

Pope Leo publishes first teaching document as pontiff

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Pope Leo has published his first teaching document, which focuses on the poor. The apostolic exhortation, *Dilexi Te* (I have loved you), has been released by the Vatican. The 104-page document is five chapters long - relatively short for an encyclical - but is viewed as adequately detailed to cover a comprehensive message.

Like Pope Francis, who completed the work of Benedict XVI on the encyclical *Lumen Fidei*, Pope Leo XIV took up the text of his immediate predecessor for his first major magisterial document. "I am happy to make this document my own - adding some reflections - and to issue it at the beginning of my own pontificate," Pope Leo stated at the beginning of the text. *Dilexi te* builds on the teaching of Francis' final encyclical which highlighted the "close connection" between the love of God and love for the poor. The missionary pope, who spent half of his time with the poor in Peru, insisted that addressing poverty and its structural causes is a pressing need. He called for widespread changes to the global market system to address rising inequality and to help people living paycheck-to-pay check. Pope Leo stressed the need for urgency because "society needs to be cured of a sickness which is weakening and frustrating it, and which can only lead to new crises". The document calls for action for the many "faces of the poor and of poverty", including "the poverty of those who lack material means of subsistence" or "who are socially marginalised and lack the means to give voice to their dignity and abilities". The pontiff noted the existence of moral, spiritual and cultural poverty alongside the poverty of "those who have no rights, no space, no freedom". He also warned of the emergence of new and sometimes "more subtle and dangerous" forms of poverty. He decried economic "rules" that increase wealth for a few but also increase inequality. The document signals that Pope Leo shares some of the same priorities of Francis, who shunned many of the trappings of the papacy and frequently criticised the global market system as not caring for society's most vulnerable people.