Toward Freedom*, *The Measure of a Man*, *The Strength to Love*, *Why We Can't Wait* and *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* It is known that the pope is a deep admirer of the American civil rights leader, and the gift was meant to "highlight his messages of love, understanding and peace."
- The flower: A handmade bronze sculpture of a flowering lotus by artist Geoffrey Smith of Stuart, Florida, titled "Rising Above," which is meant to symbolize "the possibility for growth and triumph in the face of trying times."
- The rock: A piece of granite from the "Stone of Hope" statue from the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Following the meeting with the pope, the president traveled to Brussels for a meeting with our NATO allies. He was also scheduled to meet with King Philippe and Queen Mathilde of Belgium and Prime Minister Charles Michel. {eo}