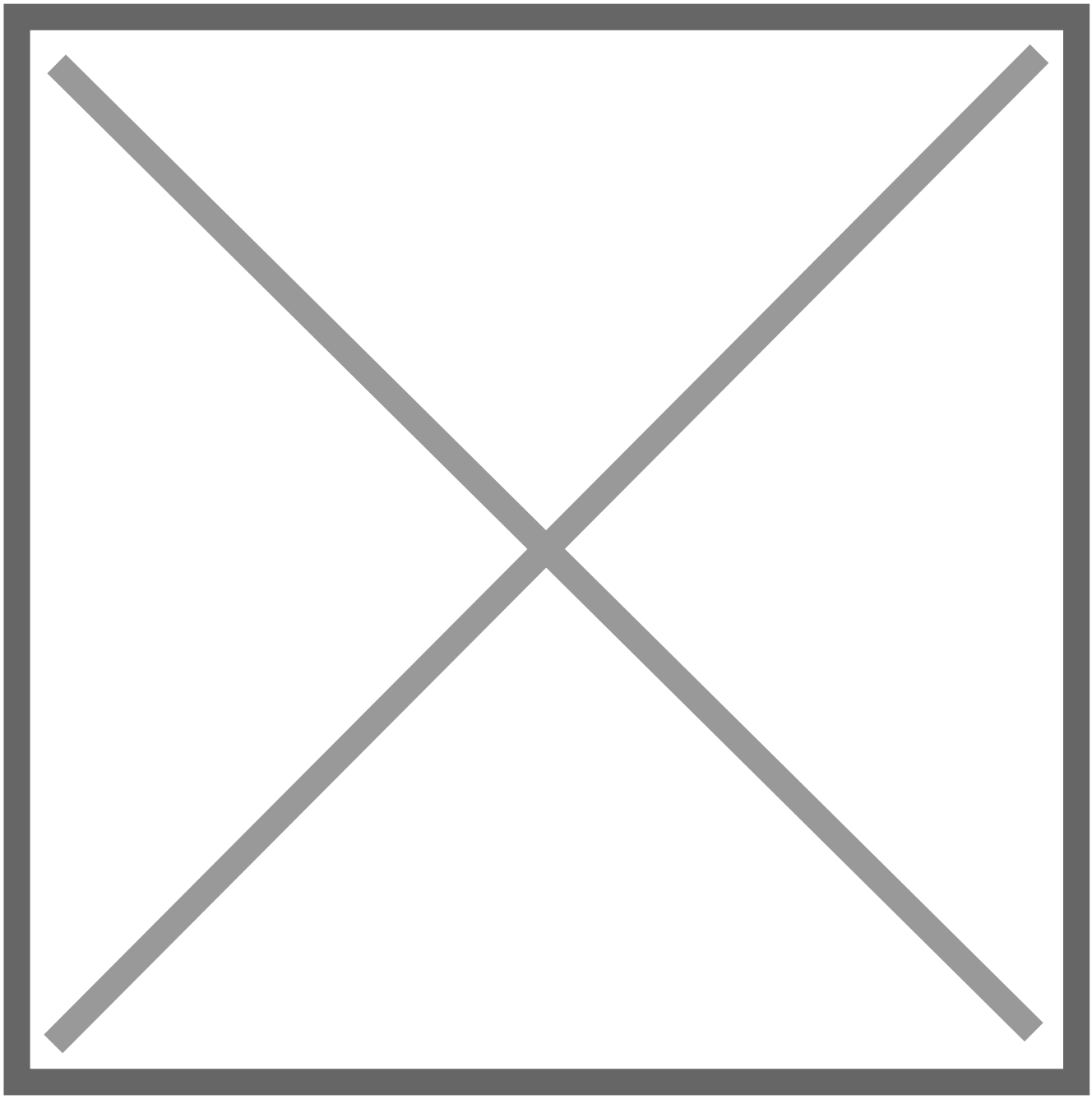
Vatican
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A statue of St. John Paul II Oct. 14, 2026, can be seen in front of Rome's Gemelli hospital where Pope Leo XIV is recovering from surgery during which doctors removed his lower right lung to treat a cancerous tumor. (CNS/Cristian Gennari)

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Church and world leaders offered prayers and wishes for a speedy recovery to Pope Leo XIV following the Vatican's announcement that he was diagnosed with lung cancer after undergoing surgery to remove part of his right lung.

Following the Oct. 13 announcement that the operation was successful, Dr. Stefano Margaritora, chief thoracic surgeon at Rome's Gemelli Hospital, and Dr. Luigi Carbone, said in a joint statement that the "examination confirmed the diagnosis of lung adenocarcinoma, as suspected by the preoperative tests."

The pope is expected to remain in recovery at Rome's Gemelli Hospital for one week. According to Vatican News, doctors will conduct post-operation tests on the removed tissue in the coming days.

In Rome, concern for the pope's health was the number one topic from pontifical university classrooms to curial offices and the *Amoris Laetitia* meeting hall.

For Cameroonian Archbishop Andrew Nkea of Bamenda, who was in Rome for the Oct. 7-14 gathering marking the 10th anniversary of *Amoris Laetitia*, the diagnosis was very surprising.

"It was a very surprising announcement (for) me in particular, because in April, the pope had been to my country, to my diocese and to my house," Nkea told OSV News, recalling the pope's visit to Cameroon during a four-nation apostolic visit to Africa in April.

"He was looking in very good form," the archbishop said.

Nevertheless, he added, "We thank God that it was an early discovery. So, we are hoping that he will recover very fast, and he will get back to his duties because the whole world is waiting for him to get well."

Despite the pope's absence on the meeting's final days, Nkea told OSV News those present in the assembly "were not discouraged, but we were very, very strongly united with him in prayer."

