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Pope Leo XIV speaks at the "Canticle of Peace" event in the Vatican Gardens in Castel Gandolfo

Pope Leo XIV speaks at the "Canticle of Peace" event in the Vatican Gardens in Castel Gandolfo on the evening of July 29, 2026, featuring a performance by Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli and a 164-member children's choir. (OSV News/Vatican Media/Matteo Pernaselci)



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The first U.S.-born pope said he is looking to travel to the United States in "the next couple of years" and said one of America's greatest sources of wealth is its history of immigration.

Pope Leo XIV said he loves "so many things" about the United States in an interview with NBC Nightly News and Noticias Telemundo filmed on the grounds of the papal retreat at Castel Gandolfo, about an hour's drive south of Rome.

The pope particularly expressed his affection for "what America stands for: a sense of freedom, a sense of opportunity, a sense of having invited for generations people from around the world to be a part of America."

"My grandparents were immigrants. On my mother's side, we have people who were both slaves and slaveowners," he said. "There's a history, if you will, of growing up in the kind of experience that helps me recognize, in myself, one of the greatest wealths of the United States, and I continue to hope that the principles that have been a part of being American for so many years, that that will continue."

Following Leo's election in May 2025, genealogists [tracked](#) his ancestry and found that three of his four grandfathers had been born outside the United States and revealed the pope's Italian, French and Spanish ancestry that had reached Chicago by way of Cuba and New Orleans.

The brief interview, given to NBC and [Telemundo](#) after the networks had exclusive streaming rights for a concert hosted on the grounds of the papal retreat on July 29, is only the second media interview Leo has given in his nearly 15 months as pope.

Asked by NBC Nightly News anchor Tom Llamas about the importance of being American, Leo said, "I think of myself more as the pope who happens to be American."

"Not to belittle what it means to be American, I was born in the United States, my family is still in the United States, I have great love for America, but I understand my mission as having a very important dimension which is precisely being pastor of a universal church and having a voice and an opportunity to speak to people throughout the world," he said.

And asked whether a trip to the United States is on the horizon, Leo said that his team is "looking at the calendar for the next couple of years."

"Nothing is set in stone yet, but I certainly hope to be there soon," he said.

Noticias Telemundo anchor Julio Vaqueiro asked the pope about migration in the United States and the "millions who live in fear" in the current immigration landscape.

"We need to rediscover the values and the treasure found in being human, in all being brothers and sisters," Leo responded in Spanish. "We must recognize that we

can all truly participate in a society that loves peace, seeks peace, and accepts one another despite our differences. If we all work for peace, we can overcome so many situations that cause conflict and hatred."

Asked if he had a message for migrants in the United States, Leo said to "have hope" and "seek ways to live in an orderly manner."

"We must recognize that there may be people who — I don't know — have suffered because of offenses, crimes and things of that kind," he said. "A society cannot be built that way. We must therefore learn to live in peace, but we must also have the courage and the hope that always helps us all."

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The interview, lasting approximately five minutes between the two journalists, followed a "Concert for Peace" hosted on the grounds of the papal retreat and attended by the pope and senior Vatican officials.

The concert, part of celebrations marking the 800th anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi's death, was headlined by Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli and an international choir of 164 children and young people from around the world.

"Music has the remarkable ability to bring different voices together in unison, where each one contributes something unique to the whole," Leo said after the performance. "In this sense, [the] choir becomes an ideal symbol of harmony and cooperation."

Addressing the choir, he said that "in a particular way, I pray that peace may reign in your homes and in all those places throughout the world that continue to suffer from violence."

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