

POPE AND PRESIDENT CLASH; WAR AND DEPORTATIONS DIVIDE

Pope Leo XIV and President Trump have had their differences before, but now they are at a serious juncture. After weeks of the pope criticizing the president over the war on Iran, Trump took to Truth Social on April 12 saying the pope was “WEAK on Crime, and terrible on Foreign Policy.”

Trump’s recent threats to Iran were stark. “A whole civilisation will die tonight, never to be brought back again.” He said he would target bridges and power plants, thus endangering the lives of innocents. Those reckless comments triggered rebukes worldwide, from the U.N. to the Vatican.

The Holy Father labeled Trump’s statement “totally unacceptable.” He added that to attack infrastructure was a “sign of the hatred, the division, the destruction human beings are capable of, and we all want to work for peace.”

Both the U.N. secretary general and the pope said that if Trump went through with his threats, it would be considered a war crime under international law.

Pope Leo’s desire for peace is understandable. Less understandable was his sweeping statement on March 1 claiming that peace is achieved “only” through “dialogue.” That is simply not true. Historically, war has frequently resulted in peace, an outcome that comes about when dialogue fails. That is why the Catholic Church is not a pacifist religion—it understands the necessity of “just wars.”

Trump’s comment that the pope is weak on crime is no doubt in reference to the pontiff’s criticisms of mass deportations. The U.S. bishops have also been vocal in denouncing the Trump administration on this issue. Cardinal Blase Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, recently said that “it’s very clear the

American people are saying, 'We really didn't vote for this.'"

In fact, the American people did vote for mass deportations: Trump made this one of his key issues. Moreover, virtually every survey taken on this subject reveals that a majority of Americans approve mass deportations. They do so because they oppose the Biden policy of deliberately allowing 20 million illegal aliens to crash our borders, about which Catholics—55 percent of whom voted for Trump—heard very little from their leaders, either in Rome or at home.

Trump does not help his case by posing as Jesus blessing a bedridden man; he released this Truth Social picture after he criticized Leo. It is offensive and immature.

There will no doubt be occasions where the pope and the president will continue to make public their disagreements. But there are so many other issues, such as religious liberty, where the two share a common interest. Let's pray the latter prove to be controlling.