



Pope Leo XIV appears at the window of his study in the Apostolic Palace overlooking St. Peter's Square at the Vatican for the traditional noon blessing after praying the Angelus, Sunday, Oct. 18, 2026, a day after he returned from the hospital, where he had lung cancer removed on Tuesday. (AP/Alessandra Tarantino)

by Associated Press

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Vatican City — October 19, 2026

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[Pope Leo XIV](#) spoke by phone Monday with Ukrainian President [Volodymyr Zelenskyy](#), urging cooperation with Russia to allow humanitarian aid into [the embattled city of Oleshky](#) and the safe evacuation of civilians, the Vatican said.

Leo recalled the "grave situation" in Oleshky, in Ukraine's Kherson region, and told Zelenskyy about his request to Russian President [Vladimir Putin](#) for a humanitarian ceasefire, according to a Vatican statement.

The pope expressed hope that cooperation between the two sides would allow food and medical aid to reach the city and permit the voluntary and safe [evacuation of civilians](#). He also reaffirmed the Holy See's commitment to promoting dialogue and peace.

Leo made the [appeal to Putin](#) during a phone call Friday while recovering at Rome's Gemelli hospital from surgery to remove the [lower lobe of his right lung](#). The Vatican said that Leo had expressed deep concern about conditions in Oleshky and sought a ceasefire to permit aid deliveries and evacuations.

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The conversation on Friday was Leo's second known phone call with Putin since becoming pope. The two previously spoke on June 4, 2025, when their conversation also focused on [the war in Ukraine](#).

Leo underwent surgery on Oct. 13 after doctors identified a suspected cancerous nodule. Tests confirmed pulmonary adenocarcinoma. He was discharged Saturday and said on Sunday during his Angelus prayer that he's slowly resuming his duties.

On Wednesday, he's expected to hold his weekly audience in [St. Peter's Square](#).