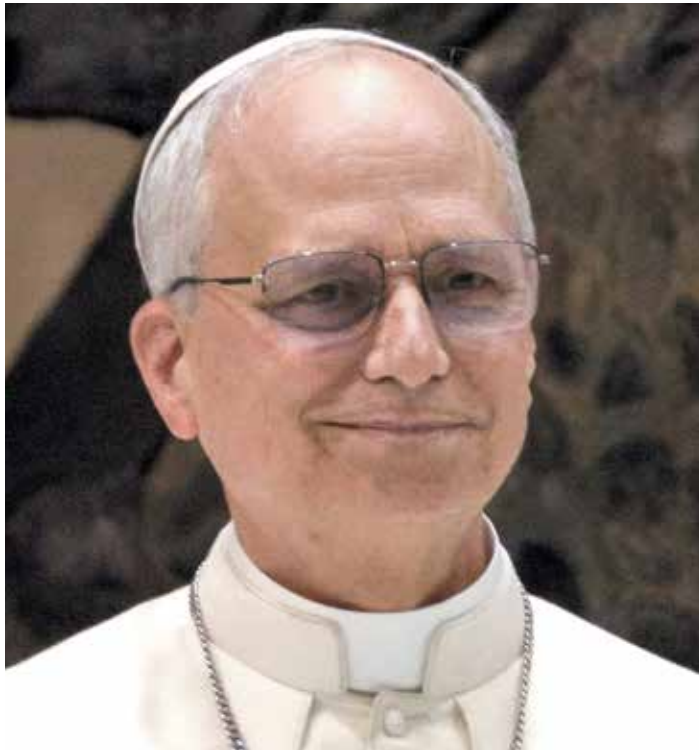


# OPINION

## Trump's attacks on Pope Leo have far-reaching consequences, putting spotlight on question of morality of war today



Pope Leo, left, and U.S. President Donald Trump. Leo, who officially heads a church that says indiscriminate warfare is a crime against God and humanity, is standing up against a bully who commands the largest military force ever known and flouts international law, writes Douglas Roche. Photographs courtesy of Commons Wikimedia/Flickr

Pope Leo is giving lessons on the immorality of modern warfare. Mark Carney should pay attention.

Douglas Roche

Opinion



EDMONTON—United States President Donald Trump's egregious behaviour in attacking Pope Leo for his stance against the U.S./Israeli war on Iran—and mocking Jesus in the process—has far-reaching consequences, for it is putting a spotlight on the entire question of the morality of war today. Prime Minister Mark Carney, however much he would like to stay out of the Trump-Leo feud, cannot escape being drawn into a fresh examination of the permissibility of war.

Leo condemned the “atrocious conflict” in Iran, and said God rejects the prayers of those who “have blood on their hands.” When Trump threatened Iran, saying that “a whole civilization will die tonight,” Leo responded by saying the statement was “truly unacceptable.” That set off another tirade by Trump, who accused the pope of being “terrible,” and “weak on crime.” The prominent Italian



Trump depicted himself as Jesus on social media, but later said he was showing that he was a doctor healing people. The post was deleted. Image courtesy of Truth Social

Catholic commentator Massimo Faggioli noted, “Not even Hitler or Mussolini attacked the pope so directly and publicly.”

Trump worsened the situation by releasing a computer-generated image of himself dressed as Jesus healing the sick. Previously, Trump had portrayed himself dressed in the white cassock of the Holy Father. These insults are further revelation of the deteriorating state of the president's mind. That such an unstable



Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, pictured, rebuked Donald Trump over his attacks on Pope Leo. Photograph courtesy of Wikipedia Commons

person is able to wage war on his own whim puts the world into the most dangerous state it has been in since the worst days of the Second World War.

These fireworks obscure the substance of the real issue here: the legitimacy of war as an instrument of foreign policy. This question reaches into the chancelleries of every major country in the world in the new age we have entered in which re-armament is the chief characteristic. World

military spending jumped 9.4 per cent last year to \$2.7-trillion. From Ukraine to Gaza to Iran, wars are spreading.

The world's political and legal systems are broken and the United Nations—which only authorizes war when attack is imminent or in self-defence—is ignored. Innocent civilians in today's wars are being killed in greater numbers than combatants. The only standard for the protection of civilization we have left is the moral call to preserve life.

While religions do not have the exclusive duty to protect life, the role of spiritual leaders is critical in raising the conscience of the world to find ways to live in peace. Far from being just another ideal which has to wait in line for the world's attention, the business of building the conditions for peace is now a pragmatic of the highest order.

Leo, who officially heads a church that says indiscriminate warfare is a crime against God and humanity, is standing up against a bully who commands the largest military force ever known and flouts international law. Leo is trying to build on the work of his predecessor, Pope Francis, who said “There is no such thing as a just war: they do not exist!”

Leo said, “In today's dramatic context of a third world war fought piecemeal. ... I too appeal to the powerful of the world by repeating these ever relevant words: never again war.” For this, he is denigrated by Trump. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni rebuked Trump.

This moment should not be lost upon Canada. While it is understandable that the Canadian prime minister would shy away from entering the dispute between Trump and Leo, this does not excuse Carney from leading the Canadian people to higher ground in the quest for peace. His actions need to show that he is more on the side of Leo than Trump. Yet, Carney gave quick support to Trump's war on Iran and has backed the U.S. military parade with extraordinarily high Canadian military spending plans.

Now that he has a majority government and can do long-range planning with more confidence, Carney should strengthen the instruments of peace, such as UN legal structures. He has the credentials to do this. In his so-far short time as prime minister, Carney has become an international star. In his first 100 days he visited 25 countries. He is practically non-stop on the phone to foreign leaders. Immediately after Pakistan hosted the U.S. and Iran delegations in the recent peace talks, Carney spoke with Pakistan's prime minister Shehbaz Sharif to discuss moving forward on de-escalation and a sustained ceasefire.

Carney is now in a position to forge new coalitions to implement the “cooperative internationalism” he has long espoused. Having strengthened Canada's military, the prime minister needs to use his impressive political and economic abilities to invigorate international diplomacy to end existing wars and prevent new ones. Carney could start by having Canada play a strong middle power role at the month-long review conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, starting April 27 at the UN.

Pope Leo is giving lessons on the immorality of modern warfare. Carney should pay attention.

Douglas Roche served formerly as a Senator, Canadian ambassador for disarmament, and member of the House of Commons.

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