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Zelenskyy tweet

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy posts on X March 14 about a conversation he had with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state. The Vatican confirmed the two talked on topics including the pope's health and a possible ceasefire in Ukraine's war with Russia.(CNS/Screen grab from X)

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As the United States continues to attempt to broker a ceasefire deal between Russia and Ukraine, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy spoke with the Vatican secretary of state.

In a long post on X March 14, Zelenskyy said that during the conversation with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, "I wished Pope Francis a speedy recovery and thanked him for his prayers and moral support for our people, as well as for his efforts in facilitating the return of Ukrainian children illegally deported and displaced by Russia."

"The Holy See has received a list of Ukrainians being held in Russian prisons and camps. We are counting on support for their release," Zelenskyy said. .

The Vatican press office later confirmed the phone call took place. Topics included the pope's health, the situation in Ukraine, the possibility of a ceasefire and the return of children taken from Ukraine into Russia, it said.

> 'The voice of the Holy See is very important on the path to peace. I am grateful for the readiness to make efforts towards our shared goal.'
> —Volodymyr Zelenskyy
>
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Pope Francis confirmed in April 2023 that the Holy See had acted as an intermediary in several prisoner exchange negotiations between Russia and Ukraine. Francis appointed Italian Cardinal Matteo Zuppi of Bologna to serve as his peace envoy for Ukraine and has been working to secure the return of thousands of Ukrainian children taken into Russia.

After speaking to Cardinal Parolin March 14, Zelenskyy reaffirmed his position that "the exchange of prisoners and an unconditional 30-day full interim ceasefire are the first quick steps that could significantly bring us closer to a just and lasting peace."

When Zelenskyy met in February with U.S. President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance, he said that Russian leader Vladimir Putin had previously reneged on agreements to exchange prisoners.

"The Ukrainian people want peace more than anyone," Zelenskyy said in his post on X after speaking with Parolin. "Meanwhile, the world sees how Russia is deliberately setting conditions that only complicate and drag out the process, as Russia is the only party that wants the war to continue and diplomacy to break down."

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Putin, at a news conference March 13, said he also wanted a ceasefire, but he said the agreement would need to include: the surrender of Ukrainian forces in Russian territory, guarantees that Ukraine would not use the ceasefire period to remobilize

and some form of monitoring of the agreement.

Zelenskyy said on X that the Vatican could help move the process forward.

"The voice of the Holy See is very important on the path to peace. I am grateful for the readiness to make efforts towards our shared goal," he wrote. "Thank you for your prayers for Ukraine and for peace."

This story appears in the **War in Ukraine** feature series. View the full series.