



ANDREW MEDICHINI / AP

Pope Leo XIV arrives in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican to celebrate a Mass where he will bless the pallia for the new metropolitan archbishops on Sunday.

Vatican launches campaign to help erase \$57-68 million structural deficit

By NICOLE WINFIELD
The Associated Press

ROME — Pope Leo XIV on Sunday celebrated a special feast day traditionally used by the Catholic Church to drum up donations from the faithful, with the Vatican under the first American pope rolling out a new campaign to urge ordinary Catholics to help bail out the deficit-ridden Holy See.

Leo celebrated Mass in St. Peter's Basilica, marking the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul and thanked donors who have contributed, using the language of the publicity campaign to say their financial support was a sign of union with his young pontificate.

In churches around the world, Masses on the July 29 feast day often include a special collection for Peter's Pence, a fund which both underwrites the operations of the central government of the Catholic Church and pays for the pope's personal acts of charity.

With a promotional video, poster, QR code and website soliciting donations via credit card, PayPal, bank transfer and post office transfer, the Vatican is betting this year that an American-style fundraising pitch under the Chicago-born Leo will do more to help keep the Holy See bureaucracy afloat and

erase its 50 million to 60 million euro (\$57-68 million) structural deficit.

The video features footage of Leo's emotional first moments as pope, when he stepped out onto the loggia of St. Peter's Basilica and later choked up as he received the fisherman's ring of the papacy. With an evocative soundtrack in the background, the video superimposes a message, available in several languages, urging donations to Leo via the Peter's Pence collection.

"With your donation to Peter's Pence, you support the steps of the Holy Father," it says. "Help him proclaim the Gospel to the world and extend a hand to our brothers and sisters in need. Support the steps of Pope Leo XIV. Donate to Peter's Pence."

At the end of his noon blessing Sunday, Leo used the same language about his first steps to say the Peter's Pence fund is "a sign of communion with the pope and participation with his Apostolic Ministry."

"From the heart, I thank those who with their gifts are supporting my first steps as the successor of St. Peter," he said.

The fund has been the source of scandal in recent years, amid revelations that the Vatican's secretariat of state mismanaged its holdings through bad invest-

ments, incompetent management and waste. The recent trial over the Vatican's bungled investment in a London property confirmed that the vast majority of Peter's Pence contributions had funded the Holy See's budgetary shortfalls, not papal charity initiatives as many parishioners had been led to believe.

Between the revelations and the COVID-19 pandemic, which closed churches and canceled out the traditional pass-the-basket collection on June 29, Peter's Pence donations fell to 43.5 million euros in 2022 — a low not seen since 1986 — that was nevertheless offset the same year by other investment income and revenue to the fund.

Donations rose to 48.4 million euros (about \$56.7 million) in 2023 and hit 54.3 million euros (nearly \$63.6 million) last year, according to the Peter's Pence annual report issued last week. But the fund incurred expenses of 75.4 million euros (\$88.3 million) in 2024, continuing the trend in which the fund is exhausting itself as it covers the Holy See's budgetary shortfalls.

On top of the budget deficit, the Vatican is also facing a 1 billion euro (about \$1.17 billion) shortfall in its pension fund that Pope Francis, in the months before he

died, warned was unable in the medium term to fulfill its obligations.

Unlike countries, the Holy See doesn't issue bonds or impose income tax on its residents to run its operations, relying instead on donations, investments and revenue generated by the Vatican Museums, and sales of stamps, coins, publications and other initiatives.

For years, the United States has been the greatest source of donations to Peter's Pence, with U.S. Catholics contributing around a quarter of the total each year.

Vatican officials are hoping that under Leo's pontificate, with new financial controls in place and an American math major running the Holy See, donors will be reassured that their money won't be misspent or mismanaged.

"This is a concrete way to support the Holy Father in his mission of service to the universal Church," the Vatican's economy ministry said in a press release last week announcing the annual collection and new promotional materials surrounding it. "Peter's Pence is a gesture of communion and participation in the Pope's mission to proclaim the Gospel, promote peace, and spread Christian charity."

OBITUARIES

Daily News obituaries are paid content and are published as submitted

MARY FRANCES PRICE

Mary Frances Price, 84, passed away on Friday, June 27 at The Medical Center. Funeral services will be held at 2:00 pm on Wednesday, July 2 at Johnson Vaughn Phelps Funeral Home with burial to follow at Fairview Cemetery.

Visitation will be from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm on Wednesday, July 2 at the funeral home. Full obituary is available at www.jvpfh.com.

DEATH NOTICES

ALICE LYNN KUMMER (HORNBECK)

Alice Lynn Kummer, 77, died in Bowling Green, KY, June 27, 2025. J.C. Kirby & Son Broadway Chapel.

Chief Justice Roberts warns against heated political comments about judges

WASHINGTON (AP) — Chief Justice John Roberts, speaking at a moment when threats against judges are on the rise, warned on Saturday that elected officials' heated words about judges can lead to threats or acts of violence by others.

Without identifying anyone by name, Roberts clearly referenced Republican President Donald Trump and Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York when he said he has felt compelled to issue public rebukes of figures in both parties in recent years.

