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Pope Leo

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Marking Ukraine's Independence Day, Pope Leo XIV pledged his prayers for the Ukrainian people in a message to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and encouraged Catholics to respond to Ukrainian religious leaders' request for prayers for peace Aug. 24.

"With a heart wounded by the violence that ravages your land, I address you on this day of your national feast," he said in the message to Zelenskyy, which the president posted on X.

Ukraine declared its independence from the Soviet Union on Aug. 24, 1991.

"I wish to assure you of my prayer for the people of Ukraine who suffer from war, especially for all those wounded in body, for those bereaved by the death of a loved one and for those deprived of their homes," the pope wrote to the president.

Leo prayed that God would console the Ukrainian people, "strengthen the injured and grant eternal rest to the departed."

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The pope also told the president he continued to pray that the Lord would "move the hearts of people of good will (so) that the clamor of arms may fall silent and give way to dialogue, opening the path to peace for the good of all."

"I entrust your nation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Peace," the pope wrote.

Zelenskyy, posting the pope's message, thanked him "for his thoughtful words, prayer, and attention to the people of Ukraine amid devastating war. All of our hopes and efforts are for our nation to achieve the long-awaited peace. For good, truth, and justice to prevail. We appreciate @pontifex's moral leadership and apostolic support."

After reciting the Angelus prayer Aug. 24, Leo also drew attention to the global prayer for Ukraine requested by the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religions.

"Today we join our Ukrainian brothers and sisters who, with the spiritual initiative 'Global Prayer for Ukraine,' ask the Lord to grant peace to their war-torn country," the pope told thousands of people gathered in St. Peter's Square.

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