News
EarthBeat



Pope Leo XIV receives a gift during a meeting with bishops from Madagascar visiting Rome for the Holy Year 2025 at the Vatican June 16, 2025. (CNS/Vatican Media)



Justin McLellan

Vatican Correspondent

View Author Profile

jmclellan@ncronline.org
Follow on Twitter at @m/McLellan_Js



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Pope Leo XIV asked Madagascar's bishops to embrace the care of creation as a central part of their prophetic ministry, calling on them to safeguard the unique ecological beauty and fragility of their homeland.

"Following Pope Francis, I invite you to take care of our common home, to preserve the beauty of the great island, whose beauty and fragility have been entrusted to you," the pope told the island nation's bishops during their visit to Rome for the Holy Year 2025. "The care of our home is an integral part of your prophetic mission. Take care of creation which groans and teach your faithful the art of protecting it with justice and peace."

A 2021 study found Madagascar to be the African country with the highest risk of cyclones, which are expected to become more intense due to climate change.

Welcoming the bishops to the Vatican, Leo praised their journey to Rome as "a beautiful sign of unity" and said that the late Pope Francis, with whom their visit was originally organized, was "spiritually present also at this moment."

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"It is nice that you also have become pilgrims of hope, together with the thousands and thousands of faithful who each day cross the Holy Doors of the papal basilicas," he told them. "You are first of all pilgrims of hope for yourselves: you who are shepherds have remembered that you are first of all sheep of the flock."

The pope praised them for bringing hope "for your people, for families, for the elderly, the children, the young; so that the churches in Madagascar, through you, may receive the grace to walk in the hope that is Jesus Christ."

As they return to their communities, he asked that the bishops to remain close to those they serve, calling their proximity to the people of God "a living sign of the Gospel."

Leo urged that as bishops they care especially for their priests "who are your first collaborators and your closest brothers, as well as for the men and women religious who devote themselves in service."

He also recalled the heroic legacy of missionaries to Madagascar, offering them as models of resilience and sacrifice. "I give thanks for the missionary vitality of your particular churches, heirs to the testimony of the saints who, to bring the Gospel to this distant land, did not fear rejection or persecution."



Pope Leo XIV addresses bishops from Madagascar visiting Rome for the Holy Year 2025 during a meeting at the Vatican June 16, 2025. (CNS/Vatican Media)

The pope cited the lives of two French missionaries — Fr. Henri de Solages, who was killed in Madagascar in 1832, and St. Jacques Berthieu, a Jesuit who was also killed on the island and canonized by Pope Benedict XVI in 2012 — to demonstrate the witness of the faith in Madagascar.

"May their example continue to strengthen you in your self-giving to Christ and to his church, amid the pastoral successes and trials you face in reaching the people of God in the different realities of your dioceses!" Leo said.

The pope also encouraged them to "not turn your gaze from the poor."

"They are at the heart of the Gospel and are the privileged recipients of the proclamation of the good news," he said. "Know how to recognize in them the face of Christ. and may your pastoral action always be animated by concrete concern for the little ones."

Catholics make up the largest group of Christians in Madagascar, comprising about 34% of the total population, or about 10 million people, according to a 2021 report by the U.S. State Department.