Vatican
Vatican News
Pope Leo XIV carries a candle as he arrives to celebrate the Easter Vigil in St. Peter's Basilica

Pope Leo XIV carries a candle as he arrives to celebrate the Easter Vigil in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican April 4. (CNS/Lola Gomez)

Carol Glatz

View Author Profile

Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Vatican City — April 4, 2026
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

God's love is stronger than any evil, capable of "driving out hatred" and "bringing down the mighty," Pope Leo XIV said.

"Man can kill the body, but the life of the God of love is eternal life, which transcends death and which no tomb can imprison," the pope said in his homily during the Easter Vigil April 4 in St. Peter's Basilica.

"This, my dear friends, is also our message to the world today," to be shared "through the words of faith and the works of charity," he said.

Just as Mary Magdalene and the other women rushed to tell the disciples that Jesus is risen, "we too should desire to set out tonight from this basilica to bring to all the good news," the pope said. "Having risen with him, through his power, we too can give life to a new world of peace and unity."

Related: Pope Leo's Way of the Cross says leaders 'will have to answer to God' for starting war

The Mass began in the atrium of St. Peter's Basilica with the blessing of the fire and of the Easter candle. With most of the lights in the basilica turned off, Leo and the concelebrating cardinals, bishops and priests processed in darkness toward the altar, stopping first to light the pope's candle and then those of the concelebrants and faithful.

During the liturgy, Leo baptized 10 adults. Five were from the Diocese of Rome, two from Great Britain, two from Portugal and one catechumen was from South Korea, according to ANSA, the Italian news agency.

The pope also confirmed the 10 and gave them their first Communion during the Mass.

During the Liturgy of the Word and the readings detailing moments in the history of salvation, Leo said in his homily, "We have seen how God responds to the hardness of sin — which divides and kills — with the power of love, which unites and restores life."

> 'Sisters and brothers, even today, there are tombs to be opened, and often the stones sealing them are so heavy and so closely guarded that they seem to be immovable.'
> —Pope Leo XIV
>
> Tweet this

The Gospel reading described how the women who had witnessed Jesus' death and burial overcame their grief and fear, and went to his tomb, expecting to find it sealed with a large stone and soldiers standing guard, he said.

"This is what sin is: a heavy barrier that closes us off and separates us from God, seeking to kill his words of hope within us," the pope said.

Pope Leo XIV presides over the Easter Vigil in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican April 4. (OSV I

Pope Leo XIV presides over the Easter Vigil in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican April 4. (OSV News/Reuters/Guglielmo Mangiapane)

However, because of the women's "faith and love," he said, they became the first witnesses of the resurrection and "they saw the power of God’s love, stronger than any force of evil, capable of 'driving out hatred' and 'bringing down the mighty.' "

Throughout history, even when humanity failed to live according to God's plan, he said, "the Lord did not abandon us, but revealed his merciful face to us in an even more surprising way — through forgiveness."

Advertisement

"Sisters and brothers, even today, there are tombs to be opened, and often the stones sealing them are so heavy and so closely guarded that they seem to be immovable," tLeo said.

Some "stones" weigh heavily on the human heart, he said, "such as mistrust, fear, selfishness and resentment; others, stemming from these inner struggles, sever the bonds between us through war, injustice and the isolation of peoples and nations."

"Let us not allow ourselves to be paralyzed by them!" he said. With God's help, many men and women have rolled away those "stones," sometimes at the cost of their lives, "but with good fruits that we still benefit from today."

"They are not unattainable figures, but people like us who, strengthened by the grace of the Risen One, in charity and truth, had the courage to speak" the words of God and to act "with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified," he said.

"Let us be inspired by their example," the pope said, "and on this holy night let us make their commitment our own, so that the Easter gifts of harmony and peace may grow and flourish everywhere and always throughout the world."