

# Pope Francis wades into ‘childless cat lady’ debate as he hails Indonesians for having large families

Pope Francis brought up a topic that has rocked the American political discourse in recent months as he praised Indonesians for choosing large families over pets during the first stop of a historic four-country trip to Asia.

The 87-year-old pontiff was speaking alongside Indonesia’s president Joko Widodo in a hall full of politicians at capital Jakarta’s presidential palace on Wednesday, when he drew smiles as he reignited the long-running debate over childless pet owners.

The Vatican leader said Indonesia set an example for other countries with dwindling birth rates.

“And your country ... has families with three, four or five children that keep moving forward, and this is reflected in the age levels of the country,” he said during his speech.

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