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Pope Leo XIV reads the homily as he celebrates Mass on New Year's Day, in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, Thursday, Jan. 1, 2026. (AP Photo/Alessandra Tarantino)

Nicole Winfield

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The Associated Press

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Rome — January 1, 2026

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Pope Leo XIV opened 2026 on Thursday with a plea for peace, singling out in particular countries "bloodied by conflict" and families wounded by violence.

Leo celebrated a New Year's Day Mass in St. Peter's Basilica and then delivered a special noontime prayer from his studio overlooking the piazza, which was full of pilgrims and tourists on the bright, chilly day.

Leo noted that Jan. 1 marks the church's World Day of Peace and used the occasion to issue a prayer.

"Let us all pray together for peace: first, among nations bloodied by conflict and suffering, but also within our homes, in families wounded by violence or pain," he said.

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After a busy Christmas season, Leo has a few days of rest before he celebrates the church's Epiphany holiday on Jan. 6. On that day too, he officially closes out the 2025 Holy Year, the once-every-quarter-century celebration that brought millions of pilgrims to Rome.

Immediately thereafter, he is to preside over a two-day meeting of the entire College of Cardinals, the princes of the church who elected him pope, as well as those who are over age 80 and didn't participate in the conclave but still remain part of the college. Leo is resurrecting a tradition largely eschewed by Pope Francis to convene cardinals every so often to seek their counsel on how to govern the 1.4 billion-strong Catholic Church.