Vatican
Vatican News



Pope Leo XIV presides over a commemoration of the martyrs and witnesses of the faith of the 21st century with representatives of other churches and Christian communions in the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls in Rome, Sunday, Sept. 14, 2025. (AP/Gregorio Borgia)

by Associated Press

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Rome — September 17, 2025

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Pope Leo XIV told the new U.S. ambassador to the Holy See that he is praying for Charlie Kirk, the conservative activist assassinated in Utah last week, as well as his wife and children, the Vatican spokesman said Tuesday.

Leo also "expressed concern about political violence and spoke of the need to refrain from rhetoric and exploitation that lead to polarization rather than dialogue," spokesman Matteo Bruni said in comments reported by Vatican News.

The pope made the comments on Saturday when he received Ambassador Brian Burch in an audience to receive his credentials. The protocol visit marked their first meeting.

"The pope confirmed that he is praying for Charlie Kirk," Bruni said.

Kirk was shot dead Sept. 10 while speaking at Utah Valley University in Orem, outside Salt Lake City. Tyler Robinson, 22, has been charged with aggravated murder in Kirk's killing.

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Leo had sent a telegram of condolences Aug. 27 after a shooting in a Catholic church in Minneapolis in which two children were killed, but didn't send a telegram about the Kirk slaying.

Burch hosted a welcome diplomatic reception Monday in which he said it was a "remarkable time to be in Rome," with an American pope for the first time.

He spoke about his papal audience, saying Leo "reminded me he is not an American pope. He is a pope of America for the world," Burch told the assembled ambassadors, cardinals and guests.

Burch's Chicago-based organization, CatholicVote, endorsed Trump in the 2024 election and helped lead a successful effort to boost Catholic support for the Republican winner.

This story appears in the **Charlie Kirk murder news and commentary** feature series. View the full series.