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Pope Leo XIV speaks with members of ROACO, a Vatican coalition of Catholic charities at the Vatican June 26, 2025. (CNS/Vatican Media)

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Pope Leo XIV called on everyone to root out false narratives being used to fuel today's wars, conflict and violence.

"People must not die because of fake news," he told participants in the plenary assembly of ROACO, a Vatican coalition of Catholic charities.

"It is truly distressing to see the principle of 'might makes right' prevailing in so many situations today, all for the sake of legitimizing the pursuit of self-interest," he said during an audience at the Vatican June 26.

"It is troubling to see that the force of international law and humanitarian law seems no longer to be binding, replaced by the alleged right to coerce others. This is unworthy of our humanity, shameful for all mankind and for the leaders of nations," he said.

The annual assembly of ROACO focused this year on the situation in the Middle East, particularly the Gaza Strip, Armenia, Syria, Ethiopia, Ukraine and other areas where the Vatican has stepped up its diplomatic efforts.

Coordinated by the Dicastery for Eastern Churches, ROACO assists Eastern-rite churches around the world as well as the Latin Church in North Africa and the Middle East. Cardinal Claudio Gugerotti, dicastery prefect, and other officials were present for the meeting.

"Our hearts bleed when we think of Ukraine, the tragic and inhumane situation in Gaza and the Middle East, ravaged by the spread of war," Leo said.

Everyone is "called upon to examine the causes of these conflicts, to identify those that are real and to attempt to resolve them," he said. However, it is up to everyone also to reject false narratives that are "the result of emotional manipulation and rhetoric, and to make every effort to bring them to light."

"After centuries of history, how can anyone believe that acts of war bring about peace and not backfire on those who commit them?" he asked. "How can we think that we are laying the foundations of the future apart from cooperation and a global vision inspired by the common good?"

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"How can we continue to betray the desire of the world's peoples for peace with propaganda about weapons buildup, as if military supremacy will resolve problems instead of fueling even greater hatred and desire for revenge?" he continued.

"People are beginning to realize the amount of money that ends up in the pockets of merchants of death; money that could be used to build new hospitals and schools is instead being used to destroy those that already exist!" Leo said.

Christians should feel outraged, speak out and get to work being peacemakers and promoters of dialogue, he said.

But, above all, Christians need to pray, he said. "It is up to us to make every tragic news story, every newsreel that we see, a cry of intercession before God. And then to offer help, just as you do and as many others can do through you."

People of faith must not let themselves "end up in the clutches of power," he said. Instead, they must seek to imitate Christ, "who conquered evil by the love he showed on the cross, and to show a way of reigning quite different from that of Herod and Pilate."

Leo also called for making the faith traditions of the "Christian East" better known in the Catholic Church, "where it is still largely unknown and where, in some places, the faith is in danger of becoming lifeless."

To help Catholics of the Latin Church become familiar with the treasures of the Eastern-rite churches, he said, there should be basic courses on the Eastern churches in seminaries, theological faculties and Catholic universities.

"There is also a need for encounter and the sharing of pastoral activity, since Eastern Catholics today are no longer our distant cousins who celebrate unfamiliar rites, but our brothers and sisters who, due to forced migration, are our next-door neighbors," he said.

This story appears in the **Pope Leo XIV** feature series. View the full series.