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Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, shakes hands with U.S. Vice President JD Va

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, greets U.S. Vice President JD Vance at the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican April 19, 2025. (CNS/Vatican Media)



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Pope Francis' top diplomats and U.S. Vice President JD Vance discussed migrants and refugees at a meeting at the Vatican on Holy Saturday (April 19) following months of clashes between U.S. church leaders and the Trump administration.

"Hope was expressed for serene collaboration between the State and the Catholic Church in the United States, whose valuable service to the most vulnerable people was acknowledged," the Vatican said after the meeting.

The encounter comes after the vice president, a 2019 convert to Roman Catholicism, suggested that financial interests motivated the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' work on behalf of migrants and refugees. HIs remarks prompted swift backlash from U.S. church leaders.

The Trump administration's draconian cuts to foreign aid has led to the termination of many programs run by Catholic Relief Services and Catholic Charities, the U.S.

church's two major charitable and humanitarian organizations.

U.S. Vice President JD Vance, carrying his daughter, and the rest of his family are escorted to

U.S. Vice President JD Vance, carrying his daughter, and his family are escorted by the Swiss Guard to his meeting with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, in the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican April 19, 2025.

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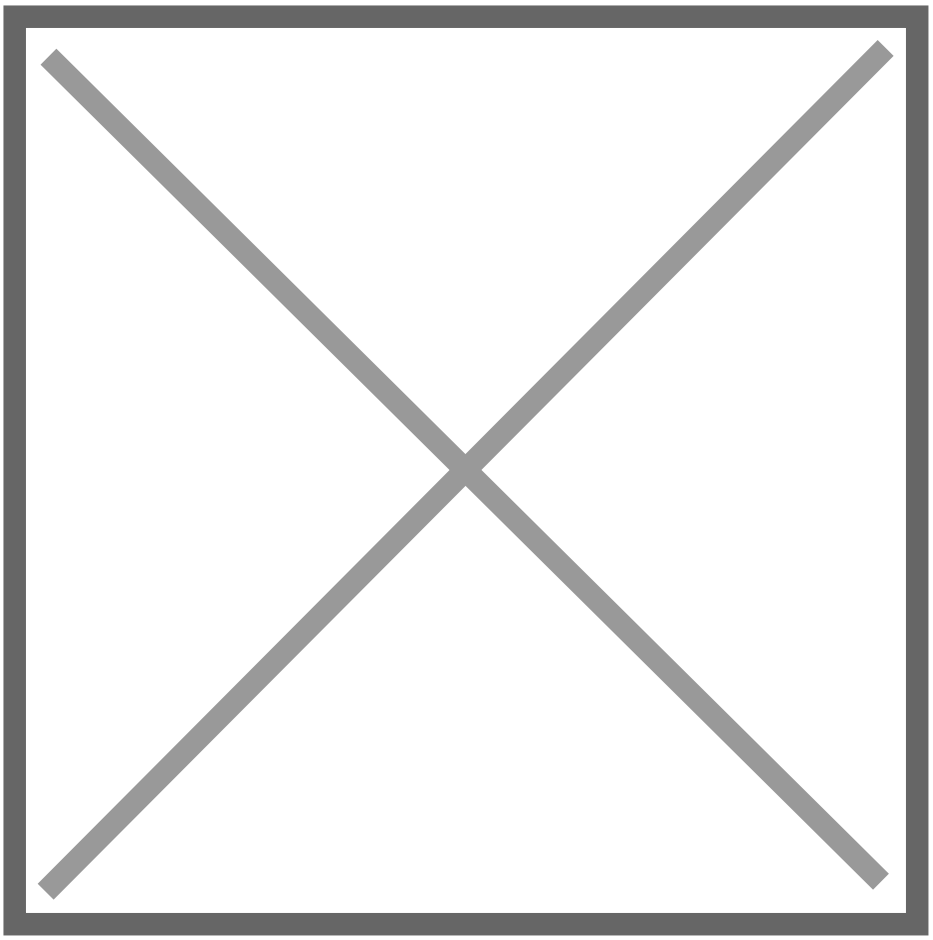
Earlier this month, the U.S. bishops' announced it was ending its contract with the U.S. government to resettle refugees and coordinate support services as a result of the Trump administration's budget cuts that had made the programs "untenable."

