



Pope Leo XIV marks feast day

Vatican launches campaign to erase \$57-68M deficit

BY NICOLE WINFIELD
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, during which he gave the pallium woolen stole to 54 new archbishops. He thanked donors who have contributed to the church, 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 June 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.

VATICAN AMERICAN-STYLE FUNDRAISING PITCH

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."

POPE THANKS DONORS

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 investments, incompetent management and waste. The recent trial over the Vatican's bungled



AP Photo/Andrew Medichini

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



AP Photo/Andrew Medichini

Pope Leo XIV looks at a pallium he blessed for the new metropolitan archbishops during a Mass in St. Peter's Basilica on Sunday at the Vatican.

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.

VATICAN FACES SHORTFALL IN PENSION FUND

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."

ROMP

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Ross Leigh, recreation outreach for Daviess County Parks & Recreation and longtime ROMP attendee, found the event to be an overall success considering growing obstacles with the weather.

"Looking into the future forecast from early last week, we were really concerned with not only the chances of rainfall but also, obviously, the high heat. We were very blessed to be able to come through it," he said. "Thursday was pretty tough, but (for) Friday and Saturday I think there was some kind of a cold front that came through (Friday) afternoon and brought some much needed relief (that) helped to drive more people out to the park"

Cleanliness of the grounds come Sunday was also not much of an issue, Leigh said. "We've been very blessed again with those who attend

the event in taking care of their areas," he said. "... I spend a lot of time on a golf cart with a pair of (trash grabbers) just picking up small stuff, and I drive throughout the entire park and not have but a half of a 5-gallon bucket of litter

"It's really amazing whenever you put that many people in the park and for them to take such respect for the property," Leigh said.

From a law enforcement standpoint, Daviess County Sheriff Brad Youngman said the festival did not bring forth "any significant issues."

"Fortunately, (there) was nothing big. We always have a handful of small things; you get that many people together, you're going to have some issues," he said. "... We did make one arrest last night (Saturday) for a highly intoxicated individual that was harassing some of the female guests. When possible we try not to make an arrest (and) tell them to go home or go back to their camper, but every once in a while they

push a little too hard; and that was the case with this (individual)."

Youngman said a theft was reported regarding a YETI cooler. Though deputies were able to locate the item, Youngman said "we did not find who took it."

Additionally, Youngman said there were a "few" reports regarding lost children on the grounds "that we were able to resolve pretty quickly."

While the festival's official attendance tally will be announced later this week, Rouse anticipates the numbers to be on par to previous years, which typically ranges between 20,000 to 25,000.

"We think that we have some people that normally come that decided to stay home just because of the heat," she said. "But I think overall, numbers seem

really consistent to the past few years; and especially on Saturday night with our biggest crowd, it's always really rewarding to turn around, and take a look out into the field and see it just completely packed with people."

And it won't be too long before planning for the 23rd ROMP will begin.

"... We'll kind of take a few weeks to listen to feedback

from attendees and the staff side of things and see what worked well and see where we can improve on," Rouse said. "And then kind of the first thing we have to do is get next year's artists secured, because they work so far out that we have to get on their schedule if we want them to come to ROMP ... and then just working all year on how we can make it better and better for the future."

FUNERALS

Cortez, Felix, 73, died Wednesday. Service: Noon Monday at James H. Davis Funeral Home and Crematory. Burial: Pleasant Grove Cemetery. Visitation: 10 a.m. to noon on Monday at the funeral home.

Crist, Sheila Ann, 83, died Friday. Service: 11 a.m. Monday at Central City Church of Christ. Burial: Rose Hill Cemetery, Central City. Visitation: 9 to 11 a.m. Monday at the church.

Haney, Barbara, 84, died Thursday, June 12. Celebration of Life: 10 a.m. July 17 at Living Hope Community Church. Service: 11 a.m. July 17 at the church.

Malone, Catherine, 67, died Thursday. Service: 2 p.m. Monday at James H. Davis Funeral Home and Crematory. Burial: Elmwood Cemetery. Visitation: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday at the funeral home.

Payne, Janice, 72, died Wednesday. Service: 10 a.m. Monday at St. William Catholic Church.

Rearden, Lois Faye, 80, died Friday. Service: Noon Tuesday at Bevil Bros. Funeral Home, Beaver Dam. Burial: Fordsville Cemetery. Visitation: 10 a.m. Tuesday until time of service at the funeral home.

Tanner, George, 65, died Tuesday. Service: 6 p.m. Monday at James H. Davis Funeral Home and Crematory. Private burial: Green Brier Baptist Church Cemetery. Visitation: 2 to 6 p.m. on Monday at the funeral home.

Robinson, Audrey Jane, 87, died Friday. Service: 2 p.m. Tuesday at James H. Davis Funeral Home & Crematory. Burial: Owensboro Memorial Gardens. Visitation: 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. Tuesday at the funeral home.

POLICE REPORTS

The following list was compiled from reports to area law enforcement agencies:

Daviess County Sheriff's Office

• Warren M. Smith, 22, Beaver Dam, was charged Saturday with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol.

Owensboro Police Department

• George R. Belt, 61, of the 2900 block of Yale Place, was charged Sunday with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol, second offense (aggravating circumstances).

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