



## Mercedes-Benz

Press Information

December 4, 2024

### Pope Francis receives first electric “Popemobile” from Mercedes-Benz

- Handcrafted one-off based on the new electric G-Class fulfills strict requirements
- Vehicle to be handed over in time for the 2025 Jubilee and contributes to the realization of the encyclical “Laudato Si”
- Pope Francis invites CEO Ola Källenius and the team involved from Graz, Sindelfingen and Rome to a private audience
- Long tradition continues: Mercedes-Benz has been supplying cars to the Vatican for almost 100 years

Vatican/Stuttgart. Mercedes-Benz has supplied cars to the Vatican for 94 years, and for the past 45 years, the Pope has been using the renowned “Popemobiles” based on the Mercedes-Benz G-Class. Now, for the first time, the Popemobile from Mercedes-Benz is going all-electric. Mercedes-Benz CEO Ola Källenius and the team members involved personally handed over a handmade unique vehicle based on the new electric G-Class to Pope Francis in the Vatican today.

This means that the Pope will travel locally emissions-free in a new Mercedes-Benz in time for the 2025 Jubilee – an event that only takes place every 25 years and one for which millions are expected in Rome. The vehicle fulfills high requirements and was developed in close cooperation with the Vatican specifically for the Pope's use. Its electric drivetrain, which was adapted to the particularly low speeds required for public appearances, contributes to the realization of the encyclical “Laudato Si.” In it, Pope Francis describes the need for sustainable development.

At the handover, Ola Källenius thanked Pope Francis and all those involved and emphasized the sustainable business strategy of Mercedes-Benz:

“With the new Popemobile, Pope Francis is the first pope to be travelling in a fully electric Mercedes-Benz when making public appearances. This is a special honor for our company, and I would like to thank His Holiness for his trust. With this Popemobile, we are also sending out a clear call for electromobility and decarbonization. Mercedes-Benz not only stands for the special and individual – but also for consistently creating the conditions for a net-carbon-neutral<sup>1</sup> new car fleet in 2039.”

Ola Källenius, Chairman of the Board of Management of Mercedes-Benz Group AG

**A unique experience: Pope Francis invites participating team members from Graz, Sindelfingen and Rome**  
Ola Källenius was accompanied by Britta Seeger, Member of the Board of Management responsible for Sales and Marketing, and Marc Langenbrinck, CEO of Mercedes-Benz Italia, at the appointment just outside St Peter's Basilica. The Holy Father also met with those who developed and built his new vehicle. Employees from Design, Research & Development, Manufacturing and Sales & Marketing were also invited to the event and were able to hand over “their” vehicle on behalf of many others involved. The handover was followed by a private audience with the Pope. A team of specialists from Graz (A), Sindelfingen (D) and Rome (I) worked together for around a year. The project was managed by the team in Rome while the electric drivetrain was

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<sup>1</sup> Net carbon-neutral means that carbon emissions that are not avoided or reduced at Mercedes-Benz are compensated for by certified offsetting projects.

adapted by the team in Graz. The experts from Sindelfingen produced the bodywork, interior fittings and customized equipment using traditional craftsmanship.

#### **Handmade model: Details of the vehicle based on the new G 580 with EQ technology**

The electric drivetrain of the new G 580 with EQ technology was adapted to fully utilize the advantages of the four electric motors near each wheel for the special purpose of slow journeys at public appearances. In the rear of the vehicle, the bench seat was replaced by a centrally positioned and height-adjustable single seat. This swiveling main seat makes it possible to move around flexibly and address an audience from different angles. Behind the single seat, two single seats have been integrated on the left and right for additional passengers.

The roof was removed at the B-pillar, and the B-pillar itself was harmoniously transitioned into the side wall to create an unmistakable side profile. In case of rain or bad weather conditions, a separate hardtop offers protection for the occupants. The left rear door was removed and rebuilt by the specialists – in traditional coachbuilding style – from a single piece and seamlessly welded into the bodyshell. On the right-hand side, the hinges of the rear door were relocated to the opposite side. Like previous Popemobiles, the vehicle is painted in classic pearl white.

