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A young seagull walks in front of Pope Leo XIV during his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square, at the Vatican, Wednesday, Nov. 25, 2026 (AP/Gregorio Borgia)

Silvia Stellacci

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Associated Press

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Pope Leo XIV on Wednesday expressed concern over the failure of United Nations climate talks to reach an agreement, saying that "extreme environmental events linked to the climate crisis are becoming increasingly frequent."

The pope has embraced defense of the environment in his papacy, taking up one of the core teachings of his predecessor, Pope Francis, whose landmark encyclical Laudato Si (Praised Be) cast care for the planet as an urgent, existential moral concern.

Leo issued an appeal during his weekly audience in St. Peter's Square to "never forget the human face of the climate crisis, which affects the lives of millions of people, strikes entire communities and undermines the prospects of future generations."

He called for "fundamental changes in behavior, socioeconomic systems and the governance of our societies," directing his appeal to "the international community and to each individual."

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During his recent trip to Peru, Leo demanded justice for environmental defenders killed for protecting the Amazon. Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Leo's No. 2, in a statement to COP31 recalled Leo's earlier appeal to "bear in mind the human face of the climate crisis," as a reminder that the talks were not "merely technical … but concern people's lives."

The talks in Antalya, Turkey, ended Sunday without reaching an overarching agreement because of disputes over whether to mention the fossil fuels that cause global warming.