

Extracts from recent speeches by Pope Leo XIV

Angelus Message of 4 January 2026

It is with deep concern that I am following the developments in Venezuela. The good of the beloved Venezuelan people must prevail over every other consideration. This must lead to the overcoming of violence, and to the pursuit of paths of justice and peace, guaranteeing the sovereignty of the country, ensuring the rule of law enshrined in its Constitution, respecting the human and civil rights of each and every person, and working together to build a peaceful future of cooperation, stability and harmony, with special attention to the poorest who are suffering because of the difficult economic situation. I pray for all this, and I invite you to pray too, entrusting our prayer to the intercession of Our Lady of Coromoto, and to Saints José Gregorio Hernández and Carmen Rendiles.

Holy See: <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/angelus/2026/documents/20260104-angelus.html>, accessed 6 January 2026.

Address to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to The Holy See on 9 January 2026

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In our time, the weakness of multilateralism is a particular cause for concern at the international level. A diplomacy that promotes dialogue and seeks consensus among all parties is being replaced by a diplomacy based on force, by either individuals or groups of allies. War is back in vogue and a zeal for war is spreading. The principle established after the Second World War, which prohibited nations from using force to violate the borders of others, has been completely undermined. Peace is no longer sought as a gift and a desirable good in itself, or in the pursuit of “the establishment of the ordered universe willed by God, with a more perfect form of justice among men and women.” Instead, peace is sought through weapons as a condition for asserting one’s own dominion. This gravely threatens the rule of law, which is the foundation of all peaceful civil coexistence.

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I would like to draw particular attention to the importance of international humanitarian law. Compliance with this cannot depend on mere circumstances and military or strategic interests. Humanitarian law, in addition to guaranteeing a minimum of humanity during the ravages of war, is a commitment that States have made. Such law must always prevail over the ambitions of belligerents, in order to mitigate the devastating effects of war, also with a view to reconstruction. We cannot ignore that the destruction of hospitals, energy infrastructure, homes and places essential to daily life constitutes a serious violation of international humanitarian law. The Holy See firmly reiterates its condemnation of any form of involvement of civilians in military operations. It likewise hopes that the international community will remember that the protection of the principle of the inviolability of human dignity and the sanctity of life always counts for more than any mere national interest.

With this in mind, the United Nations has mediated conflicts, promoted development and helped States protect human rights and fundamental freedoms. In a world facing complex challenges such as geopolitical tensions, inequalities and climate crises, the UN should play a key role in fostering dialogue and humanitarian support, helping to build a more just future.

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Religious freedom risks being curtailed. As Benedict XVI recalled, this is the first of all human rights, because it expresses the most fundamental reality of the person. The most recent data show that violations of religious freedom are on the rise, and that sixty-four percent of the world’s population suffers serious violations of this right.

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On the sixtieth anniversary of the promulgation of the Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, one of the fruits of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council that concluded on 8 December 1965, I had the opportunity to reiterate the categorical rejection of all forms of antisemitism, which unfortunately continues to sow hatred and death. I likewise emphasized the importance of cultivating the Jewish-Christian dialogue, deepening our common biblical roots.

On that same commemorative occasion, the meeting with representatives of other religions allowed me to renew my appreciation for the progress made in recent decades along the path of interreligious dialogue.

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The persecution of Christians remains one of the most widespread human rights crises today, affecting over 380 million believers worldwide. They suffer high or extreme levels of discrimination, violence and oppression because of their faith. This phenomenon impinges on approximately one in seven Christians globally, and it worsened in 2025 due to ongoing conflicts, authoritarian regimes and religious extremism.

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Pride obscures both reality itself and our empathy towards others.... We see this in many contexts, starting with the ongoing war in Ukraine and the suffering inflicted on the civilian population. Faced with this tragic situation, the Holy See strongly reiterates the pressing need for an immediate ceasefire, and for dialogue motivated by a sincere search for ways leading to peace. I make an urgent appeal to the international community not to waver in its commitment to pursuing just and lasting solutions that will protect the most vulnerable and restore hope to the afflicted peoples. I likewise emphasize the Holy See's full willingness to support any initiative that promotes peace and harmony.

At the same time, we see this in the Holy Land, where, despite the truce announced in October, the civilian population continues to endure a serious humanitarian crisis, adding further suffering to that already experienced. The Holy See is especially attentive to any diplomatic initiative that seeks to guarantee to the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip a future of lasting peace and justice in their own land, as well as to the entire Palestinian people and the entire Israeli people. In particular, the two-State solution remains the institutional perspective for meeting the legitimate aspirations for both peoples; yet sadly, there has been an increase in violence in the West Bank against the Palestinian civilian population, which has the right to live in peace in its own land.

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I wish to repeat my urgent appeal that peaceful political solutions to the current situation should be sought, keeping in mind the common good of the peoples and not the defence of partisan interests. This pertains in particular to Venezuela, in light of recent developments. In this regard, I renew my appeal to respect the will of the Venezuelan people, and to safeguard the human and civil rights of all, ensuring a future of stability and concord.

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Peace remains a difficult yet realistic good. Peacemaking requires humility and courage. The humility to live truthfully and the courage to forgive.... A humble and peace-loving heart is what I wish for each of us and for all who dwell in our countries at the beginning of this New Year.

Holy See: <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/speeches/2026/january/documents/20260109-corpo-diplomatico.html>, accessed 11 January 2026.