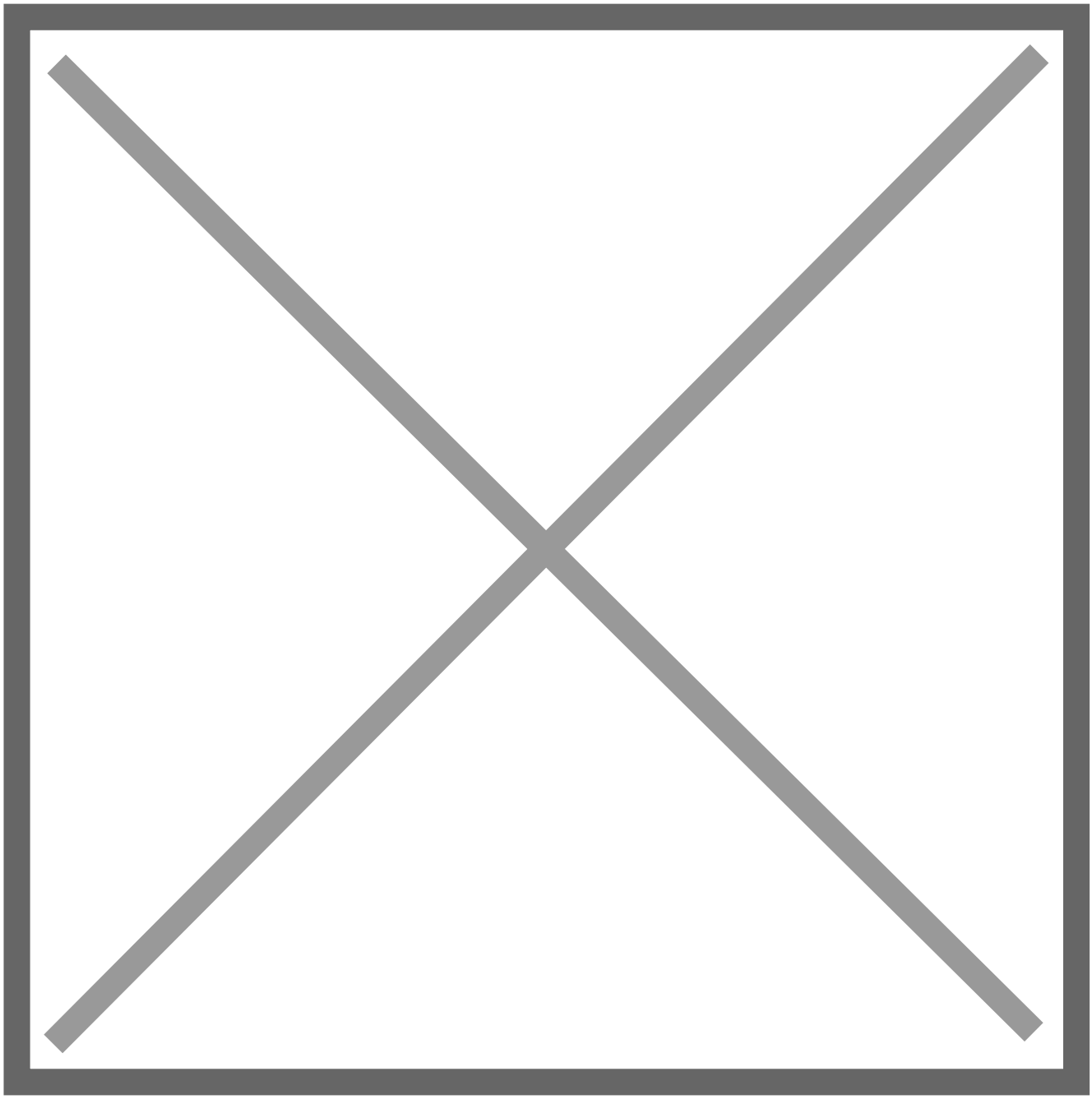
Vatican
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Pope Leo XIV poses for a photo with one of his guests at a luncheon marking the Jubilee of the Poor Nov. 16, 2025, in the Vatican audience hall. (CNS/Vatican Media)

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Before joining hundreds of people for lunch, Pope Leo XIV celebrated Mass for the Jubilee of the Poor and prayed that all Christians would share "the love of God, which welcomes, binds up wounds, forgives, consoles and heals."