"There was an exchange of opinions on the international situation, especially regarding countries affected by war, political tensions and difficult humanitarian situations, with particular attention to migrants, refugees, and prisoners," the Vatican statement said.

Vance met with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican's secretary of state, and Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the Vatican's foreign minister. The Holy See Press Office described the meeting as cordial.

"Satisfaction was expressed for the good existing bilateral relations between the Holy See and the United States of America," it said.

The statement said there was "common commitment to protect the right to freedom of religion and conscience."



Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin and Archbishop Paul R. Gallagher, Vatican foreign minister, and Vice President JD Vance. (CNS/Vatican Media)

The closed-door meeting took place one day after Vance and his family attended the Vatican's Good Friday Passion service on April 18.

On Saturday (April 19), Vance returned to the Vatican for his first official encounter with the church's top diplomats since becoming the United States' first ever Catholic Republican vice president.

Vance's motorcade of more than 30 vehicles arrived at the Vatican around 10 a.m. local time and departed at noon. Helicopters hovered above Vatican City for the duration of his visit to the city-state and pilgrims were stopped from entering St. Peter's Square.

As of now, there has been no known meeting between Vance and the pope, who is currently recovering from a five-week hospitalization for double pneumonia, where

he twice nearly lost his life. There is no indication yet if such a meeting will occur before Vance departs on Easter Sunday.

After their meeting, the Vance family -- wife Usha, and their children: Ewan, Vivek and Mirabel.-- was given a tour of the Apostolic Palace and the Sistine Chapel, Catholic News Service reported.

"Oh, wow, look how beautiful this is," Vance could be heard saying on a Vatican video clip, CNS reported. Vance also could be heard saying he was proud of his children because "they mostly held it together" during the long Vatican Good Friday liturgy.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, greets U.S. Vice President JD Vance with his

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, greets U.S. Vice President JD Vance with his wife, Usha, and children before a meeting in the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican April 19, 2025. (CNS/Vatican Media)

Just days before he fell ill, on Feb. 11, Francis penned a nearly unprecedented letter to the U.S. bishops. Although the pope did not directly name Vance in the letter, he explicitly rejected an interpretation of a theological concept that the vice president had relied on to defend the Trump administration's plans to deport millions of migrants.

In an interview with the Italian daily, *La Repubblica*, on the same day Vance arrived in Italy, Parolin said that the Trump administration's current engagement on a range of geopolitical issues is at odds with the Holy See.

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Cardinal Pietro Parolin, greets U.S. Vice President JD Vance. Archbishop Paul R. Gallagher looks on. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

“It is clear that the current U.S. administration's approach is very different from what we are used to and, especially in the West, from what we have relied on for many years," said the pope's top diplomat on April 18.

"The Holy See always strives to place the human person at the center, and many vulnerable people are suffering enormously, for example, due to cuts in

humanitarian aid," said the Italian cardinal, in reference to the Trump administration's draconian budget cuts to foreign assistance.

Parolin also discussed the ongoing war against Hamas, describing Israel's bombardment of Gaza as "humanly horrific and morally unacceptable."

"Self-defense is legitimate," said Parolin, "but it can never involve the total or partial annihilation of another people or the denial of their right to live in their own land."



U.S. Vice President JD Vance meets with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni at Chigi Palace in Rome, Italy, Friday April 18, 2025. (Kenny Holston/The New York Times via AP, Pool)

Regarding Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Parolin cautioned that peace cannot be imposed. Parolin insisted that the starting point of any negotiations must be the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. "It is up to the Ukrainians themselves to decide what they are willing to negotiate or potentially concede from their perspective."

Vance, in a meeting Friday with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, said a Ukraine-Russia ceasefire could still be brokered by U.S. "We do feel optimistic that we can hopefully bring this war, this very brutal war, to a close," Vance said. The BBC reported that Vance comments came hours after U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio warned that the US would end peace talks if there were clear signs that a deal could be done.

Vance and his family are scheduled to depart on April 20 for India where he is expected to meet with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

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