#### **A long tradition: The history of Mercedes-Benz vehicles for the Vatican**

Mercedes-Benz has been manufacturing vehicles for the head of the Catholic Church and his travels and public appearances for almost 100 years. The first vehicle of this type was a Nürburg 460 Pullman Sedan for Pope Pius XI from 1930. At the time, Mercedes-Benz was awarded the delivery contract due to a harmonious overall package – and because the team at the time transferred an important characteristic of previous carriages to the vehicle – the ability to accommodate two dignitaries and other staff using folding seats.

In the 1960s, John XXIII received a 300 Landaulet with an automatic transmission and extended wheelbase. His successor Paul VI initially used a 600 Pullman Landaulet and later a 300 SEL – also a Landaulet. In the 1980s, John Paul II used the first vehicle officially called “Popemobile” for events in St. Peter's Square, a modified 460 series G-Class model. From 2002, he used a 463 series G 500, which was also used by his successors Benedict XVI and Francis. Specially-designed vehicles based on the Mercedes-Benz M-Class and the GLE were also used at times. After retirement from service, some of the Popemobiles were placed for viewing in the Vatican and the Mercedes-Benz Museum in Stuttgart.

#### **Statements from Britta Seeger, Marc Langenbrinck, Gorden Wagener and participating team members**

“We build the perfect Mercedes for every customer – including, for almost 100 years, the Vatican. We are overjoyed to be able to fulfill the Holy Father's wish for an electric Popemobile and are particularly proud to be able to build the vehicle according to his requirements. This cooperation at eye level honors us deeply and is a valuable symbol of sustainable change together.”

Britta Seeger, Member of the Board of Management of Mercedes-Benz Group AG, responsible for Sales & Marketing

“The G-Class is one of Mercedes-Benz's most iconic vehicles and we are proud that we can develop vehicles for the Holy Father in this tradition. The first all-electric G-Class combines sustainability, elegant design and maximum functionality. It is a great honor for us to be able to present this special vehicle to Pope Francis today.”

Gorden Wagener, Chief Design Officer, Mercedes-Benz Group AG

“Today we are experiencing an important moment that underlines the deep bond that has united Mercedes-Benz Italy and the Vatican for more than half a century. As Pope Francis emphasizes, business must be an integral part of the community. Thus, it is a great honor for us to contribute to this unique project. On behalf of the large family of Mercedes-Benz Italy, I would like to extend to the Holy Father my sincerest wishes for his well-being and the fruitful continuation of his Magisterium. We look forward to a wonderful

Jubilee and we are certain that 'our Papamobile' will be a valuable support for His Holiness in the many engagements that await him."

Marc Langenbrinck, Mercedes-Benz Cars Italy Sales & Head of Mercedes-Benz Italy

"I'm very proud that I was able to contribute to the electric Popemobile. From the first sketch to the final sign-off, the team's work was characterized by great passion, professionalism and respect for the task. The vehicle represents an incredible amount of manual labor and passion – but it's also full of state-of-the-art technology. The fact that Pope Francis has invited some of us to hand it over personally really tops everything off. It's an experience that you'll tell your grandchildren about."

Klaus Millerferli, Development Engineer at Mercedes-Benz AG in Sindelfingen

"With the G-Class, we are used to working on one of the most legendary and iconic Mercedes-Benz models on a daily basis. Building a vehicle for the Pope is something also very special for us – but even here we have experience. The entire team in Graz is very happy and proud that the Vatican is once again relying on our G."

Peter Zotter, Development Engineer at Mercedes-Benz G GmbH in Graz

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#### **About Mercedes-Benz USA**

Mercedes-Benz USA (MBUSA), headquartered in Atlanta, is responsible for the distribution, marketing and customer service for all Mercedes-Benz products in the United States. MBUSA offers drivers the most diverse lineup in the luxury segment with 18 model lines ranging from the sporty GLA SUV to the flagship S-Class and the dynamic all-electric vehicles from Mercedes-Benz. MBUSA is also responsible for Mercedes-Benz Vans in the U.S. More information on MBUSA and its products can be found at [www.mbusa.com](http://www.mbusa.com) and [www.mbvans.com](http://www.mbvans.com).

Accredited journalists can visit our media site at [media.mbusa.com](http://media.mbusa.com).

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