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Pope Leo XIV tries on a traditional shawl as he greets participants in the Jubilee of the Easter

Pope Leo XIV tries on a traditional shawl as he greets participants in the Jubilee of the Eastern Churches in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican May 14, 2025. (CNS/Vatican Media)



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Pope Leo XIV offered to host or facilitate peace talks among countries at war, calling for world leaders to "meet, talk, negotiate" during an address to Eastern-rite Catholics at the Vatican today.

"For my part, I will make every effort so that this peace may prevail," Leo said on May 14. "The Holy See is always ready to help bring enemies together, face-to-face, to talk to one another, so that peoples everywhere may once more find hope and recover the dignity they deserve, the dignity of peace."

The pontiff appealed to all global leaders to engage in diplomacy before resorting to combat. "War is never inevitable," Leo said. "Weapons can and must be silenced, for they do not resolve problems but only increase them."

"Those who make history are the peacemakers, not those who sow seeds of suffering," he said.

Pope Leo XIV rejected notions that divide people into good and evil.

"Our neighbors are not first our enemies, but our fellow human beings; not criminals to be hated, but other men and women with whom we can speak." He called for the rejection of what he described as "Manichaean notions," which he said only perpetuate violence and division.

The pope also affirmed the Catholic Church's commitment to peace.

"The church will never tire of repeating: Let weapons be silenced," he said.

He expressed gratitude for those who "in silence, prayer and self-sacrifice, are sowing seeds of peace," mentioning Christians in the Middle East who remain in their homelands despite conflict and instability. He insisted that Christians must be allowed to stay in their native lands with all the rights needed for a secure existence.

Leo began with the traditional Easter greeting, "Christ is risen. He is truly risen."

He noted the importance of Eastern-rite Christian communities, highlighting their historical role as the birthplace of Christianity. He mentioned Pope Leo XIII's 1894 apostolic letter *Orientalium Dignitas*, which recognized the dignity of Eastern churches and called for the preservation of their rites and traditions.

The pope acknowledged the challenges facing by Eastern Christians in the diaspora, citing war, persecution, and instability as reasons many have been forced to flee their homelands.

"The priceless heritage of the Eastern churches is being lost," Leo said. He urged the Vatican Dicastery for Eastern Churches to help define principles that would allow Eastern Catholics to preserve their traditions in the West.

The loss of Eastern liturgical tradition is a serious concern, Leo said. He cautioned against Eastern Catholics assimilating into Western culture where they would lose their distinct identity. "Preserving the Eastern rites is more important than is generally realized," Leo said.

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The new pontiff described the contribution of the Christian East as essential to the global church. He urged Eastern communities to preserve the mystery in their traditions, describing their traditions as "medicinal" because the offer remedies for spiritual struggles. Eastern spirituality should not be diluted or altered for the sake of convenience, warning against the influence of consumerism and utilitarianism, Leo said.

Pope Leo XIV meets with participants in the Jubilee of the Eastern Churches in the Paul VI Aud

Pope Leo XIV meets with participants in the Jubilee of the Eastern Churches in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican May 14, 2025. (Vatican Media)

He listed Eastern Christian communities affected by conflict, including the Holy Land, Ukraine, Lebanon, Syria, the Middle East, Tigray, and the Caucasus.

Leo said these communities as "martyr churches," quoting Pope Francis. He pointed to the endurance of Eastern Christians who continue to live in war-torn regions despite the risks, highlighting their resilience as a testament to faith.

Leo said leaders should view peace not as a political tool but as a moral imperative, grounded in respect for human dignity.

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