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Pope Francis meets U.S. President Donald Trump and his wife, Melania, during a private audience at the Vatican, May 24, 2017. (AP/Alessandra Tarantino)

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The No. 2 officer at the Vatican said that the Holy See is hopeful about working with President-elect Donald Trump's administration to address peacekeeping options as wars escalate in Europe and beyond.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin's comments were made on Friday (Nov. 15) at a conference on Catholicism and China at the Pontifical Gregorian University, where he presented an optimistic outlook about the Vatican's relationships with Beijing.

The Vatican hopes there will be "synergy" with the incoming president "because we believe that all problems today are global problems requiring global solutions," Parolin said, "and those solutions can only happen if we put all of our resources together."

As the Vatican's secretary of state, Parolin has been directly involved in mediating the Holy See's relations with Russia, China and the United States in a global context characterized by growing tensions and wars. While he voiced optimism about working with the Trump administration to build peace, he also underlined "the need to be very humble and patient."

At an event organized by the America First Policy Institute at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida on Thursday, Trump repeated his vow, made throughout the presidential campaign, to end all wars. Taking a perhaps more pragmatic approach, Parolin stressed that "there aren't any magic solutions" to the growing conflicts, which "require a lot of goodwill and willingness to compromise with others."

"If these are the main approaches then we can truly build bridges and not walls," Parolin added, citing Pope Francis' remark concerning Trump during his first presidential campaign in 2016, when he first promised to build a wall on the U.S. border with Mexico.

Trump is poised to take a more competitive and hawkish stance on China, while the Vatican has engaged in a policy of dialogue with the rising superpower. While Parolin said that "it's hard to tell others what to do," the "principle of dialogue is essential" to the Holy See, which will continue to engage with China diplomatically.

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The Vatican announced in late October that a secret deal on the appointment of bishops between the Holy See and the People's Republic of China was renewed for four years. The deal, which allows Beijing to have a say on the appointment of bishops in the country, was met with criticism by those who believe that it weakens the Vatican's power to denounce human rights violations in China. The former bishop of Hong Kong, Cardinal Joseph Zen, and the former U.S. secretary of state under Trump, Mike Pompeo, spoke openly against the Sino-Vatican deal.

"Patience and courage: These are the two fundamental attitudes that we must continue to adopt in the China dossier," Parolin said, describing the renewal of the deal as a sign "of progress," as well as the presence of Beijing-approved bishops at an important Vatican summit in October.

"There are these small signs that should not be diminished in their importance and move toward a larger understanding and collaboration," he said.

The conference, titled "A Legacy of Friendship, a Dialogue of Peace," focused on the life of the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci, who brought Catholicism to China in the late 1500's by infusing his faith into the cultural and political fabric of Chinese society. Francis frequently recognizes Ricci's contributions to dialogue and encounter in his speeches and made him "venerable" in 2022, a first step toward canonization.

Parolin said Ricci laid out the framework of the Vatican's engagement with China by proving "that there is no contradiction between being authentically Chinese and being Christian; on the contrary, the gospel strengthens Chinese culture from within."

The bishop of Hong Kong, Cardinal Stephen Chow, underlined the importance of the "Ricci way" in the continuing dialogue between China and the Holy See. Speaking at the conference, he said Chinese society, at its own pace, is slowly changing its approach to Catholicism and religion in general.

"We may not agree on the process," Chow said, "but that is what dialogue is for." He optimistically described "a metamorphosis of China," which is starting to no longer view faith as a foreign threat and treasure the contributions of the Catholic Church in the field of charity, health and education.

"People will see the goodness of the church, so let's continue to walk with China," Chow said.

The Vatican's international commitment extends beyond China and is focused on issues dear to Francis, including migration and climate change. Parolin attended the conference shortly after returning from Baku, Azerbaijan, which is hosting the international climate conference COP29 from Nov. 11-22.

"Climate change is an ethical and moral issue, not just a technical one," Parolin said. "The great theme of this conference will be managing a fund to address the damages and losses caused by climate change." The previous COP29 conference in Dubai created the fund, but Parolin said that it still lacks financial support. "Countries should be encouraged to make a more significant contribution," he said.

This story appears in the **Trump's Second Term** feature series. [View the full series.](#)