Pope Leo XIV celebrates Easter Mass in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican April 5, 2026. (OSV N

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by Justin McLellan

Vatican Correspondent

View Author Profile

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

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From a sun-drenched St. Peter's Square awash in the bright colors of spring flowers, Pope Leo XIV urged world leaders to follow Christ's example of embracing a form of strength that "brings peace to humanity" rather than fuels conflict.

"Let those who have weapons lay them down!" the pope said from the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica in his Easter message Urbi et Orbi, "to the city and the world," his first as pope.

"Let those who have the power to unleash wars choose peace!" he proclaimed, "not a peace imposed by force, but through dialogue, not with the desire to dominate others, but to encounter them!"

Despite issuing a strong call for peace on the world stage, Leo notably avoided naming specific conflicts or countries in a departure from previous papal practice, in which Easter addresses included a sweeping survey of global crises.

Instead, the pope framed Christ's resurrection on Easter as a counterexample to a world that exerts power through force.

People fill St. Peter's Square at the Vatican for Easter Mass celebrated by Pope Leo XIV April 5

People fill St. Peter's Square at the Vatican for Easter Mass celebrated by Pope Leo XIV April 5, 2026. (OSV News photo/Remo Casilli, Reuters)

"The power with which Christ rose is entirely nonviolent," the pope said in his message. "This is the true strength that brings peace to humanity, because it fosters respectful relationships at every level: among individuals, families, social groups, and nations."

The power of Christ "does not seek private interests, but the common good; it does not seek to impose its own plan, but to help design and carry out a plan together with others," he continued.

Leo called on Easter Sunday for all people to "abandon every desire for conflict, domination, and power, and implore the Lord to grant his peace to a world ravaged by wars and marked by a hatred and indifference that make us feel powerless in the face of evil."

The pope's decision to forgo explicit geopolitical references in his address comes after a Holy Week in which he had become increasingly vocal in condemning the world's many wars: On Palm Sunday, the pope said Jesus rejects the prayers of those who wage war, and he later called on President Donald Trump by name to search for an off-ramp in the war in Iran.

On Holy Thursday, he denounced the "imperialist occupation of the world" which he said Jesus subverts by rejecting the logic of power, and on Good Friday the pope led a prayer service that said leaders "will have to answer to God" for starting wars.

Leo read his Easter message to the world from the balcony of St. Peter's Square on an occasion which marked the final public appearance of Pope Francis last year, who

died the day after Easter.

In doing so, Leo lifted a term from his predecessor, condemning the "globalization of indifference" which has taken hold of society.

The world is "growing accustomed to violence, resigning ourselves to it," Leo said, and increasingly indifferent "to the deaths of thousands of people," as well as to "the repercussions of hatred and division that conflicts sow" and the "economic and social consequences they produce, which we all feel."

Leo also issued a call for a prayer vigil for peace next Saturday, April 11, in St. Peter's Basilica.

In closing his message, the polyglot pope showcased his linguistic range delivering brief Easter greetings in multiple languages, including several he does not speak, such as German, Polish, Portuguese, Arabic and Chinese.

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Dressed in floral vestments that mirrored the flower-laden stage of St. Peter's Square, the pope celebrated Mass with some 50,000 people on Easter Sunday before addressing the crowd from the basilica's balcony.

In his homily, he said Easter's proclamation that "death has been conquered forever" is not easy for people to accept since "the power of death constantly threatens us, both from within and without."

Personally, death is present "when the disappointments or loneliness we experience drain our hope" and "when our worries or our resentments suffocate the joy of living," Leo said.

In society, "death is always lurking," he said. "We see it present in injustices, in partisan selfishness, in the oppression of the poor, in the lack of attention given to the most vulnerable."

"We see it in violence, in the wounds of the world, in the cry of pain that rises from every corner because of the abuses that crush the weakest among us, because of the idolatry of profit that plunders the earth’s resources, because of the violence of war that kills and destroys," the pope said.

Easter, however, "gives us hope," Leo said. "It is a new beginning; it is life finally made eternal by God’s victory over the ancient enemy."

"We need this song of hope today," he said.

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