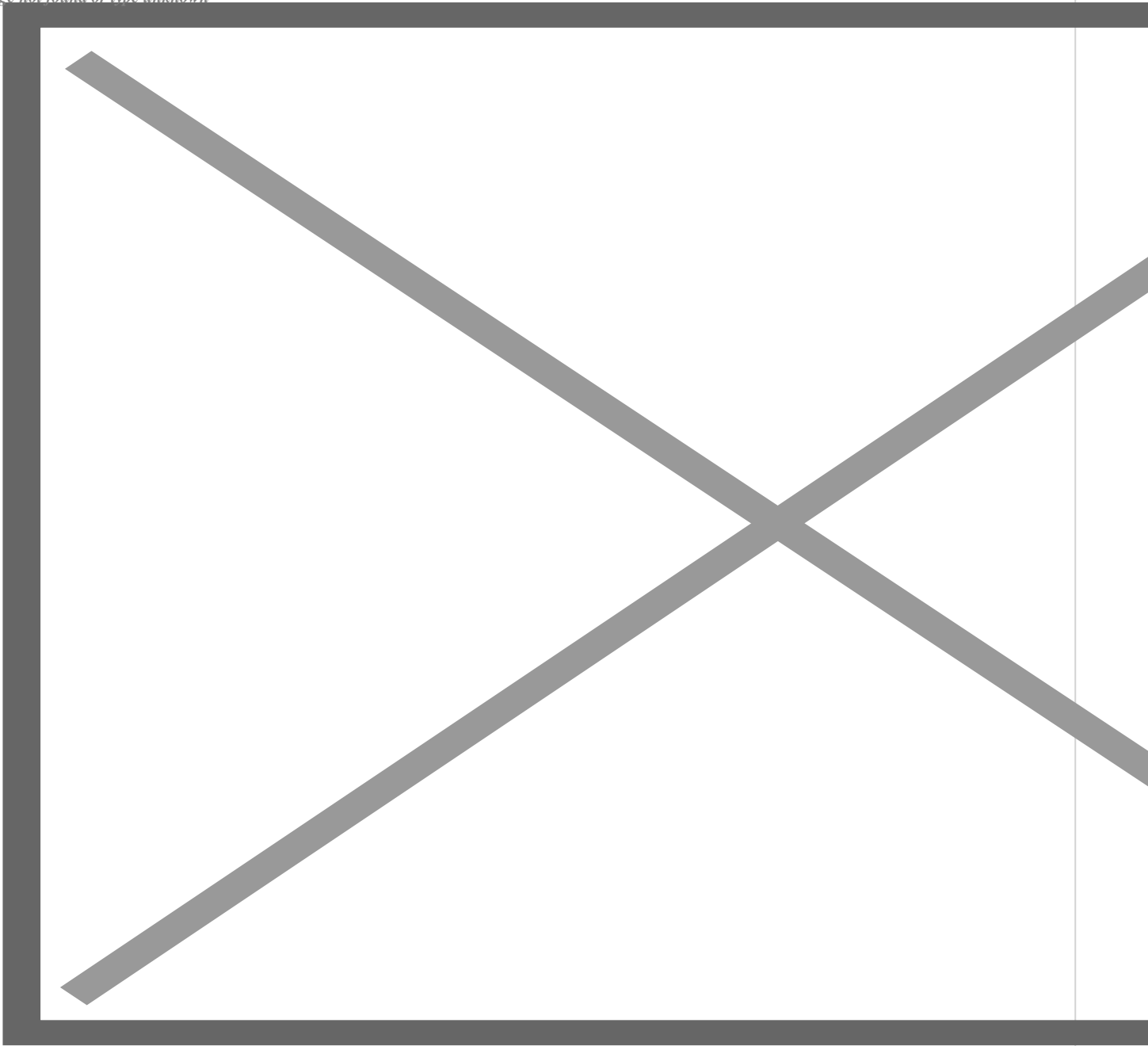


Pope Francis receives Cuban president at The Vatican

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Cuban president received by Pope Francis at the Vatican

Vatican City, June 20 (Prensa Latina)-- The President of Cuba, Miguel Díaz-Canel, was received today in audience by Pope Francis at the Holy See, during which both discussed various issues in the interest of strengthening the positive relations between the two States.

Díaz-Canel arrived at 09:50 local time at the Auletta Paolo VI, where the meeting was held, accompanied by his wife, Lis Cuesta, as well as by his country's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bruno Rodríguez and several deputy ministers of the Foreign Ministry, members of the delegation.

During the conversation, which began at 10:00 local time and lasted 40 minutes, the Cuban leader reiterated to the Pontiff his gratitude for the solidarity shown towards the people of the Caribbean nation.

On July 12 last year, the Pope said "Cuba is a symbol, Cuba has a great history", and added that "I love the Cuban people very much".

A few days later, on August 10 of that year, Francis expressed his "closeness in a special way to those affected" by the tragedy caused by the explosions and fire at an oil base in the western Cuban province of Matanzas.

On October 2, he expressed his sorrow for the victims caused by Hurricane Ian, which hit western Cuba this week.

On January 14, 2023, the Bishop of Rome sent a message to the people of Cuba, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of John Paul II's visit to the island, where he thanked him "for the example of collaboration and mutual help that unites you".

With "the spirit that characterizes you, open, welcoming and supportive, continue walking together with hope, knowing that always, and particularly in the midst of adversities", he wished on that occasion.

A few days later, on January 24, Pope Francis greeted the V International Conference for the Balance of the World, held in Cuba, where he emphasized the importance of the thought of the national hero of that country, José Martí.

During this meeting, according to Vatican sources, Francis gave Díaz-Canel a bronze work of art of a dove carrying an olive branch, with the inscription "Be messengers of peace", as well as the book on the *Statio Orbis* of March 27, 2020 and a copy of this year's Message for Peace.

For his part, the Cuban President gave the Pontiff a sculpture in silver, bronze and wood, entitled "The Reader", as well as two volumes of Cuban poetry by various authors.

After the meeting, the Cuban president met at the Secretariat of State with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, whose meeting and the issues discussed, including the request for the release of prisoners, will be reported later by the Vatican.

This visit to the Holy See by the Cuban leader was the third by a president of that country, after the November 1996 visit by Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro, who was received by Pope St. John Paul II, and the May 2015 visit by Army General Raúl Castro, who met with Pope Francis.



Radio Habana Cuba