Vatican
Vatican News
Pope raises hand in greeting, standing at lectern in window of Apostolic Palace.

Pope Francis waves to visitors and pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican for the recitation of the Angelus prayer Aug. 15, 2024, the feast of the Assumption of Mary. (CNS/Vatican Media)

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Mary is not a "motionless wax statue," but a disciple who wants to share the good news of Jesus with everyone and reaches out to help and comfort them, Pope Francis said.

Reciting the Angelus prayer with visitors in St. Peter's Square Aug. 15, the feast of the Assumption, the pope entrusted to Mary's care the people around the world experiencing war.

"To Mary, queen of peace, whom we contemplate today in the glory of paradise, I would like once again to entrust the anxieties and sorrows of the people in so many parts of the world who suffer from social tensions and wars. I am thinking particularly of the tormented Ukraine, the Middle East, Palestine, Israel, Sudan and

Myanmar."

"May our heavenly mother obtain for all consolation and a future of serenity and concord," the pope said.

As the pope was reciting the prayer, the Vatican press office issued a statement saying that Cardinal Matteo Zuppi of Bologna, the pope's envoy for peace in Ukraine, had a telephone conversation Aug. 14 with Li Hui, the Chinese government's special representative for Eurasian affairs. The two had met in person in Beijing last September to discuss ways China could contribute to peace between Russia and Ukraine.

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"During the phone call, great concern was expressed about the situation and the need to foster dialogue between the parties, with appropriate international guarantees for a just and lasting peace," the Vatican statement said. The call took place as Ukraine said its troops were continuing the incursion into Russia, which began Aug. 6.

Writing Aug. 15 in Avvenire, the newspaper of the Italian bishops' conference, Cardinal Zuppi said, "There are some signs of peace, solidarity and willingness to dialogue here and there." He pointed to efforts to help children in Ukraine, to free the Hamas hostages in Gaza and the recent exchange of prisoners between the United States and Russia.

But there are also small signs of peace shared whenever one person helps another, he said. "These gestures admittedly are as small as seeds that put down roots that cannot be seen, but they grow."

Francis also told those gathered at the Vatican for the midday prayer that he continues "to follow with concern the very serious humanitarian situation in Gaza," and he called again "for a cease-fire on all fronts, for the release of hostages and for aid to the exhausted population. I encourage everyone to make every effort to ensure that the conflict does not widen and to pursue the avenues of negotiation so that this tragedy ends soon! Let's not forget: War is defeat."