"And every morning before we started the meeting, we prayed for his health and for his quick recovery," he said. "It really didn't affect the meeting in the sense that it didn't kill our spirits, because we have hope in God and trust in his healing power. But at the same time, we missed him in the meeting."

A meaning to suffering

Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller, who led the then-Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith from 2012 to 2017, in a conversation with OSV News Oct. 14, acknowledged the shock many felt at Leo's diagnosis so early in his pontificate.

"We are remembering John Paul II; in his last years he suffered. But now Pope Leo, nobody thought, was prepared for the suffering of these (health problems), with cancer in the first year," the German cardinal said.

While the pope's office does not spare him from human suffering, Müller noted that it does position him to be an example of leading in adversity. "The Holy Father is the first representative of Jesus Christ, the Vicar of Christ, and the successor of Saint Peter," he told OSV News.

"Therefore, he is also for us an example, and he wants to be an example, to give us a good example in suffering, but also in the hope in Jesus Christ and this life on earth, and also for eternal life," the cardinal added.

Speaking with OSV News Oct. 14, Dominican Fr. Thomas Joseph White, rector of Rome's Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas, said that while the news of Leo's surgery and cancer diagnosis had left many "concerned and saddened," it also serves as a reminder of "the Christian meaning of suffering."

"Even though it's objectively a bad thing — I mean, it's a grave thing to suffer — there's the Christian hope to live suffering constructively," White told OSV News. "And so, you think about the pope doing that, and you pray for him."

White recalled the witness given by previous pontiffs who navigated debilitating illnesses in the public eye.

He noted that ministerial priests, especially the Roman Pontiffs, are called "to be conformed to Christ and to pray for others, to offer himself in Christ with the grace of Christ for others."

"I think actually of John XXIII, who did die of cancer and would actually publish, I think on a weekly basis, the intentions that he was praying for and how he was offering his suffering for the faithful and for various intentions, which is, I think, a saintly example," White said.

White also noted the "saintly example" of St. John Paul II's battle with Parkinson's and said both pontiffs' examples were "meant to speak to all of us as Christians and just human beings about the constructive living of suffering, despite its objectively bad character, to make something constructive of it."

Recalling his personal encounters with Leo, White told OSV News he was struck by the pope's "peacefulness, his joy and his serenity," expressing hope that the pope's "stability of character" will guide him "through this next stage in his own vocation and in his teaching to us as the Holy Father, including in his illness."

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World leaders react

Prominent world leaders took to social media to offer prayers and words of encouragement in the wake of the pope's diagnosis.

"Wishing His Holiness Pope Leo XIV a speedy recovery following his recent diagnosis," U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres wrote on X, adding that his prayers and thoughts were with the pope and "the Catholic community worldwide."

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio also took to X, saying that he and his wife, Jeanette, were "united in prayer for (Leo's) health following his recent diagnosis."

"May the Lord give him strength and the Holy Spirit guide the medical professionals taking care of the Holy Father," Rubio wrote.

The U.S. ambassador to Italy and San Marino, Tilman Fertitta, offered hopes for the pontiff's "speedy recovery from his surgery and for his continued health."

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney wished the pope "a full and swift recovery following his successful surgery."

"His Holiness is a source of hope and inspiration for billions around the world," Carney wrote on X. "His message of unity and compassion reminds us of the strength we can offer one another in moments of uncertainty."

Echoing Carney's sentiments, Australia's prime minister, Anthony Albanese, praised the pope as "a source of inspiration to Catholics" and a "voice for peace, humanity and reason in our modern world."

"My thoughts and prayers are with him as he recovers from his recent surgery," Albanese wrote. "We hope and pray for a quick recovery."

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi wished Leo "a full and speedy recovery as well as continued good health," while his counterpart in neighboring Pakistan, Shehbaz Sharif, assured the pontiff of his prayers for "strength, comfort and a speedy recovery."

"Pakistan's Catholic community, and indeed the entire nation, joins me in praying for His Holiness' good health," Sharif wrote. "His steadfast message of compassion, peace and human dignity resonates deeply with people across Pakistan and the world. We pray that he continues his invaluable service to humanity, with renewed strength and conviction."

In Latin America, Venezuela's acting president, Delcy Rodriguez, invoked the intercession of the country's saints — Sts. José Gregorio Hernández and Carmen

Rendiles — and prayed that God "grant you strength to continue your noble mission of bringing peace, love, and hope to the peoples of the world."

"Venezuela raises its prayers for the prompt and full recovery of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV. We convey to him the affection and solidarity of our people, united in faith and hope for his health and well-being," she wrote on X.

In Peru, one of three countries Leo is scheduled to visit in November, President Keiko Fujimori said the country received the news of the pontiff's diagnosis "with deep sadness" and asked God "to care for him, to give him strength, and allow us to see him soon recovered."

"Today, more than ever, let us unite our faith in a great chain of prayer. May our Lord of Miracles hear our pleas and accompany him in this difficult moment," Fujimori wrote. "Holy Father, this land, which is also your home, embraces you with immense affection. Today it is our turn to accompany you with our prayers, just as you have so many times accompanied us with yours."

Anglican Archbishop Sarah Mullally of Canterbury also reacted to the news of the pope's cancer diagnosis, saying that her "daily prayers remain with Pope Leo XIV."

Assuring the prayers of the Church of England and the Anglican Communion, Mullally said: "I pray that the Holy Spirit — the Comforter, Healer and Giver of Life — will sustain him in the days and weeks ahead, and that his recovery will be swift and complete."

Shortly after the Archbishop of Canterbury's post was published, the Anglican Communion's official X account shared her message and called on Anglicans "to join with Catholic sisters and brothers in prayer for the Holy Father."