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Pope Leo XIV smiles as he greets visitors during his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican June 17, 2026. A day earlier, Leo spoke with journalists about the Society of St. Pius X. (CNS/Vatican Media)

Junno Arocho Esteves

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Pope Leo XIV said that although he is considering a final appeal to the traditionalist Society of St. Pius X, the choice to splinter from the Catholic Church falls on them.

Speaking to journalists outside his residence in Castel Gandolfo June 16, the pope was asked about his feelings regarding plans by the traditionalist society, commonly known as SSPX, to proceed with the consecration of new bishops without a papal mandate.

The pope said that while he is "considering making another appeal to say: 'Do not do this, let us try to live in communion within the church,' " the decision to proceed "is their choice."

"Certainly, division among Christians is always a painful point. But they refuse to accept certain fundamental elements of the church, starting with several points from the Second Vatican Council," Leo said.

"If they make that choice, I am sorry, but we must move forward," he added.

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In February, Fr. Davide Pagliarani, superior general of the SSPX, announced the society would proceed with the consecration of new bishops July 1, following a breakdown in communication with the Vatican after requests for an audience with Leo went unanswered.

After announcing their intention to proceed with the consecrations, Pagliarani was invited to meet with Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, who offered to continue dialogue with the SSPX, but only if the society suspended its decision to consecrate new bishops.

After meeting with SSPX council members, Pagliarani sent a letter to the cardinal saying that while he welcomed continued dialogue, he could not accept the conditions, noting that the society and the Holy See remained divided over the Vatican II and post-conciliar reforms.

In a May 13 statement, Fernández said that without the "requisite pontifical mandate," the consecrations would be considered "a schismatic act" and that "formal adherence to the schism constitutes a grave offense against God and entails the excommunication established under Church law."

Leo speaks on US-Iran agreement

Leo also expressed his optimism about the recent deal to end the war in Iran that is expected to be signed June 19 in Switzerland.

"Thank God, there is at least this memorandum that it seems they will officially sign this Friday, so they are saying," the pope said about the tentative agreement between the United States and Iran.

According to a draft of the memorandum published June 17 by Bloomberg News, the agreement outlined a framework for an immediate end to the conflict, mandating an end to all hostilities, including in Lebanon, and the restoration of shipping traffic along the Strait of Hormuz.

It also dictates $300 billion from the United States and its partners to be used "for the rehabilitation and economic development of the Islamic Republic of Iran," and an end to sanctions on the country. For its part, Iran will commit to "never produce nuclear weapons."

The pope expressed his hope that the agreement "will truly be a solution to the war, that the war is truly finished and that we can move forward for the good of all."

"Eliminating nuclear weapons, yes, that as well; seeking the good of all peoples, and seeking how to resolve problems also at the economic and social level that have been created during this time," he said.

Vacation, future travels

Asked about his recent June 6-12 visit to Spain, Leo told journalists that "the enthusiastic response from so many people" was "something very beautiful."

"Every moment was very well prepared, it must be said, by the bishops with so many laypeople and so many volunteers in all the places who worked to prepare everything. It has been wonderful. From what I've seen, the people were very happy, and I am certainly happy to be able to celebrate the faith," the pope said.

Regarding his summer vacation, the pope said that while he expects "a bit of rest," there will also be "a lot of reading, reflection and preparation for what comes next."

"There is always work too, but peacefully," he said.

Among the most anticipated events after the summer is the pope's Sept. 25-28 visit to France. In a June 9 statement, the French bishops' conference released additional details on the upcoming papal trip, which includes stops in Paris, Metz and Lourdes.

When asked about other trips after France, Leo said he was "looking into others."

Although the Vatican has yet to announce any other trips, Peruvian President José María Balcázar told journalists outside a polling station in Chiclayo, the pope's former diocese, that Pope Leo is expected to arrive in Peru Nov. 10, the Peruvian news site RPP reported June 7.

Regarding a possible 2027 visit to Mexico, Pope Leo told journalists that he hoped it would be much sooner.

"We will see about that, but hopefully not too much time passes," he said.

Cardinal Carlos Aguiar Retes of Mexico City said in January that he had invited the pope to visit Mexico, "which he had originally extended a few days after the conclave."

"In response, the Holy Father expressed his gratitude and stated his desire and interest in being in our country soon to entrust his pontificate to the Virgin of Guadalupe," the statement read.

Mexico City is home to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which is on the site of Mary's apparitions to St. Juan Diego in 1531.