

Fearless Leo: What a Pope Invites Us to Be

This letter is in support of Pope Leo XIV's leadership and encourages all of us toward love and action.

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At a time when armed conflicts proliferate, and democracies strain under polarization and the coercion of autocrats, truth itself is contested and trust for moral authority stands at a crossroads. This week, we are seeing how religion is used as a balm—or a blade.

Around the world, sacred traditions are being invoked to justify violence, exclusion, and domination of our neighbors. Political opportunists wrap themselves in the mantel of religious language, while advancing policies that erode human dignity and render us suspicious of empathy, the moral adhesive of any healthy society. Meanwhile, billions of everyday religious adherents—across faiths—daily practice compassion, service, and humility, even when drowned out by louder, more divisive voices.

This tension has come into stark relief this week in exchanges between Donald Trump and Pope Leo XIV. One sees a world enshrined in avarice and ambition; the other invites us into a moral universe guided by the pursuit of peace as a global virtue.

Pope Leo says he is not afraid of Donald Trump, or presumably any autocrat clothed in the vain and ruinous garments of omnipotence. The Pope is only one human being, but his service at the margins,

his courage in truth-telling, and his indictment of the forces that would manipulate and destroy whole civilizations, is a compelling mandate to act. Pope Leo's words while strong and encouraging require more human beings who claim love and fearlessness, together.

When religion becomes a political blade, it loses its prophetic power, ceases to challenge injustice and instead sanctifies it. This is not new—but it is newly dangerous in an era of global instability and instant amplification.

This week we witness not only a choice between Trump's unbridled autocracy and Pope Leo's undaunted faith. We witness ourselves, our choice to be remade now, in our time. We must concert our collective work toward justice or languish under moral death and the finality of a civilization in decline.

Religious traditions, in all their diversity, share common moral ground: the dignity of every human being, the call to care for the vulnerable, the imperative of truthfulness, and the pursuit of peace. These are not abstract ideals; they are actionable principles every day. They demand our courage; they require us to forge serious albeit imperfect bonds as close as those who founded and framed us for life on this planet undeniably suspended in all this black wonder and awe.

When political authority berates moral authority—such as the recent public attack of a US President on the Vicar of Christ—meanness should never be given a pass.

This world need not be anemic of integrity, purpose, and reverence. Our story must exude these and more. We require leaders who engage religion with humility, and religious voices that speak truth to power without fear or favor.

In this moment of global uncertainty, the world does not need more righteous rhetoric. It needs more of Pope Leo's moral clarity. It needs more of you as well.

Signatories

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