



By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

Is the Vatican the new address for negotiations between Moscow and Kyiv?



The meeting between Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Pope Leo XIV at the Vatican on 9 July produced more than just a protocol photo and another appeal for peace.

This **meeting** at the Pope's summer residence in Castel Gandolfo led to a concrete offer from the Holy See to act as an active mediator in the opening of negotiations between Kyiv and Moscow.

This is the first time in this multi-year war that the Vatican has made it clear that it wants to move from the sphere of moral authority to the field of direct diplomatic engagement, as we **announced** at the end of May.

Pope Leo XIV did not arbitrarily select the time. After almost four years of gruelling **warfare**, Ukrainian offensives have slowed under the weight of logistical and human losses, while Russia has stabilised its lines and is gradually extending its control in the Donbass.

On the other hand, the West's support for Kyiv is showing signs of **fatigue**, even if this is rarely admitted publicly. The Vatican is obviously counting on the political vacuum that is emerging between the reality of the war and the increasingly frequent discussions in European capitals about the need for a political solution.

Two important levels can be recognised in the Pope's initiative. The first is the natural role of the Holy See as a moral authority in international relations.

The Vatican has neither military power nor economic instruments, but it enjoys a unique trust, even among countries that are in conflict with each other.

The second level is reflected in the approach of **Pope Leo XIV**, who from the beginning of his pontificate showed a willingness to intervene directly in the most difficult global issues, relying on the power of the Vatican's diplomatic tradition to provide scope for dialogue where there is almost none.

Creating a channel for dialogue outside established frameworks

Despite the symbolic power, the underlying issues quickly surface. With Zelenskyy's words after the meeting, Ukraine has stressed that it will not give up its territorial integrity and that no negotiations can begin on the basis of the current de facto front lines.

Moscow, however, **refuses** to even consider a dialogue that questions the annexation of Crimea and Russia's control over parts of the Donbass. This means that the Vatican is actually offering a negotiating table that neither side is prepared to approach in principle.

In international relations, symbolic steps often provide scope for talks, even if specific interests persistently prevent this. The Pope's offer could be the beginning of the creation of an additional channel for dialogue, outside established frameworks such as the G7 or NATO meetings.

In such a format, neutral states like Switzerland and possibly Brazil could help open up the political process, as Brazil has repeatedly offered itself as a mediator through the BRICS. In this case, the Vatican would provide the framework and legitimacy that are sometimes crucial for the start of serious negotiations.

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It should not be overlooked that, at the same time, Italy is launching its own initiative through a **conference** in Rome dedicated to the reconstruction of Ukraine with a package of 300 million euros intended primarily for small and medium-sized enterprises, the digital sector, and agriculture.

Prime Minister Meloni's government is thus

clearly combining economic interests with broader political endeavours in which the Vatican is acting as a potential mediator.

The message from Rome is that peace does not only mean the end of human suffering but also the possibility of launching concrete development projects that can stabilise the Ukrainian economy. This is an additional argument against prolonging the war, as it opens up the prospect of real economic benefits from a political solution.

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The Russian leadership obviously expects to further strengthen its positions on the front, particularly in the Donbass, in the coming months to maximise tactical advantages in possible future negotiations.

The Vatican therefore probably wants to speed up the start of talks, as it knows that any delay would only further entrench the current fronts and make a political solution more difficult in the future.

What is happening within the West itself should not be overlooked. European economies are growing more and more slowly, which is putting additional pressure on governments.

German **exports** have fallen for the second time this month, partly due to US tariffs hitting the vehicle and machinery industries. France is seeing a **decline** in industrial production, and Italy's public **debt** has exceeded 147 per cent of GDP.

In such a situation, it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain a policy of full and unlimited support for Ukraine. Therefore, the need to find a solution that reduces the burden and protects political stability in European countries is being discussed more and more openly.

A dialogue devoid of power calculations

The Vatican appears here not only as a moral voice, but also as a possible political channel through which a more serious discussion about calming the conflict could begin. The issue here is how willing the West and Ukraine are to accept talks on a ceasefire or humanitarian corridors.

If this process gets underway, Europe and the United States could gradually relax their military approach without openly admitting that they are changing their policy under pressure.

It is expected that the Vatican will intensify its contacts with London, Paris, and Berlin over the summer in order to obtain at least tacit support for the opening of a special forum to seek minimum solutions to defuse the conflict.



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At the same time, it is possible that the Pope will send envoys to Moscow to see if there is a willingness to agree on humanitarian issues, such as the exchange of prisoners or a more stable power supply in vulnerable parts of Ukraine.

This attempt, even if restricted to agreements on humanitarian aid or prisoner exchange, would still represent a significant development. It would show that channels of dialogue can be opened, even at a time when

the war is being waged with undiminished ferocity and the political positions of the warring parties are still irreconcilable.

For the Vatican, this would mean renewing its special role in international relations - quietly, often away from the public eye, initiating processes that can later develop into broader political agreements.

This kind of discreet but influential mediation has changed the course of major crises throughout history, and now it could lay the foundations for something more lasting, even in such difficult circumstances.

If Russia continues to believe that war can give it a better negotiating position and Ukraine remains determined to reclaim all its territories, it will be difficult for the Vatican to find room for genuine mediation. Even then, this initiative has its value.

It demonstrates an effort to initiate a dialogue devoid of power calculations. In an environment where military balances dictate almost all political moves, such a signal remains important because it reminds us that a way out of the war is still possible, however remote it may seem now.

The Vatican is not changing the balance of power with this step, but it adds a factor that could be significant if the conflict continues and further burdens the parties involved.

So far, there are no signs that Moscow or Kyiv are willing to make concessions, but the opening of this channel offers the possibility that if the military logic begins to weaken under the pressure of costs and exhaustion, negotiations can begin in a place that is already politically prepared.

It is neither a symbol nor a rhetorical gesture but the creation of initial requirements for a future agreement, even if it still seems a long way off at this stage.