

Pope Leo's condemnations of war and calls for peace

Vigil of Prayer for Peace (Saturday 11 April 2026 at St Peter's Basilica, Rome)

In his Reflection, Pope Leo stated, "War divides; hope unites. Arrogance tramples upon others; love lifts up. Idolatry blinds us; the living God enlightens.... Prayer teaches us how to act... Thoughts, words and deeds then break the demonic cycle of evil and are placed at the service of the Kingdom of God. A Kingdom in which there is no sword, no drone, no vengeance, no trivialization of evil, no unjust profit, but only dignity, understanding and forgiveness. It is here that we find a bulwark against that delusion of omnipotence that surrounds us and is becoming increasingly unpredictable and aggressive. The balance within the human family has been severely destabilized. Even the holy Name of God, the God of life, is being dragged into discourses of death... Enough of the idolatry of self and money! Enough of the display of power! Enough of war! True strength is shown in serving life.... Dear brothers and sisters, there are certainly binding responsibilities that fall to the leaders of nations. To them we cry out: Stop! It is time for peace! Sit at the table of dialogue and mediation, not at the table where rearmament is planned and deadly actions are decided!"

Holy See: <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/homilies/2026/documents/20260411-rosario-pace.html>, accessed 18 April 2026.

US President Donald Trump on his Truth Social feed (Sunday 12 April 2026)

On Sunday evening, US President Donald Trump attacked Pope Leo on his Truth Social feed, tweeting "Pope Leo is WEAK on Crime, and terrible for Foreign Policy.... I don't want a Pope who thinks it's OK for Iran to have a Nuclear Weapon. I don't want a Pope who thinks it's terrible that America attacked Venezuela... And I don't want a Pope who criticizes the President of the United States..."

Truth Social: <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/116394704213456431>, accessed 18 April 2026.

On that same evening, President Trump posted an AI-generated image of himself which portrayed him as Jesus healing the sick. Even among his supporters, there was criticism. President Trump took down this image about 13 hours later, after claiming unconvincingly that it simply portrayed him as a doctor.

Pope Leo in a press conference (Monday 13 April 2026)

Pope Leo is currently involved in an Apostolic Journey to Algeria, Cameroon, Angola and Equatorial Guinea (13-23 April 2026). In a press conference on the papal plane en route to Algeria, he was asked about President Trump's statement. Pope Leo stated that he does "not see my role as that of a politician. I am not a politician, and I do not want to enter into a debate with him [President Trump].... I do not think the message of the Gospel should be abused as some are doing. I continue to speak strongly against war, seeking to promote peace, dialogue, and multilateralism among states to find solutions to problems. Too many people are suffering today, too many innocent lives have been lost, and I believe someone must stand up and say there is a better way.... I say this to all world leaders, not only him [President Trump]: let us end wars and promote peace and reconciliation.... I have no fear of the Trump administration or speaking out loudly of the message of the Gospel, which is what I believe I am here to do, what the Church is here to do."

Vatican News: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2026-04/pope-on-board-plane-to-algeria-i-am-not-a-politician.html>, accessed 18 April 2026.

US Vice-President JD Vance at the University of Georgia (Tuesday 14 April 2026)

In an event hosted by Turning Point USA, US Vice-President JD Vance stated, "When the pope says that God is never on the side of people who wield the sword, there is more than a 1,000-year tradition of just-war theory.... I think it's very, very important for the pope to be careful when he talks about matters of theology."

The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/apr/17/pope-jd-vance-row-iran-just-war>, accessed 18 April 2026.

Statement by the US Bishops' Committee on Doctrine (Wednesday 15 April 2026)

Bishop James Massa is the Chair of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Doctrine. On Wednesday 15 April 2026, he issued an official *Clarification on Just War Theory*: "For over a thousand years, the Catholic Church has taught just war theory... A constant tenet of that thousand-year tradition is a nation can only legitimately take up the sword 'in self-defense, once all peace efforts have failed' (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2308) ... When Pope Leo XIV speaks as supreme pastor of the universal Church, he is not merely offering opinions on theology, he is preaching the Gospel and exercising his ministry as the Vicar of Christ. The consistent teaching of the Church is insistent that all people of good will must pray and work toward lasting peace while avoiding the evils and injustices that accompany all wars."

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: <https://www.usccb.org/news/2026/us-bishops-chairman-doctrine-issues-clarification-just-war-theory>, accessed 18 April 2026.

Pope Leo at the Maqam Echahid Martyrs' Monument in Algeria (Monday 13 April 2026)

In his Address, Pope Leo stated, "In this place, let us remember that God desires peace for every nation: a peace that is not merely an absence of conflict, but one that is an expression of justice and dignity. This peace, which allows us to face the future with a reconciled spirit, is possible only through forgiveness.... I know how difficult it is to forgive. However, as conflicts continue to multiply throughout the world, we cannot add resentment upon resentment, generation after generation. The future belongs to men and women of peace. In the end, justice will always triumph over injustice, just as violence, despite all appearances, will never have the last word."

Holy See: <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/speeches/2026/april/documents/20260413-algeria-monumento-martiri.html>, accessed 18 April 2026.

Pope Leo at a Meeting for Peace at St Joseph's Cathedral in Bamenda, Cameroon (Thursday 16 April 2026)

In his Address, Pope Leo stated, "I find it is you who are proclaiming peace to me, and to the entire world. As one of you observed, the crisis impacting these regions of Cameroon has brought Christian and Muslim communities closer than ever before. Indeed, your religious leaders have come together to establish a Movement for Peace, through which they seek to mediate between the opposing sides. I wish this would happen in so many other places of the world. Your witness, your work for peace can be a model for the whole world! Jesus told us: Blessed are the peacemakers! But woe to those who manipulate religion and the very name of God for their own military, economic or political gain, dragging that which is sacred into darkness and filth... The masters of war pretend not to know that it takes only a moment to destroy, yet a lifetime is often not enough to rebuild. They turn a blind eye to the fact that billions of dollars are spent on killing and devastation, yet the resources needed for healing, education and restoration are nowhere to be found... The world is being ravaged by a handful of tyrants, yet it is held together by a multitude of supportive brothers and sisters!... Peace is not something we must invent: it is something we must embrace by accepting our neighbour as our brother and as our sister."

Holy See: <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/speeches/2026/april/documents/20260416-camerun-incontro-pace.html>, accessed 18 April 2026.

Pope Leo in a press conference (Saturday 18 April 2026)

In a press conference on the papal plane en route from Cameroon to Angola, Pope Leo stated that he wasn't directly targeting President Trump or the United States in his messages about war and peace. He had prepared the speeches for his Apostolic Journey before President Trump's social media post. He stated, "And yet as it happens, it was looked at as if I was trying to debate... the president, which is not in my interest at all."

New York Post: <https://nypost.com/2026/04/18/world-news/pope-leo-has-no-interest-in-feud-with-president-trump-over-iran-war/>, accessed 18 April 2026.