



Pope Leo XIV waves after delivering the Urbi et Orbi (Latin for 'to the city and to the world') Christmas' day blessing from the main balcony of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, Thursday, Dec. 25, 2025. (AP/Gregorio Borgia)

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Pope Leo XIV during his first Christmas Day message on Thursday urged the faithful to shed indifference in the face of those who have lost everything, such as in Gaza, those who are impoverished, such as in Yemen, and the many migrants who cross the Mediterranean Sea and the American continent for a better future.

The first U.S. pontiff addressed some 26,000 people from the loggia overlooking St. Peter's Square for the traditional papal "Urbi et Orbi" address, Latin for "To the City and to the World," which serves as a summary of the woes facing the world.

While the crowd gathered under a steady downpour during the papal Mass inside St. Peter's Basilica, the rain had subsided by the time Leo took a brief tour of the square in the popemobile, then spoke to the crowd from the loggia.

Leo revived the tradition of offering Christmas greetings in multiple languages abandoned by his predecessor, Pope Francis. He received especially warm cheers when he made his greetings in his native English and Spanish, the language of his adopted country of Peru where he served first as a missionary and then as archbishop.

Someone in the crowd shouted out "Viva il papa!" or "Long live the pope!" before he retreated into the basilica. Leo took off his glasses for a final wave.

Leo surveys the world's distress

During the traditional address, the pope emphasized that everyone could contribute to peace by acting with humility and responsibility.

"If he would truly enter into the suffering of others and stand in solidarity with the weak and the oppressed, then the world would change," the pope said.

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Leo called for "justice, peace and stability" in Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, Israel and Syria, prayers for "the tormented people of Ukraine," and "peace and consolation" for victims of wars, injustice, political instability, religious persecution and terrorism, citing Sudan, South Sudan, Mali, Burkina Faso and Congo.

The pope also urged dialogue to address "numerous challenges" in Latin America, reconciliation in Myanmar, the restoration of "the ancient friendship between Thailand and Cambodia," and assistance for the suffering of those hit by natural disasters in South Asia and Oceania.

"In becoming man, Jesus took upon himself our fragility, identifying with each one of us: with those who have nothing left and have lost everything, like the inhabitants of Gaza; with those who are prey to hunger and poverty, like the Yemeni people; with those who are fleeing their homeland to seek a future elsewhere, like the many refugees and migrants who cross the Mediterranean or traverse the American continent," the pontiff said.

He also remembered those who have lost their jobs or are seeking work, especially young people, underpaid workers and those in prison.

Peace through dialogue

Earlier, Leo led the Christmas Day Mass from the central altar beneath the balustrade of St. Peter's Basilica, adorned with floral garlands and clusters of red poinsettias. White flowers were set at the feet of a statue of Mary, mother of Jesus, whose birth is celebrated on Christmas Day.

In his homily, Leo underlined that peace can emerge only through dialogue.

"There will be peace when our monologues are interrupted and, enriched by listening, we fall to our knees before the humanity of the other," he said.

He remembered the people of Gaza, "exposed for weeks to rain, wind and cold" and the fragility of "defenseless populations, tried by so many wars," and of "young people forced to take up arms, who on the front lines feel the senselessness of what is asked of them, and the falsehoods that fill the pompous speeches of those who send them to their deaths."

Thousands of people packed the basilica for the pope's first Christmas Day Mass, holding aloft their smartphones to capture images of the opening procession.

This Christmas season marks the winding down of the Holy Year celebrations, which will close on Jan. 6, the Catholic Epiphany holiday marking the visit of the three wise men to the baby Jesus in Bethlehem.

Barry reported from Milan.

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