Opinion
Guest Voices



Pope Leo XIV talks to visitors during his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Oct. 8. (CNS/Lola Gomez)



Phyllis Zagano

View Author Profile

Follow on Twitter at @phylliszagano

Religion News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

October 14, 2025
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Pope Leo XIV is clear in his first formal document: The love of money really is the root of all evils.

At a press conference on Thursday, Oct. 9, the Vatican presented his apostolic exhortation, *Dilexi Te* ("I have loved you"). More a pastoral presentation than an expansive theological treatise, it criticizes the expansion of wealth to the detriment of the poor of the world.

Now part of the church's official magisterium, *Dilexi Te* is frank in its view of world economics. It singles out the "wealthy elite, living in a bubble of comfort and luxury, almost in another world compared to ordinary people."

That would include Elon Musk, whose potential trillion-dollar pay package Leo criticized previously. The problem, Leo said then, is that priorities are reversed. CEOs earn 600 times what workers do. Worse, wealth is presented as the goal of every human person.

At the Oct. 9 press conference, Vatican reporters asked whether the document was aimed at the treatment of immigrants in the United States and liberation theology.

Cardinal Michael Czerny, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, the Vatican department concerned with immigration and human rights, fielded most of these questions. Responding in English, he explained that it would be a mistake to read the document in political terms, but rather should be

received as it is — an apostolic exhortation aimed at helping the church understand the Gospel in light of world events.



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

Czerny was especially clear in describing the problem of "structural sin," evils for which everyone in society shares some responsibility. He presented the international drug trade as an example of how it has seeped into every area of personal and political life, weighing "crushing burdens of corruption and crime and evil" in the world.

Overlooked in the press conference was Leo's recognition in his exhortation that women bear the brunt of every blow slammed upon the poor. Largely quoting Pope Francis, the exhortation reads:

> Let us not forget that "doubly poor are those women who endure situations of exclusion, mistreatment and violence, since they are frequently less able to defend their rights. Even so, we constantly witness among them impressive examples of daily heroism in defending and protecting their vulnerable families." While significant changes are underway in some countries, "the organization of societies worldwide is still far from reflecting clearly that women possess the same dignity and identical rights as men. We say one thing with our words, but our decisions and reality tell another story."

Advertisement

But as Leo strives to bring the Gospel to the world, can he not see that the world questions the way the church regards women?

Czerny affirmed that *Dilexi Te* is "the magisterium of the church," or official church teaching. But where does the church affirm women, except with words and managerial appointments? Does Leo speak about the church when he repeats Francis' affirmation, "We say one thing with our words, but our decisions and reality tell another story"?

Czerny said, "The world is badly arranged." One might add the way the church is so arranged as well.

As Czerny also said, "Let him (or her) who has ears, hear."

Read this next: Pope Leo blasts elitism, indifference toward poor in first major document
This story appears in the **Dilexi Te** feature series. View the full series.