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Pope Leo XIV attends a commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Vatican 1965 declaration *Nostra Aetate* (In Our Time) in the Paul VI Hall at the Vatican, Tuesday, Oct. 28, 2025. (AP/Gregorio Borgia)

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Pope Leo XIV acknowledged Wednesday that there had been misunderstandings and conflicts with Jews over [Israel's war in Gaza](#). But he strongly confirmed the Catholic Church's condemnation of antisemitism and commitment to fighting it as part of Christians' Gospel-mandated friendship with the Jewish people.

At a time of rising antisemitism stemming from Israel's war, Leo adopted as his own the [Vatican's official position abhorring antisemitism](#) as he marked the 60th anniversary of a landmark Vatican document that revolutionized the Catholic Church's relations with Jews.

Leo dedicated his Wednesday general audience to the anniversary of the "Nostra Aetate" declaration, speaking to a crowd that included several Jewish leaders and representatives of other religions who had come to Rome this week to participate in anniversary celebrations.

In the text, "Nostra Aetate," Latin for "In Our Time," the Catholic Church deplored antisemitism in every form and repudiated the "deicide" charge that blamed Jews as a people for Christ's death.

The idea of Jewish collective guilt for the crucifixion had fueled antisemitism for centuries. The Vatican crafted the document repudiating it as the church reckoned with the role traditional [Christian teaching had played in the Holocaust](#).

Leo quoted the document as saying the Catholic Church decries "hatred, persecutions, displays of antisemitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone" and noted that all his predecessors since then had clearly condemned antisemitism.

"And so I, too, confirm that the church does not tolerate antisemitism and fights against it, on the basis of the Gospel itself," he said.

"We cannot deny that there have been misunderstandings, difficulties and conflicts in this period, but these have never prevented the dialogue from continuing," he added. "Even today, we must not allow political circumstances and the injustices of some to divert us from friendship, especially since we have achieved so much so far."

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This year's anniversary comes amid a surge in antisemitism linked to Israel's military actions in Gaza following the Oct. 7, 2023 Hamas attacks. In the United States alone, the Anti-Defamation League says the [number of antisemitic incidents](#) reached a record high last year, with 58% of the 9,354 incidents related to Israel, notably chants, speeches and signs at rallies protesting Israeli policies.

The war has similarly strained the Vatican's relations with the Jewish community. Pope Francis repeatedly [angered Jewish and Israeli leaders](#) with comments they perceived as drawing a moral equivalence between the Hamas attacks and Israel's military actions.

Francis did meet with relatives of hostages taken by Hamas and called repeatedly for them to be returned. But he called for an investigation to determine if [Israel's attacks in Gaza constitute genocide](#) and said Israel's military response was disproportionate.

Leo didn't minimize the strain when he [met with Jewish leaders](#) and faith leaders who attended his installation as pope in May. In greeting the Jewish leaders present, he recalled Christians' special relationship with Jews.

"Even in these difficult times, marked by conflicts and misunderstandings, it is necessary to continue the momentum of this precious dialogue of ours," Leo said in May.

Rabbi Noam Marans, director of interreligious affairs at the American Jewish Committee, said Leo's acknowledgment of the problems was in itself a big step forward. In Rome to mark the anniversary, Marans said he hoped for continued, firm position from the Vatican repudiating antisemitism.

"Never in the relationship of Catholics and Jews since 'Nostra Aetate' has the Jewish people been more in need of friends who commit themselves to combating antisemitism with every fiber of their being," he said in an interview.

"The Catholic Church has one of the largest megaphones available. It has moral suasion that is unparalleled. We hope that they will use all of the tools in their arsenal to double down in that effort," he added.

This story appears in the **Pope Leo XIV** feature series. [View the full series.](#)