

The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer, 1 March 2026

At midday on the Second Sunday of Lent, the Holy Father Leo XIV appeared at the window of his study in the Vatican Apostolic Palace to pray the Angelus with the faithful and pilgrims gathered in Saint Peter's Square.

The following is an extract from the Pope's words of introduction to the Marian prayer:

Dear brothers and sisters!

I am following with deep concern what is happening in the Middle East and in Iran during this tumultuous time. Stability and peace are not achieved through mutual threats, nor through the use of weapons, which sow destruction, suffering, and death, but only through reasonable, sincere, and responsible dialogue.

Faced with the possibility of a tragedy of immense proportions, I make a heartfelt appeal to all the parties involved to assume the moral responsibility of halting the spiral of violence before it becomes an unbridgeable chasm. May diplomacy regain its proper role, and may the well-being of peoples, who yearn for peaceful existence founded on justice, be upheld. And let us continue to pray for peace.

Holy See: <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2026/03/01/260301a.html>, accessed 3 March 2026.

Press Release from Caritas Internationalis:

Iran: Caritas Supports Pope's Appeal for Peace through Dialogue

Caritas Internationalis is a global confederation of 162 Catholic organisations working in more than 200 countries and territories. As an expression of the Church's mission, they serve the poor, vulnerable and excluded, regardless of race or religion, working together for a just world.

1 March 2026

Caritas unequivocally condemns the US and Israel's attacks on Iran on Saturday, in which they claim to have dropped over 1,200 bombs, and Iran's retaliatory attacks on Israel and several other countries in the region, including Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.

These acts of war increase the tension, violence and instability in the region, jeopardising prospects of peace, and constitute grave violations of human dignity, the rule of law, and International Law, including the UN Charter and International Humanitarian Law, which protects civilians and non-combatants in conflict.

Schools, hospitals, places of worship and populated civilian areas, which should be sanctuaries of learning, care and safety, are protected spaces under International Humanitarian Law; attacks on which, deliberately or recklessly, are morally indefensible and legally prohibited.

In this moment of rapidly escalating regional tension, Caritas urges all parties to step back from the brink immediately and diffuse the situation, to refrain from further military action, and to uphold their obligation to protect civilians without exception.

The loss of innocent life, particularly that of children, demands urgent restraint and a renewed commitment to diplomacy.

In today's Angelus, responding to the spiralling violence in the Middle East, Pope Leo appealed powerfully for stability and peace, which can only be achieved through reasonable, sincere dialogue.

Addressing all the parties involved directly, Pope Leo XIV said:

“Faced with the possibility of a tragedy of immense proportions, I make a heartfelt appeal to all the parties involved to assume the moral responsibility of halting the spiral of violence before it becomes an unbridgeable chasm. May diplomacy regain its proper role, and may the well-being of peoples, who yearn for peaceful existence founded on justice, be upheld. And let us continue to pray for peace.”

Caritas echoes this urgent appeal. Justice, restraint, and the primacy of human life must guide national leaders’ every decision in this critical moment.

The international community must act swiftly to prevent further loss of innocent life and to ensure accountability, protection, and a genuine path toward peace.

Caritas Internationalis: <https://www.caritas.org/iran/advocacy/iran-caritas-supports-popes-appeal-for-peace-through-dialogue/>, accessed 3 March 2026.

Call for peace in Middle East – Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

A statement from Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Archbishop of Perth:

4 March 2026

In this season of Lent, Pope Leo has encouraged us to pray for peace, to “fast from words and acts of hatred and conflict” and to rediscover the peace Christ offers.

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference joins Pope Leo XIV and many world leaders in expressing deep alarm at the escalating violence now engulfing the Middle East.

The loss of life and the fear and uncertainty experienced by ordinary people and the destabilisation of an already fragile region weigh heavily on our hearts.

As Pope Leo warned this week, we stand “faced with the possibility of a tragedy of enormous proportions”.

His appeal is one we wholeheartedly echo: that all parties “assume the moral responsibility to stop the spiral of violence before it becomes an irreparable abyss”.

Violence only multiplies suffering; war is not the answer and is always a defeat for humanity.

The current hostilities have already caused immense harm.

As Pope Leo reminded us: “May diplomacy recover its role and may the good of peoples be promoted, peoples who long for peaceful coexistence founded on justice.”

We are also mindful of the Australians currently in the region, including personnel serving in peacekeeping and humanitarian roles. This is an anxious time for their families, friends and communities. We assure them of our prayers and our pastoral concern.

Above all, we pray for the innocent: for those already killed, for the injured and traumatised, for families separated or displaced and for communities living in fear.

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference: <https://mediablog.catholic.org.au/president-calls-for-peace-in-middle-east/#more-10494>, accessed 5 March 2026.
