News

Palestinians make their way along a road in the central Gaza Strip as they return to the north

Palestinians, who were displaced to the southern part of Gaza at Israel's order during the war, make their way along a road in the central Gaza Strip as they return to the north Oct. 10 after a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in Gaza went into effect. (OSV News/Reuters/Mahmoud Issa)

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As the first apostolic exhortation under Pope Leo XIV — *Dilexi Te* — was released at the Vatican Oct. 9, Israel and Hamas initially agreed on a peace deal that would end a two-year war that has devastated the Gaza Strip, with over 67,000 casualties, including 20,00 children, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

The war started after the Oct. 7, 2023, attack by Hamas on Israeli southern communities, in which Hamas killed over 1,200 Israelis, mostly civilians — including little children and their families — and took over 250 hostages. To date, 205 people were rescued or released from Hamas captivity, with 148 returned alive and 57 deceased.

As part of the U.S.-brokered peace plan, Hamas agreed to release the remaining 48 hostages, 20 of whom are believed to be alive. Israel, for its part, agreed to withdraw from Gaza territory in three phases.

Commenting on the peace plan, Cardinal Konrad Krajewski, prefect of the Dicastery for the Service of Charity, said, "The joy is great" but overshadowed by tragic loss of life.

Cardinal Konrad Krajewski and Cardinal Michael Czerny

Cardinal Konrad Krajewski, prefect of the Dicastery for the Service of Charity, speaks at a Vatican news conference Oct. 9, 2025, to present "Dilexi Te" ("I Have Loved You"), Pope Leo XIV's apostolic exhortation. Cardinal Michael Czerny, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, listens. (CNS /Pablo Esparza)

"Just remember the children that died there, almost 70,000 civilians died, and to this there is no solution," he told OSV News Oct. 10.

"Of course, economic and food aid are necessary, but there's a pain there that simply cries out to heaven," he commented on the immensity of human losses.

"Those mothers and fathers, whose children were starving," are an embodiment of those losses," he said, emphasizing that "in 2025, children were starving in Gaza."

"Now only faith can protect them from revenge, from hatred, from answering by the same means," he told OSV News. "This peace will be very, very fragile," he added. "Very fragile and very easily breakable. Because it will take a long time to regain balance" in the region, the cardinal said.

"So it is very joyful news, because finally, people are no longer being killed, but I think that getting out of this conflict will be very difficult, and help will be very much needed," he said, highlighting the need for both spiritual and psychological help for Gazans as "what happened, it will simply be inside them all the time"

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> —Cardinal Konrad Krajewski
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President Donald Trump was expected to travel to Egypt and Israel during the weekend of Oct. 11-12 to attend the signing of the Gaza peace agreement and to witness the release of hostages, which will likely happen Oct. 13.

The Israeli military said that a ceasefire in the Palestinian territory took effect at 12:00 p.m. local time Oct. 10, and that it has begun to withdraw from parts of the strip.

In the first phase of the ceasefire deal, Israeli hostages who are alive will be exchanged for around 250 Palestinian prisoners and 1,700 detainees from Gaza. Humanitarian aid will also enter the enclave.

Krajewski was coordinating the Vatican's humanitarian efforts throughout the two years of the war and visited the Holy Land at Christmas.

He said while "enormous aid," has been sent to Gaza, he can't further comment on the scale of Vatican's assistance so as "not to endanger those who helped."

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Krajewski said that the church must assist those in need in the world as it is.

"The church must be very flexible, dynamic and not have any set paths, but recognize Christ in the poor, but the poor of today. The one who is at our doorstep, who is completely different than he was a few years ago."

Displaced Palestinians walk past the rubble in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, follow

Displaced Palestinians walk past the rubble in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, following Israeli forces' withdrawal from the area Oct. 10, after Israel and Hamas agreed on the Gaza ceasefire. (OSV News /Reuters/Ramadan Abed)

Asked about the first apostolic exhortation, Krajewski told OSV News that it stems from Pope Francis, who at the end of his pontificate, "wanted to tell everyone the same thing," he had repeated in deeds and words for 12 years, "as if to remind everyone of his entire teaching, so simple, so ordinary, so touching everyone's heart — to remind us all that we are all Christians, when we behave like the Samaritan."

"It's beautiful that the first document issued by the new pope confirmed all this and made it his own, because it's Pope Leo's document, not Pope Francis'," the cardinal said.

In his first apostolic exhortation, Leo has taken up the call of Francis for Christians to see in the poor the very face of Christ — and to be a church that "walks poor with the poor" to authentically live out the Gospel.

Dilexi Te ("I Have Loved You") was publicly released Oct. 9. It was signed Oct. 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, whose radical embrace of poverty and service to the poor is presented as a key example in the exhortation.

Krajewski told OSV News that Francis was the pope of the poor as he gave up "all privileges and that he himself, like Jesus, was poor" — until the end when he "donated all his money to the poor" and was "buried in old shoes" and lunched regularly with the needy of Rome. But Leo, too, is willing to continue the same kind of care for the homeless, migrants and other people in need, the cardinal said.

"The pope, right after his election, told me as an almoner: 'We are continuing.' And that was enough for me. One word was enough for me. 'We are continuing.'"

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For Krajewski, it meant continuing the Francis legacy toward those in need, which the exhortation embodies.

"Pope Francis said that we need to go out into the streets, that we need to seek out the poor, that this is exactly what Christ did, that the almonry is not supposed to be an office from one hour to the next and the poor are supposed to come — we are supposed to seek them out."

As soon as Krajewski left the Sala Stampa — the Vatican's Press Office — after speaking at the press conference presenting Dilexi Te Oct. 9, he picked up 250 sleeping bags to distribute to the homeless of Rome, accompanied by another Polish prelate, Cardinal Grzegorz Rys.

"You can't find a better comment to Dilexi Te than two cardinals driving to get the sleeping bags," Cardinal Rys told OSV News Oct. 9 on a loud speaker as they were driving past St. John Lateran, the cathedral of Rome. The sleeping bags will be

distributed to the homeless of Rome as winter approaches.