Opinion
Guest Voices



President Donald Trump on April 12, 2026, left, and Pope Leo XIV on March 31, 2026. (AP)



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President Donald Trump has attacked Pope Leo even though the pope has gone out of his way not to mention the president when urging nations to avoid war and embrace peace.

"The things that I say," said the pope, "are certainly not meant as attacks on anyone. The message of the Gospel is very clear: 'Blessed are the peacemakers.'"

But true to form, Trump took the comments personally and fired back his own. It was not a surprise; this is how the president treats all who do not support him.

"I'm not a fan of Pope Leo," announced the president. The pope is not "doing a very good job," said the president. "He's a very liberal person" and should "stop catering to the Radical Left."

"Pope Leo is WEAK on Crime, and terrible for Foreign Policy," the president wrote in a social media post. "I don't want a Pope who thinks it's OK for Iran to have a Nuclear Weapon."

Nor was it surprising that the president posted his attack around the same time that three American cardinals were praising Leo and attacking the war on CBS' "60 Minutes." Trump cannot stand being upstaged.

The pope, on the other hand, at a prayer vigil at St. Peter's Basilica on Saturday (April 11), did not name names when he urged an end to war.

Leo prayed for peace and described the kingdom of God as "a kingdom in which there is no sword, no drone, no vengeance, no trivialization of evil, no unjust profit, but only dignity, understanding and forgiveness. It is here that we find a bulwark against that delusion of omnipotence that surrounds us and is becoming increasingly unpredictable and aggressive."

He noted that "war divides; hope unites. Arrogance tramples upon others; love lifts up. Idolatry blinds us; the living God enlightens."

"Enough of the idolatry of self and money!" the pope cried. "Enough of the display of power! Enough of war! True strength is shown in serving life."

To the leaders of nations, he said, "Stop! It is time for peace! Sit at the table of dialogue and mediation, not at the table where rearmament is planned and deadly actions are decided!"

At a Mass for Peace on the same day, Cardinal Robert McElroy of Washington, D.C., did not mince words: "We are in the midst of an immoral war. We entered this war not out of necessity but rather choice. We failed to ardently pursue the pathway of negotiation to its end before turning to war.

"We had no clear intention," said the cardinal, "instead darting from unconditional surrender to regime change to the degradation of conventional weapons to the removal of nuclear materials. And we blinded ourselves to the cascade of global destructiveness that would likely flow from our attacks — the expansion of the war far beyond Iran, the disruption of the world economy, and the loss of life."

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"Each of these policy failures," explained the cardinal, "is equally a moral failure, which, under Catholic just war principles, renders both the initiation of this war and any continuation of it morally illegitimate."

The cardinal went on to say, as citizens, "we must advocate for peace with our representatives and leaders.

"For it is very possible," he noted, "that the negotiations will fail because of recalcitrance on one or both sides, and our president will move to reenter this

immoral war. At that critical juncture," he continued, "as disciples of Jesus Christ called to be peacemakers in the world, we must answer vocally and in unison: No. Not in our name. Not at this moment. Not with our country."

In John's Gospel, the first words of risen Jesus are "Peace be with you." But this peace is not a peace of stillness, it is not a peace of sleep. Immediately after wishing the disciples peace, Jesus says, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

As Christians we have the same mission as Jesus had from his Father. That mission is to spread the good news of the Father's love, of the Father's mercy and forgiveness. Our mission, like that of Jesus, is to help establish the kingdom of God, a kingdom of justice, of peace and of love.

The pope will continue to preach the gospel of peace.

In response to the president's attacks, Leo told reporters on the papal plane on the way to Algeria, "I'm sorry to hear that, but I will continue on what I believe is the mission of the church in the world today.

"I will not shy away from announcing the message of the Gospel and inviting all people to look for ways of building bridges of peace and reconciliation, and looking for ways to avoid war any time that's possible."

The pope added: "I'm not afraid of the Trump administration or of speaking out loudly about the message of the Gospel, which is what the church works for.

"We are not politicians. We do not look at foreign policy from the same perspective that he may have," the pope said. "I will continue to speak out strongly against war, seeking to promote peace, promoting dialogue and multilateralism among states to find solutions to problems."

"Too many people are suffering today," explained the pope. "Too many innocent people have been killed, and I believe someone must stand up and say that there is a better way."

Trump's attack on Leo is counterproductive. He could never have been elected president without Catholic voters. But his attack has united the Catholic bishops and encouraged them to publicly side with the pope against the war.

Even Catholics who voted for Trump will not be happy. It will give them one more reason (besides the war, ICE attacks on law-abiding immigrants and the price of

gasoline and food) to question their support of Trump and Republican politicians. Hardcore Trump supporters will stick with the president, but others will decide this is not what they voted for.