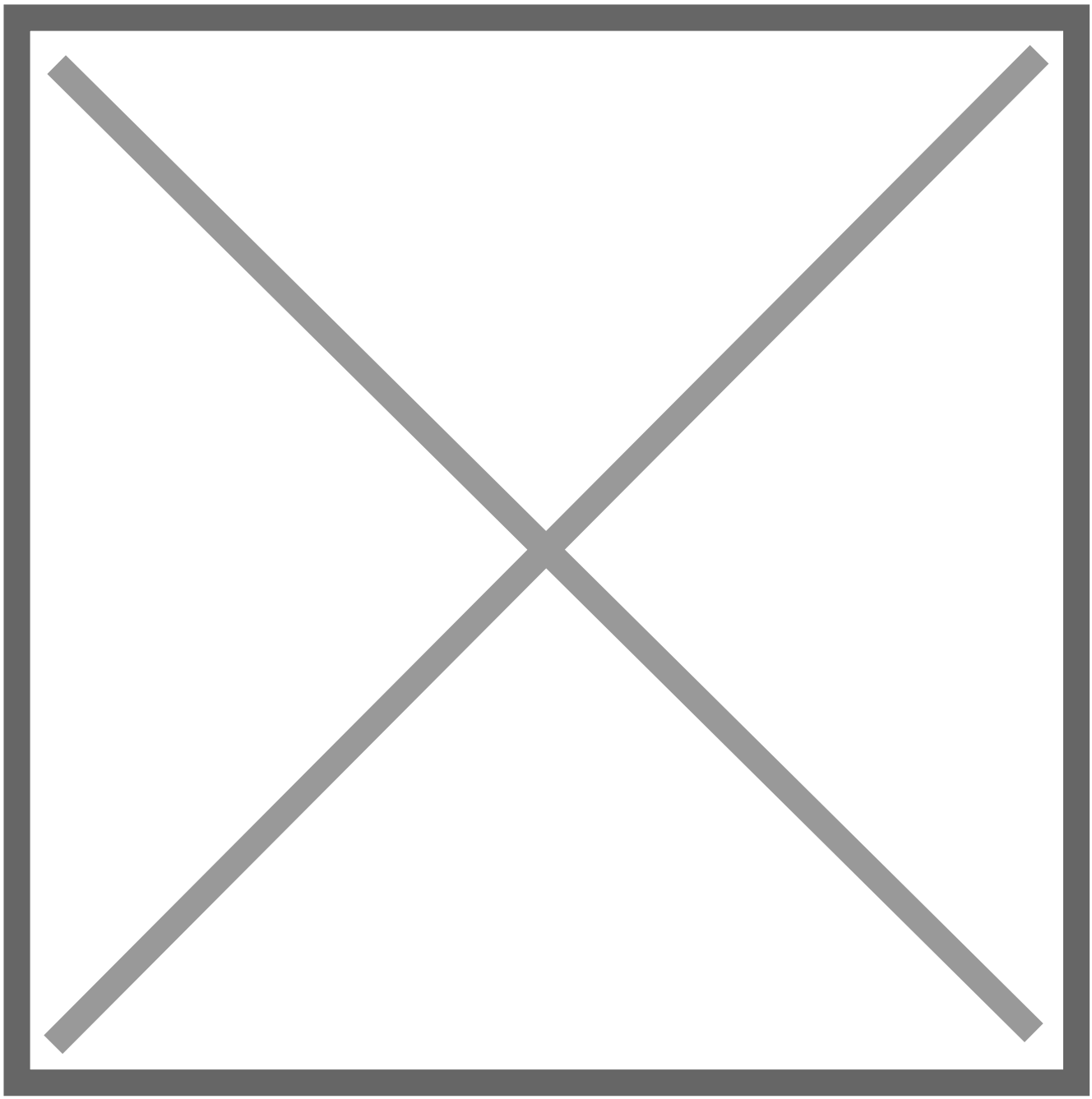
News



Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, concelebrates Mass at Holy Family Church in Gaza City Dec. 21, 2025, during his Christmas pastoral visit. In an Easter video message released April 5, 2026, Pizzaballa said that in Jerusalem, amid the Iran war, "we are living a very different and strange Easter, without gathering, without people, very low profile." (OSV News/Courtesy of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem)

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Pope Leo XIV sent Easter greetings to Catholics in Gaza as they celebrate Easter amid the fear and uncertainty of war, said Fr. Gabriel Romanelli, pastor of Holy Family Parish.

In a video posted on his X account April 6, Romanelli said on Easter, he received a message from the pope who "has been constantly in contact with us, through messages and at times, through phone calls."

Leo, he said, has often "sent his blessings and we know — and he tells us — his constant prayers for us and his concern for everything that is happening. The pope's prayers and his blessing are a great blessing for this community."

As Gaza's sole Catholic church, the parish community has long received the attention of the Vatican, especially from Leo and his predecessor, Pope Francis, after Israel launched its war in the area in retaliation for the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas militants.

Despite its aim to attack Hamas, Israel had been criticized for its attacks against Palestinian civilians. According to a recent report by the UNRWA, the United Nations' Palestinian relief agency, more than 72,000 Palestinians have been killed in the Gaza Strip and nearly 172,000 have been injured between Oct. 7, 2023, and

March 25, 2026.

The parish was also struck in 2025 when an Israeli tank fired on the church, killing three people and injuring nine, including Romanelli, who sustained a leg injury in the attack.

Throughout Holy Week, Romanelli chronicled the Holy Week celebrations in Gaza City. In a separate video published on Easter, April 5, Romanelli said that despite the circumstances, Catholics in Gaza were happy because "Jesus is risen, and we're convinced that Jesus' resurrection is the cause of our spiritual and physical resurrection which is the fullness of salvation that will come to our body and soul."

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"The devil wants us to forget about Jesus, to not live out our faith, to live embittered and in desperation. He doesn't want us to think about death. And we don't have a problem thinking about death because after death, there is the resurrection. Death is just a passage and that is why happiness and joy must be experienced on Easter," Romanelli said.

As Christians around the world celebrated Easter, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem said that Christians in the Holy Land are clinging to the hope of Christ's victory over death as the U.S.-Israeli-led war against Iran continued.

"Today in Jerusalem, we are living a very different and strange Easter, without gathering, without people, very low profile," said Latin Patriarch Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa in an Easter video message published April 5.

"So, it's very difficult in certain aspects to feel the atmosphere of Easter, that is, the atmosphere of joy or (being) cheerful, where people meet to hug each other and to send their greetings, their blessings," he said.

Citing security concerns, Israeli authorities have limited access to major liturgies, including those at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Pizzaballa celebrated Easter Sunday at the church, which houses the sites of Jesus' crucifixion and the tomb where he was buried and resurrected.

In his message, Pizzaballa recalled the Gospel account of Christ's resurrection, which "happened during the night" before the women found the empty tomb in the early morning.

"So this is also my message: There is no darkness, there is no situation that will not allow us to celebrate the risen Lord, even today, even now, in this difficult situation we are living," he said.

The Latin patriarch of Jerusalem went on to say that Jesus "is not waiting for us to be at the right level of faith" nor does he expect "anything from us," but instead gave the "gratuitous gift to come to us as the risen Lord and to transform all our wounds and our difficulties to believe."

"We don't allow the darkness to overcome in our hearts, in our way of thinking, in our attitude, in our relations," the cardinal said. "Even today, despite everything, this is my greeting to all: there is no situation that will forever condemn (us) to be under the shadow of death. Nothing. Even here."

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