



On Monday Pope Francis met German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier at the Vatican for a conversation focused largely on migration and ecumenical dialogue in the country in light of the Reformation anniversary.

According to an Oct. 9 Vatican communique, discussion between the Pope and Steinmeier, elected in February, touched on the “good relations and fruitful collaboration” between Germany and the Holy See, and emphasis was placed on the “positive interreligious and ecumenical dialogue” in the country.

Special mention was made of the relationship between Catholics and Protestants in light of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, which Pope Francis marked at the end of October 2016 with a trip to Sweden for a joint-commemoration of the event with Lutheran Church leaders in the country.

Discussion also turned to the topics of both the economic and religious status of Europe, and the world as a whole. Particular emphasis was placed on the issue of migration and “the promotion of a culture of acceptance and solidarity.”

Migration has been a hot topic in Germany recently, which is among the most popular migration destination in the world after the U.S.

In 2015, German Prime Minister Angela Merkel opted to allow more than one million asylum seekers into the country, as migration reached a fever pitch due to war in Syria and surrounding countries.

However, with most of those asylum seekers ending up in Bavaria, Merkel met backlash from her Bavarian allies in the Christian Social Union.

In response, on Sunday – two weeks after a federal election in which her party received the lowest level of support since 1949 – she and members of her Christian Democratic Union party met with CSU reps on Sunday to reach an agreement over the migration issue.

Both sides agreed to cap the number of incoming refugees at 200,000 per year, with a few small exceptions.

The deal was likely part of the 55-minute long discussion between Pope Francis and President Steinmeier, who subsequently met with Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin and Vatican Secretary for Relations with the States, Archbishop Paul Gallagher.

At the beginning of the meeting, Pope Francis, who lived in Bavaria for a brief period of time as a Jesuit, greeted the president in German, and the meeting concluded with an exchange of gifts: the president giving the Pope an antique print from the 1600s by Dutch painter Johannes David, and an emblematic book with various designs and drawings, which the president said was for the Pope's "private library."

For his part, Pope Francis gave the president his usual gift to heads of state: a copy of his 2014 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, his 2015 environmental encyclical *Laudato Si*, and his 2016 post-synodal exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, as well as a medal of St Martin.