



## Pope Leo Calls for an Unarmed Peace Amid the Threat of War

These are highlights, as reported by the Vatican News Service, of **Pope Leo's Message for the World Day of Peace, which is on January 1.**

In his first Message for this observance, he addresses the seriousness of the moment while proposing a vision of peace that is “unarmed and disarming,” resisting violence not through force but through moral clarity, dialogue and the conversion of hearts.

Fear is a theme in the Pope’s reflection. He warns that when societies lose sight of peace as a lived reality, they accept narratives in which war appears inevitable, even necessary.

“It is no coincidence,” the Pope continued, “that repeated calls to increase military spending, and the choices that follow, are presented by many government leaders as a justified response to external threats. The idea of the deterrent power of military might, especially nuclear deterrence, is based on the irrationality of relations between nations, built not on law, justice and trust, but on fear and domination by force.”

This approach, he said, does not bring security but entrenches instability and perpetuates anxiety.

Quoting Saint John XXIII, Pope Leo XIV recalls how peoples today live “in the grip of constant fear,” aware that weapons capable of catastrophic destruction already exist, and that war could erupt “by some chance and unforeseen circumstance.” He cites concrete figures, noting that global military expenditure rose by 9.4 percent in 2024 alone, reaching \$2.7 trillion - resources directed toward instruments of death rather than human development.

The Message highlights a shift in political and cultural attitudes, where preparedness for war is viewed as prudent and disarmament as naïve. Pope Leo XIV writes: “When peace is not a reality that is lived, cultivated and protected, then aggression spreads into domestic and public life.” He warns that this normalization of confrontation dominates global politics, undermining diplomacy and international law.

The Pope also addresses the role of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, in military decision-making. He calls this a “destructive betrayal of the legal and philosophical principles of humanism,” as machines increasingly assume responsibility for life-and-death choices, while economic interests drive re-armament.

The Pope reiterates that the Gospel links peace and nonviolence. “The peace of the risen Jesus is unarmed,” he writes, “His was an unarmed struggle in the midst of concrete historical, political and social circumstances.”

He recalls the challenge faced even by the disciples: “Put your sword back into its sheath.” Christians, he notes, are called to recognize past complicity in violence and commit to prophetic witness.

In a world that equates strength with domination, goodness itself becomes “disarming.” Pope Leo XIV reflects: “Perhaps this is why God became a child,” pointing to the defenselessness of Bethlehem as a revelation of divine power.

Drawing again on Saint John XXIII, the Pope stresses that disarmament must extend beyond the realm of weapons. “Unless this process of disarmament be thoroughgoing and complete, and reach people’s very souls, it is impossible to stop the arms race.”

He insists that fear must be addressed at its root through the renewal of minds and hearts, replacing suspicion with trust. True peace, he writes, “cannot consist in the possession of an equal supply of armaments but only in mutual trust.”

Religions, he adds, have a responsibility to avoid using faith to justify violence or war and instead to be “houses of peace,” where hostility is addressed through dialogue, justice and forgiveness.

The Message also addresses public authority. Pope Leo XIV calls for a renewed commitment to diplomacy, mediation and international law, lamenting the erosion of treaties and the weakening of supranational institutions.

He highlights that peace is not a utopia but a choice - personal, communal and political. Quoting Pope Francis, he warns against narratives that present violence as inevitable, noting that such narratives are tools of domination.

Peace, he writes, “exists; it wants to dwell within us.” The task is not to create it, but to welcome it - and to allow it “to disarm us.”