Opinion
Guest Voices



President Donald Trump speaks outside the Oval Office of the White House, April 13, 2026, in Washington. (AP/Alex Brandon)



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On Easter Sunday, U.S. President Donald J. Trump published a foul-mouthed tirade against Iran, threatening to destroy a civilization. One week later, on Orthodox Easter Sunday, he attacked Pope Leo XIV as "weak on crime." Then, on Monday (April 13), he posted an AI-generated image of himself in flowing robes as Jesus, the healer.

Trump's tirade continues.

He may well see it as just another fight: Donny from Queens v. Bob from Chicago. But the world watches, in astonishment.

The situation is reminiscent of the 14th-century beginning of the Avignon Papacy, a dark era when the monarchy exerted control over the papacy. Then King Philip IV of France had Pope Boniface VIII, as gangsters say, taken care of. Pope Leo says he is not afraid of the United States.

No U.S. president has shown such disrespect and contempt for the pope. What seems to irk Trump is that a Chicago-born pope is unwaveringly Catholic in his position on war, saying, "God rejects prayers of war."

In early January, addressing diplomats accredited to the Holy See, the pope pointed out: "War is back in vogue and a zeal for war is spreading. The principle established after the Second World War, which prohibited nations from using force to violate the

boundaries of others, has been completely undermined." With typical Vatican restraint, the pope listed the locations of the atrocities (Ukraine, Gaza, East Asia, Haiti), not a few inflicted on places and populations by the United States. He said the panorama of destruction on land and at sea was rooted in "the persistent idea that peace is only possible through the use of force and deterrence."

Soon after, the Pentagon met with Leo's representative, Cardinal Christophe Pierre, then-nuncio to the United States. Who said what to whom is disputed, but it is obvious the Trump administration was not happy with the pope. The Pentagon lead in the meeting, U.S. Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Elbridge Colby, is Catholic.

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Soon, the U.S. joined Israel in a massive bombing of Iran, temporarily stopped some six weeks later, just after Easter.

Catholic leaders are vocal. Speaking with 60 Minutes' reporter Norah O'Donnell in an unnamed Catholic church in or near Washington, D.C., the three cardinals serving as U.S. diocesan archbishops presented Catholic teaching on two issues: warfare and immigration.

Chicago's Blase Cupich, grandson of Croatian immigrants; Washington's Cardinal Robert W. McElroy, a fifth-generation San Franciscan; and Newark, New Jersey's Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, son of Irish immigrants, joined to converse about U.S. immigration policy and warfare

Cupich decried "the gamification" of war, calling the White House social media post interspersing real-time bombing with thriller video scenes "sickening."

McElroy, who titled his Stanford doctoral dissertation "Morality and American Foreign Policy," said the U.S. intervention in Iran did not meet the criteria for just war. He admitted that under President Joe Biden, border crossings had "gotten out of control," but he decried the current detention of so many good people living good lives.

Tobin, whose archdiocese is more than 30% Hispanic, has called Immigration and Customs Enforcement a "lawless organization" and said it violates the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

The three cardinals presented such a strong condemnation of the U.S. military involvement and its execution of immigration policy that President Trump thought it appropriate to post overnight, after their televised interview, the meme depicting himself as Jesus, the healer, which he later attempted to explain away, saying it showed him as a "doctor."

So much of what President Trump says is so detached from reality that even those who were among his most ardent supporters, even Marjorie Taylor Greene, are openly talking about the 25th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which allows the vice president and a majority of the 15 Cabinet members to declare the president incompetent to govern.

The three American cardinals said what needed to be said. The vice president and 15 Cabinet members have the constitutional authority to do what needs to be done.