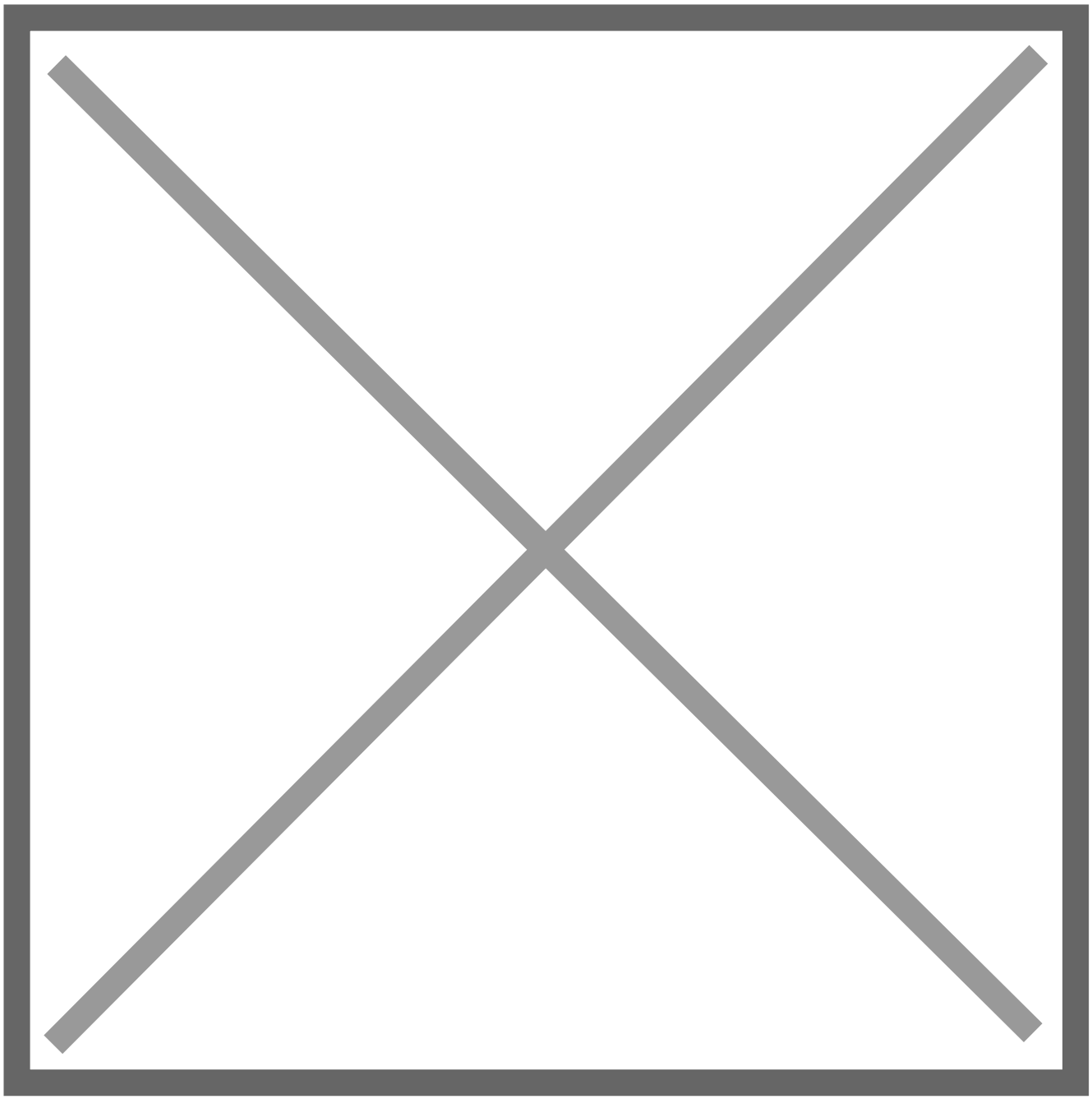
News



Spanish bishops met for the plenary meeting in Madrid April 17-21, 2021. In a statement published Feb. 24, 2026, the bishops said that during a Nov. 17 audience, Pope Leo XIV spoke with them about "the risks of subjecting faith to ideologies without mentioning any specific group." They clarified a recent report that alleged the pope had warned about attempts by far-right political parties in the country to "weaponize the Church." (OSV News/Conferencia Episcopal Española)

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The executive commission of the Spanish bishops' conference clarified a recent report that alleged Pope Leo XIV had warned about attempts by far-right political parties in the country to "weaponize the Church."

In a statement published Feb. 24, the bishops said that during a Nov. 17 audience, the pope spoke with them about "the risks of subjecting faith to ideologies without mentioning any specific group."

"We wish to express our respect and adherence to the pope and welcome his call to evangelizing communion in the society in which we live, with all its challenges," the statement read.

The nine-member executive commission, which oversees the implementation of decisions made by the bishops' conference, is led by its president, Archbishop Luis Argüello of Valladolid, and its vice president, Cardinal José Cobo of Madrid.

On Feb. 23, the Spanish newspaper El País reported on the pope's meeting with the Spanish bishops and alleged that the pope's greatest concern was the rise of far-right ideological groups that "seek to win the Catholic vote" and "instrumentalize the Church."

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"The pope sees that the far right uses believers for its own ends," an anonymous prelate told El País.

The article said that far-right parties in Spain, particularly VOX, have been increasingly more vocal against the Catholic Church and its stance on immigration.

In August, Santiago Abascal, VOX president, criticized the Spanish bishops' conference after it voiced opposition to a local council's measure that would effectively ban Muslims from holding religious events in certain areas.

"Limiting these rights violates the fundamental rights of every human being, and it affects not just one religious group but all religious denominations, as well as non-believers," the bishops said. "Imposing these restrictions on religious grounds constitutes discrimination that cannot exist in democratic societies."

The statement prompted Abascal to accuse the bishops, and in particular Auxiliary Bishop Francisco César García Magán of Toledo, the conference's secretary general, of failing to combat actions that "go against our identity, even against religious freedom, and against the faith" out of fear of losing public funds.

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Although the Spanish bishops' conference did not respond to Abascal's criticism, García seemingly responded to Abascal and his party's ideological leanings, lamenting that "we are hearing slogans again that were hurled furiously and vehemently against the Gospel and against the Church and churches in the first third of the 20th century."

Those slogans "are now being uttered by some of the supposed heirs of those who, in that first third of the 20th century, defended the Church, many of them at the price of their blood through martyrdom," the bishop said in a homily during a Mass at Toledo Cathedral in August.

"Some of these supposed ideological heirs are the ones who today launch slogans that should never be heard again in the history of Spain, and much less uttered by

self-proclaimed Catholics," he added.

The El País report went on to say that the bishops' recent support of a government plan to regularize the status of half a million unauthorized migrants in the country has only further drawn the ire of far-right groups.

The executive commission of the Spanish bishops' conference said that in their November meeting, the pope "received us with special affection, listened to the interventions of all members of the commission, and encouraged us in the evangelizing commitment in which the Church in Spain is engaged."

"The Holy Father also encouraged us toward communion among all the members and institutions that form the Church," the bishops said.