



Pope Leo XIV meets with Vice President JD Vance, center, and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, left, on the occasion of their meeting at the Vatican, Monday, May 19, 2025. (AP/ Vatican Media)

Nicole Winfield

[View Author Profile](#)

Jacquelyn Martin

[View Author Profile](#)

Associated Press

[View Author Profile](#)

[Join the Conversation](#)

Rome — May 19, 2025

[Share on Bluesky](#)[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

U.S. Vice President JD Vance extended an invitation to [Pope Leo XIV](#) to visit the United States during a meeting at the Vatican on Monday ahead of a flurry of U.S.-led diplomatic efforts to make progress on a ceasefire in Russia's war in [Ukraine](#).

Vance gave the first American pope a letter from U.S. President Donald Trump and the first lady inviting him. The Chicago-born pope took the letter and put it on his desk and was heard saying "at some point," in the video footage of the meeting provided by Vatican Media.

Vance, who [converted to Catholicism](#) in 2019, also gave the Augustinian pope a copy of two of St. Augustine's most seminal works, "The City of God" and "On Christian Doctrine," the vice president's office said. Another gift: A Chicago Bears T-shirt with Leo's name on it.

"As you can probably imagine, people in the United States are extremely excited about you," Vance told Leo as they exchanged gifts.

Leo gave Vance a bronze sculpture with the words in Italian "Peace is a fragile flower," and a coffee-table sized picture book of the papal apartments in the Apostolic Palace. Leo noted that Francis had chosen not to live in them and added, "And I may live in, but it's not totally decided."

Vance led the U.S. delegation to Sunday's formal Mass [opening the pontificate](#) of the first American pope. Joining him at the meeting on Monday was Secretary of State Marco Rubio, also a Catholic, Vance spokesperson Luke Schroeder said. The two then also met with the Vatican foreign minister, Archbishop Paul Gallagher.

"There was an exchange of views on some current international issues, calling for respect for humanitarian law and international law in areas of conflict and for a negotiated solution between the parties involved," according to a Vatican statement after their meeting.

According to the photo of the visits released by the Vatican, Leo's brother, Louis Prevost, a self-described "MAGA-type," and his wife Deborah joined the delegation

during the visit.

Advertisement

The Vatican listed Vance's delegation as the first of several private audiences Leo was having Monday with people who had come to Rome for his inaugural Mass, including other Christian leaders and a group of faithful from his old diocese in [Chiclayo, Peru](#).

The Vatican, which was largely sidelined during the first three years of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, has [offered to host any peace talks](#) while continuing humanitarian efforts to facilitate prisoner swaps and reunite Ukrainian children taken by Russia.

After greeting Leo briefly at the end of Sunday's Mass, Vance spent the rest of the day in separate meetings, including with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. He also met with European Union Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Italy's Premier Giorgia Meloni, who said she hoped [the trilateral meeting](#) could be a "new beginning."

In the evening, Meloni spoke by phone with U.S. President Donald Trump and several other European leaders ahead of Trump's [expected call](#) with Russia's President Vladimir Putin on Monday, according to a statement from Meloni's office.

'Every Effort'

Leo, the former Cardinal Robert Prevost, is a Chicago-born Augustinian missionary who spent the bulk of his ministry in Chiclayo, a commercial city of around 800,000 on Peru's northern Pacific coast.

In the days since his May 8 election, Leo has vowed ["every effort"](#) to help bring peace to Ukraine. He also has emphasized his continuity with Pope Francis, who made caring for migrants and the poor a priority of his pontificate.

Before his election, [Prevost shared](#) news articles on X that were critical of the Trump administration's plans for [mass deportations of migrants](#).

Vance was one of the [last foreign officials](#) to meet with Francis before [the Argentine pope's April 21 death](#). The two had tangled over migration, with Francis [publicly](#)

[rebuking](#) the Trump administration's deportation plan and correcting Vance's theological justification for it.

NCR is an independent nonprofit and relies on support from readers like you, especially at this crucial moment in church history. Please donate [here to the Spring Fund Drive](#).

This story appears in the **Pope Leo XIV** feature series. [View the full series](#).