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Pope Leo XIV is greeted by faithful as he arrives at the St. Thomas of Villanova Church to celebrate a mass, in Castel Gandolfo, on the outskirts of Rome, Friday, Aug.15, 2025. (AP/Gregorio Borgia)

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CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy — August 15, 2025
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Pope Leo XIV prayed Friday for a peaceful end to the "increasingly deafening violence" of wars around the world as he celebrated a Catholic feast day on the same day as a high-stakes U.S.-Russia summit over the war in Ukraine.

History's first American pope didn't mention the meeting Friday in Alaska between President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin. But he has constantly called for dialogue and an end to the conflict, including in conversations with Putin and Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

On Friday Leo recalled that the Aug. 15 feast day dedicated to the Virgin Mary was declared a dogma by Pope Pius XII at the height of World War II.

"He (Pius) hoped that human lives would never again be destroyed by wars," Leo said. "How relevant are these words today? Unfortunately, even today, we feel powerless in the face of the spread of increasingly deafening violence, insensitive to any movement of humanity."

The pope prayed for hope for a peaceful future.

"We must not resign ourselves to the prevalence of the logic of armed conflict," he said.

Leo wasn't the only religious leader offering prayers for peace. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christians, prayed for a successful outcome of the U.S.-Russia summit during a visit to the Turkish island of Gokceada, home to an ethnic Greek community and his birthplace.

"Enlighten the leaders who will meet tomorrow in Alaska, that they may bring peace to the world, end these murderous wars, stop the shedding of blood, let reason

prevail, and let justice and mutual respect reign throughout the world," Bartholomew said Thursday. "There is room here for everyone. We need not kill one another to make space."

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The 85-year-old Bartholomew was visiting the island for the Aug. 15 celebration of the Virgin Mary, which is also an important date on the Orthodox Christian calendar.

Leo spoke from the main piazza of Castel Gandolfo, the hilltown south of Rome that is home to a papal estate and gardens. He has spent a chunk of the summer at the estate, extending now for the second time his vacation to take advantage of the quiet and relatively cooler calm of the property overlooking Lake Alban.

It was here that Leo met with Zelenskyy for the second time on July 9. Leo had spoken by telephone with Putin on June 4 and, according to the Vatican, "urged Russia to make a gesture that would promote peace, emphasizing the importance of dialogue for establishing positive contacts between the parties and seeking solutions to the conflict."

Upon arrival in Castel Gandolfo earlier this week, Leo told reporters that he hoped the Trump-Putin summit would produce at least a cease-fire, saying the war had gone on for too long with too many dead, and no end in sight.

Leo, who marks his 100th day as pope Saturday, will spend the long weekend here, breaking Sunday to have lunch with the poor people of the Albano diocese. He is scheduled to return to the Vatican on Tuesday, closing out a six-week vacation period punctuated by spells back at the Vatican, most significantly to preside over the 1-million strong Holy Year celebration for young people earlier this month.