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Vatican News



Pope Leo XIV reads his homily during Mass at the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Rome March 15, 2026, "Laetare" Sunday, the fourth Sunday of Lent. (CNS/Vatican Media)



by Justin McLellan

Vatican Correspondent

View Author Profile

jmclellan@ncronline.org
Follow on Twitter at @m/McLellan_Js

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Pope Leo XIV called out depictions of war that transform it "into a video game," days after a series of White House social media posts spliced footage of real bomb strikes with clips from popular gaming titles.

Speaking March 16 to the staff of the Italian state television program, TG2, the pope said it is up to journalists "to show the sufferings that war always brings to the people; to show the face of war and to relate it through the eyes of the victims, so as not to transform it into a video game."

"Always, but especially in the dramatic circumstances of war, such as those we are currently experiencing, the media must guard against the risk of becoming propaganda," Leo said. "And the task of journalists, in verifying the news so as not to become a mouthpiece for those in power, becomes even more urgent and delicate — I would say essential."

Although the pope did not reference any specific examples, his remarks came amid criticism of the Trump administration's online messaging about the war in the Middle East.

On X, the White House published a post March 12 that splices real footage of bomb strikes in Iran with footage from the Nintendo video game "Wii Sports," captioned "UNDEFEATED." Another post from March 6 included clips from the video game "Grand Theft Auto V."

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And beyond video games, the White House has published posts combining footage from the war with scenes from action movies and football tackles.

Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago, an ally of Leo, called the administration's comparison of the war to a video game "sickening" and a "profound moral failure."

Leo's comments followed an escalation in his rhetoric around the war in Iran. After an initial two weeks in which his condemnation of the war was relatively restrained, the pope explicitly called for a ceasefire and lamented the "thousands of innocent people" killed in strikes on civilian targets.

The Vatican also said March 16 that Leo received a phone call from Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to discuss the "alarming developments in the conflict in the Middle East and the living conditions of the Palestinian people."

"During the conversation, the Holy Father reaffirmed the Holy See's commitment to achieving peace through political and diplomatic dialogue, as well as through full respect for international law," it said in a statement.

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This story appears in the **War in Iran** feature series. View the full series.