"It becomes wrapped up in the political dispute that a judge who's doing his or her job is part of the problem," Roberts said at a gathering of lawyers and judges in Charlotte, North Carolina. "And the danger, of course, is somebody might pick up on that. And we have had, of course, serious threats of violence and murder of judges just simply for doing their work. So I think the political people on both sides of the aisle need to keep that in mind."

Roberts appeared at the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals judicial conference on the day after the Supreme Court issued the final decisions of its term, including a major victory for Trump that limits judges' ability to use court orders with nationwide reach to block his agenda. C-Span carried Roberts' conversation with Judge Albert Diaz, the 4th Circuit's chief judge.

Roberts first took issue with Trump's comments in 2018, when Roberts responded to Trump's description of a judge who rejected his migrant asylum policy as an "Obama judge." In March, Roberts rejected calls for impeaching judges, shortly after Trump demanded the removal of one who ruled against his deportation plans.

In 2020, Roberts called out Schumer for remarks that Roberts termed inappropriate and threatening after the senator said Trump-nominated Justices Brett Kavanaugh and Neil Gorsuch "will pay the price" for votes in a then-pending Louisiana abortion case. Schumer later said he should not have used those words.



MANUEL BALCE CENETA / AP

Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court John Roberts speaks during a lecture to the Georgetown Law School graduating class of 2025 in Washington on May 12.

Trump calls for ceasefire deal on war in Gaza

By TIA GOLDENBERG,
SAMY MAGDY and
WAFAA SHURAF
The Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — U.S. President Donald Trump on Sunday urged progress in ceasefire talks in the 20-month war in Gaza, as Israel and Hamas appeared to move closer to an agreement.

A top adviser to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Ron Dermer, was set to travel to Washington this week for talks on a ceasefire, an Israeli official said, and plans were being made for Netanyahu to travel there in the coming weeks, a sign there may be movement on a deal. The official declined to discuss the visit's focus and spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss plans that had not been finalized.

"MAKE THE DEAL IN GAZA. GET THE HOSTAGES BACK!!!" Trump wrote on social media early Sunday. Trump raised expectations Friday for a deal, saying there could be an agreement within the next week.

Trump has repeatedly called for Israel and Hamas to end the war in Gaza. An

eight-week ceasefire was reached just as he took office earlier this year, but Israel resumed the war in March after trying to get Hamas to accept new terms on next steps.

Some Palestinians greeted the possibility of a new truce with skepticism after watching the last ceasefire shattered.

"Since the beginning of the war, they have been promising us something like this: Release the hostages and we will stop the war," said Abdel Hadi Al-Hour. "They did not stop the war."

Trump post slams Netanyahu corruption trial

Trump also doubled down on his criticism of the legal proceedings against Netanyahu, who is on trial for alleged corruption, calling it "a POLITICAL WITCH HUNT."

In the post Saturday evening, Trump said the trial interfered with ceasefire talks.

Netanyahu "is right now in the process of negotiating a Deal with Hamas, which will include getting the Hostages back. How is it possible that the Prime Minister of Israel can be forced to sit in a Courtroom all day long, over



NOTHING," Trump wrote.

Last week, Trump called for the trial to be canceled. It was a dramatic interference by an ally in the domestic affairs of a sovereign state. It unnerved many in Israel, despite Trump's popularity there.

The trial has repeatedly been postponed at Netanyahu's request, citing security and diplomatic developments. On Sunday, the court agreed to call off two more days of testimony by him scheduled this week.

Major sticking point over how the war ends

Talks between Israel and Hamas have repeatedly faltered over a major stick-

ing point: whether the war should end as part of any ceasefire agreement.

Hamas official Mahmoud Merdawi accused Netanyahu of stalling progress on a deal, saying on social media that the Israeli leader insists on a temporary agreement that would free just 10 of the hostages. About 50 hostages remain, with less than half believed to be alive.

Netanyahu spokesperson Omer Dostri said "Hamas was the only obstacle to ending the war," without addressing Merdawi's claim.

Hamas says it is willing to free all the hostages in exchange for a full withdrawal of Israeli troops and

Relatives of Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes on the Gaza Strip mourn their deaths at Shifa Hospital in Gaza City on Saturday.

JEHAD ALSHRAFI / AP

an end to the war. Israel rejects that offer, saying it will agree to end the war if Hamas surrenders, disarms and goes into exile, something the group refuses.

The war in Gaza began with the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas-led attack in which militants killed 1,200 people and took roughly 250 hostages.

Gaza's Health Ministry on Sunday said another 88 people have been killed by Israeli fire over the past 24 hours, raising the war's

toll among Palestinians to 56,500. The ministry, which operates under the Hamas government, does not distinguish between militants and civilians in its count but says more than half of the dead are women and children.

The war has displaced most of Gaza's population, often multiple times, obliterated much of the territory's urban landscape and left people overwhelmingly reliant on outside aid, which Israel has limited since the end of the latest ceasefire.

Fewer than half of Gaza's hospitals are even partly functional, and over 4,000 children need medical evacuation abroad, a new U.N. humanitarian assessment says.

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