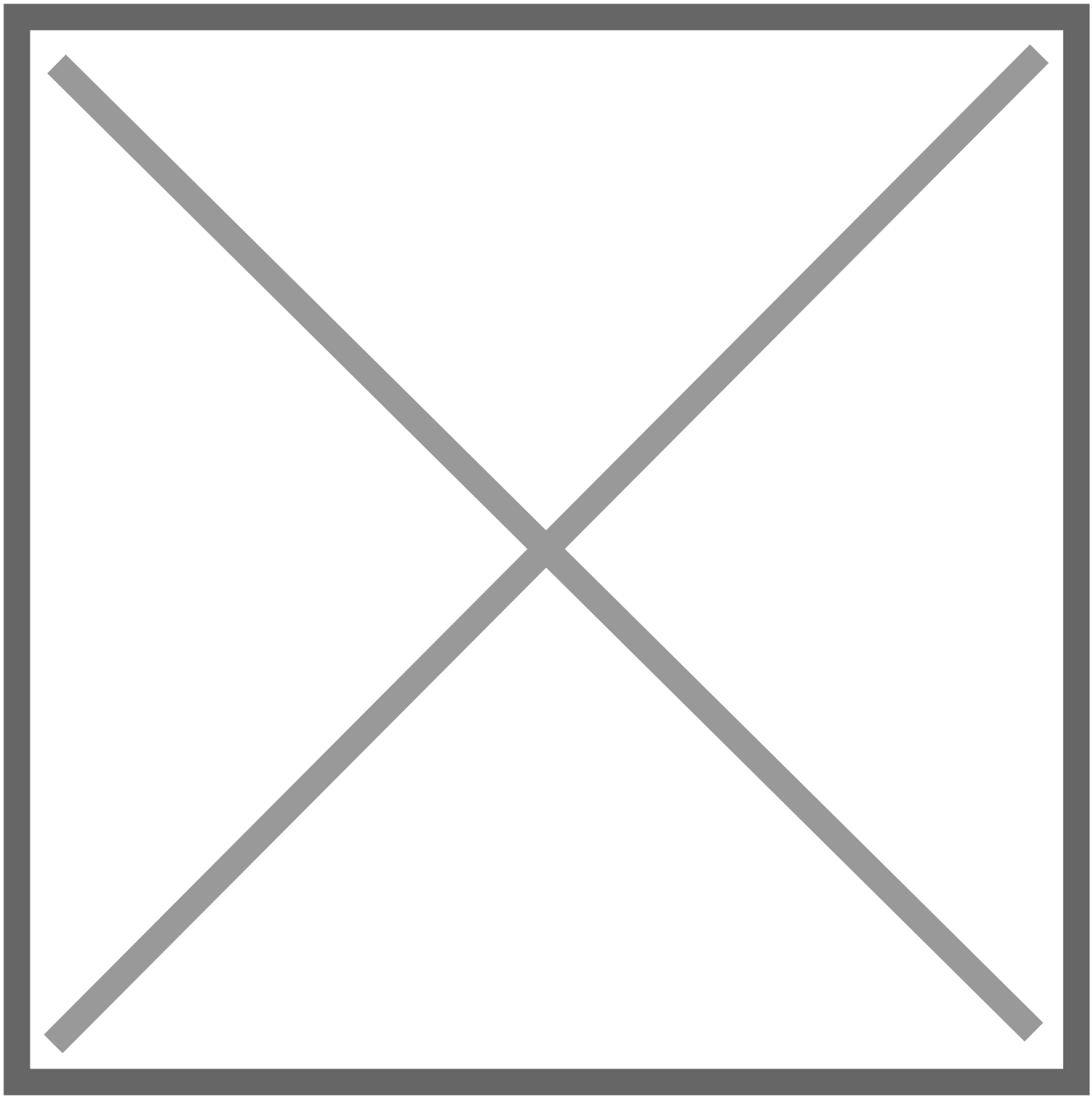
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Pope Leo XIV prays the Angelus in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican, Feb. 1, 2026. (CNS/Vatican Media/Matteo Pernaselci)

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Pope Leo XIV has called for "a sincere and effective dialogue" as tensions between the U.S. and Cuba mount.

The pope shared his concerns in remarks delivered after he led the Angelus prayer Feb. 1 in St. Peter's Square.

"I have received the greatly troubling news regarding an increase in tensions between Cuba and the United States of America, two neighboring countries," Leo said.

President Donald Trump has moved to cut off fuel supplies to Cuba, signing a Jan. 29 executive order imposing tariffs on any nation that "directly or indirectly sells or otherwise provides any oil" to the island nation.

In that order, Trump said Cuba's communist government had "taken extraordinary actions that harm and threaten" the U.S., aligning itself with and supporting "numerous hostile countries, transnational terrorist groups, and malign actors" — among them, Russia, China and Iran, as well as the militant groups Hamas and Hezbollah.

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel denounced the move in a Jan. 30 social media post, writing that Trump sought to "suffocate the Cuban economy" under "a false and baseless pretext."

Pressure on Cuba has intensified following the Trump administration's Jan. 3 removal of Venezuela's ruling leader, Nicolás Maduro, and his wife, Cilia Flores, on charges of alleged narcoterrorism and weapons offenses.

Venezuela had once helped supply Cuba with oil, but the island has increasingly seen fewer imports from that and other allies — all amid what the Pan-American Health Organization and World Health Organization have described as a long-running "socio-economic crisis exacerbated by converging disasters," including in its energy and public health sectors.

Global trade analyst Kpler estimates that Cuba is set to run out of fuel during the next three weeks, based on current reserves and assuming no further shipments arrive, reported the Financial Times Jan. 29.

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Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum pledged to find ways to aid Cuba, warning that halting oil supplies could cause a humanitarian crisis — a scenario Trump appeared to dismiss as he spoke with reporters Jan. 31 aboard Air Force One during a flight to Florida.

"It doesn't have to be a humanitarian crisis. I think they probably would come to us and want to make a deal," he said, according to The Associated Press, adding, "So Cuba would be free again."

In his post-Angelus remarks, Leo said, "I echo the message of the Cuban bishops, inviting all responsible parties to promote a sincere and effective dialogue, in order to avoid violence and every action that could increase the suffering of the dear Cuban people."

On Jan. 31, the Conference of Catholic Bishops of Cuba released a message stating that "recent news, which includes the announcement of the elimination of any possibility of oil entering the country, is raising alarms, especially for the least fortunate.

"The risk of social chaos and violence among the people of the same nation is real," said the bishops. "No Cuban of good will would rejoice at this."

The bishops underscored that "the unwavering position of the Pope and the Holy See, consistent with international law, is that governments should be able to resolve their disagreements and conflicts through dialogue and diplomacy, not coercion or war.

"People can understand each other through communication," said the bishops. "And whenever there is goodwill, it is possible to find ways to resolve conflicts and seek the triumph of truth and goodness, of justice, love, and freedom."

They invoked the intercession of La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre ("The Virgin of Charity of Cobre"), a miraculous image of Mary found in early 17th-century Cuba. Pope Benedict XV named Mary patroness of Cuba under that title in 1916.

Leo echoed their plea in his remarks after the Angelus, saying, "May the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre assist and protect all of the children of that beloved land!"