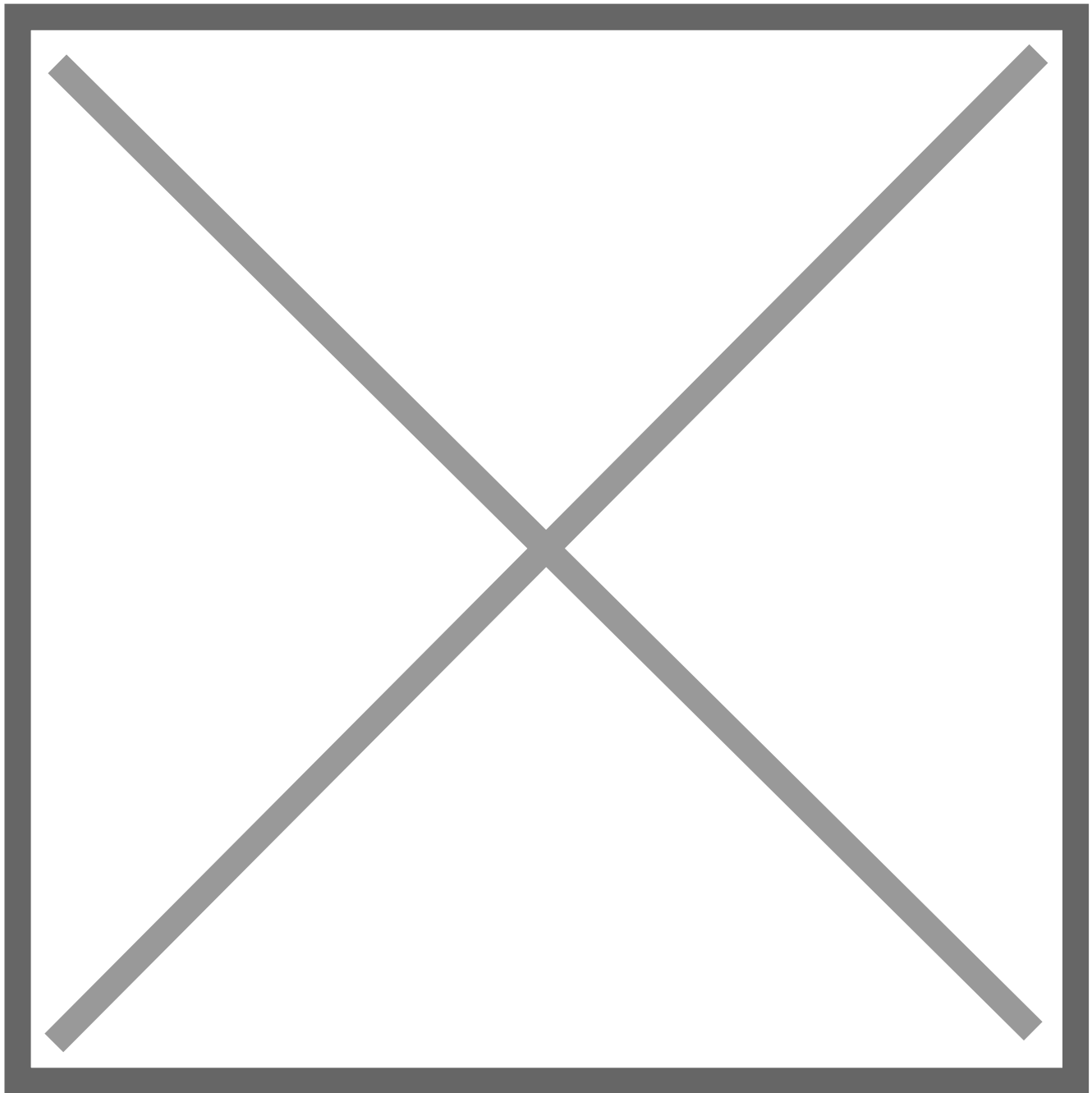




A combination photo shows American folk-rock singer Bob Dylan performing in front of St. John Paul II during a concert in Bologna, Italy, Sept. 27, 1997, and Pope Leo XIV smiling during in San Cristóbal de La Laguna, Tenerife, Spain, June 12, 2026. (OSV News/Reuters/Paolo Cocco/Lola Gomez)

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Vatican City — July 22, 2026

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Pope Leo XIV said the conscience of just one person can "be worth the entire world" when it comes to preventing a nuclear catastrophe, in a new book foreword that also quotes an unpublished Bob Dylan song about the atomic bomb.

The pope made the remarks in a foreword published July 21 for a forthcoming book, "Disarmed and Disarming: Peace Is a Gift," which the Vatican Publishing House says will soon be released in English.

In the essay, Leo cited lyrics from an unpublished 1963 song by Bob Dylan, "Go Away You Bomb," and he praised the pacifist Servant of God Dorothy Day as an example of someone who worked for peace.

"Above all in the atomic era, the affirmation of the truth must push through: it is not atomic weapons that generate peace, but disarmament," the pope wrote.

He said that idea, which felt self-evident during past decades of nuclear de-escalation, "has been obscured by a race to armament that today frightens and terrifies."

The pope, quoting singer-songwriter Dylan's lyrics figuratively addressed to the atomic bomb, wrote, "'I hate you cause yer man-made and man-owned an' man-

handled."

Leo said that "peace seeks witnesses," pointing to figures such as Blessed Floribert Bwana Chui and Servants of God Giorgio La Pira and Dorothy Day as examples of people who advanced peace by resisting corruption, backing diplomacy and aiding the poor.

The pope wrote that peace is also carried forward by "little-known protagonists" who acted on their own conscience, recounting the story of Soviet officer Stanislav Petrov during the Cold War.

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On Sept. 26, 1983, radar systems at a bunker near Moscow where Petrov was on duty indicated that the United States had launched multiple intercontinental ballistic missiles at the Soviet Union. The alert turned out to be a malfunction in the Soviet satellite detection system. Petrov disobeyed orders and declined to pass along the warning of an attack, a choice the pope said was made "with the conscience of someone who knew that that simple gesture could have caused millions of deaths."

"A world in which machines, albeit sophisticated and faster than us, are the ones to decide to bomb defenceless people would be truly frightening," Leo wrote.

"The conscience of a single person can be worth the entire world."

"If there is one thing the world is seeking today, I believe it to be a message of peace for the future," the pope added.

The book compiles addresses and reflections on peace that Leo has delivered since his papal election. In the foreword, signed July 19, the pope lamented that 103 countries are involved in some form of conflict around the world, citing wars in Ukraine, the Middle East, Sudan, Myanmar, Yemen and Congo, among other places.

Peace, the pope wrote, "is built with truth." He noted that even those who wage war claim to do so in the name of peace, since no leader openly admits to wanting war for its own sake. He wrote that after the devastation in 1945 of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, resorting to war is increasingly an "adventure with no return," echoing words from St. John Paul II in 1991.

"Peace is a responsibility," Leo wrote. "It begins with us." Quoting a sermon by St. Augustine, he said, "'The times are troubled, the times are hard, the times are wretched.' Live good lives, and you will change the times by living good lives; you will change the times, and then you'll have nothing to grumble about."

To those tempted toward despair over the world's ongoing wars, the pope pointed to the words that Pope Pius XI extended to the entire Church, "'Let us thank God that He makes us live among the present problems. It is no longer permitted to anyone to be mediocre.'"

"May God guide us on paths of non-violence," Leo said. "May believers and people of good will never stop working as builders of peace. May every person make peace his or her life's cause."