Vatican

Vatican News



Pope Leo XIV, right, and the singer and Nobel prize winner Bob Dylan, left, shake hands during a meeting in the Vatican on Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2026. (Vatican Media/LaPresse via AP)

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Vatican City — November 4, 2026

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Bob Dylan came knockin' on Pope Leo XIV's door Wednesday, as the American singer-songwriter and poet visited with the American pope at the Vatican during a break between concert dates in Italy.

The Vatican said the encounter was brief, with Leo giving Dylan a rosary and Dylan presenting the pope with a copy of his autobiography, "Chronicles: Volume One."

Leo had quoted from an unpublished protest song Dylan penned in 1963, "Go Away You Bomb," in his 2026 book "Disarmed and Disarming: Peace Is a Gift."

Leo was warning against the race to rearm and the recourse to nuclear weapons and quoted the lyric, addressed to a hypothetical atomic bomb: "I hate you cause yer man-made and man-owned, an' man-handled."

Two Vatican officials accompanied Dylan: the Rev. Antonio Spadaro, a Vatican culture ministry official who also accompanied Patti Smith to a July audience with Leo; and Andrea Monda, the editor of the Vatican newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano.

Spadaro said Dylan had wanted to speak with Leo, and the two met in private for a few minutes. In an essay in L'Osservatore Romano, he recalled that the former Robert Prevost, who was born in Chicago in 1955, grew up familiar with Dylan's music.

He also noted that Dylan was very familiar with St. Augustine of Hippo, the inspiration of Leo's spirituality and Augustinian religious order, penning "I Dreamed I Saw St. Augustine" for the 1967 album John Wesley Harding.

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Dylan, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2016, wore a black hoodie and a loose tie. Vatican photos of the encounter showed him with the hood over his head.

It wasn't Dylan's first papal encounter: He played for Pope John Paul II, and thousands of other people, in 1997 during a concert capping a religious congress in Bologna, Italy.

Dylan, who changed his name from Robert Zimmerman, was born to a Jewish family in Minnesota. He famously became a born-again Christian in 1979 and alienated some of his longtime fans with songs like "Gotta Serve Somebody" and "Saved."

In more recent years, Dylan has been more circumspect about his religious beliefs. In a 2022 interview with the Wall Street Journal, Dylan said that he was a "religious person" who reads the scriptures, meditates and prays.

Dylan met with Leo in between concert dates in Italy. He played in Milan on Monday and is playing Rome on Thursday. In his most recent concert before the meeting with the pope, Dylan sang his 1997 song "Tryin' to Get to Heaven" that contains the lyric, "I've been all around the world, boys/Now I'm trying to get to heaven before they close the door."