With thousands of migrants, refugees, unhoused people, the unemployed and members of the trans community present in St. Peter's Basilica or watching from St. Peter's Square, Leo assured them, "In the midst of persecution, suffering, struggles and oppression in our personal lives and in society, God does not abandon us."

Rather, "he reveals himself as the one who takes our side," the pope said in his homily Nov. 16, the church's celebration of the World Day of the Poor.

Volunteers with Vatican, diocesan and Rome-based Catholic charities joined the people they assist for the Mass. The French charity Fratello organized an international pilgrimage, bringing hundreds of people to Rome for the Mass, visits to the major basilicas of Rome and prayer services.

The Vatican said 6,000 people were at Mass in the basilica and another 20,000 people watched on screens from St. Peter's Square. By the time Leo led the recitation of the Angelus prayer, some 40,000 people were in the square.

After the Angelus, as part of the celebration of the 400th anniversary of their foundation, the Vincentian Fathers sponsored and served lunch for the pope and his guests. Members of the Daughters of Charity and volunteers from Vincentian organizations helped serve the meal and handed out 1,500 backpacks filled with food and hygiene products.

The luncheon featured a first course of vegetable lasagna, followed by chicken cutlets and vegetables and ending with baba, a small Neapolitan cake soaked in syrup. Rolls, fruit, water and soft drinks also were on offer.

Before the Mass, Fr. Tomaž Mavric, superior general of the Vincentians, symbolically gave Leo house keys from the Vincentians' "13 Houses Campaign." The name of the

project, which has constructed homes for the poor around the world, is an homage to St. Vincent de Paul and his decision in 1643 to use an endowment from French King Louis XIII to build 13 small houses near the Vincentian headquarters in Paris to care for abandoned children.

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In his homily at the Mass, Leo noted how the Bible is "woven with this golden thread that recounts the story of God, who is always on the side of the little ones, orphans, strangers and widows."

In Jesus' life, death and resurrection, "God's closeness reaches the summit of love," he said. "For this reason, the presence and word of Christ become gladness and jubilee for the poorest, since he came to proclaim the good news to the poor and to preach the year of the Lord's favor."

While the pope thanked Catholics who assist the poor, he said he wanted the poor themselves to hear "the irrevocable words of the Lord Jesus himself: 'Dilexi te,' I have loved you."

"Yes, before our smallness and poverty, God looks at us like no one else and loves us with eternal love," the pope said, "And his church, even today, perhaps especially in our time, still wounded by old and new forms of poverty, hopes to be 'mother of the poor, a place of welcome and justice,'" he said, quoting his exhortation on love for the poor.

While there are many forms of poverty — material, moral and spiritual — the thing that cuts across all of them and particularly impacts young people is loneliness, he said.

"It challenges us to look at poverty in an integral way, because while it is certainly necessary at times to respond to urgent needs, we also must develop a culture of attention, precisely in order to break down the walls of loneliness," the pope said. "Let us, then, be attentive to others, to each person, wherever we are, wherever we live."

Poverty is a challenge not only for those who believe in God, he said, calling on "heads of state and the leaders of nations to listen to the cry of the poorest."

"There can be no peace without justice," Leo said, "and the poor remind us of this in many ways: through migration as well as through their cries, which are often stifled by the myth of well-being and progress that does not take everyone into account, and indeed forgets many individuals, leaving them to their fate."

This story appears in the **2025 Holy Year** feature series. View the full series.