

# **Pope Leo XIV decries violence against women, appeals for respect of equal dignity**

By [Elise Ann Allen](#) in [cruxnow.com](#)

Pope Leo XIV gave a shout-out to women everywhere and called for an end to femicide and gender-based violence on Sunday, International Women's Day.

Speaking during his March 8 Sunday Angelus address on International Women's Day, the pope issued an appeal "for the recognition of the equal dignity of men and women."

"Unfortunately, many women, since infancy, are still discriminated against and undergo various forms of violence. My solidarity and prayer go out to them in a special way," he said.

In his reflection on the day's Gospel reading, which recounted Jesus's encounter with a Samaritan woman at a well, Leo noted that Jesus's disciples were shocked when they returned from looking for good and saw him speaking with a woman, especially a Samaritan.

"According to custom, he ought to have simply ignored that Samaritan woman; instead, Jesus speaks with her, listens to her, and shows her respect – without a hidden agenda and without disdain," the pope said.

Leo noted that many people come to the church seeking this same sensitivity and availability.

"How beautiful it is when we lose track of time in order to give attention to the person we are encountering, as we see in this passage," he said, noting that Jesus himself forgot to eat, because he was so nourished by God's own desire "to reach people on the deepest levels."

The Samaritan woman, then, "becomes the first of many female evangelizers," as her testimony of Jesus spread throughout her village, and many of the "rejected and despised" people there came to know Jesus as a result.

Leo closed urging believers to pray for the grace to serve "those men and women thirsting for truth and justice" as Jesus did.

"This is not the time for opposition between one church and another, between 'us' and 'them': those who worship God seek to be men and women of peace, who worship him in Spirit and in truth," he said.

Also on Sunday, Pope Leo responded to a reader who wrote in to the Piazza San Pietro Magazine, published by St. Peter's Basilica, who asked about violence against women.

The reader, named Giovanna, specifically asked what can be done at a cultural and ecclesial level to stop violence against women, and especially femicide, for which Italy is notorious.

Leo in his response said the issue of violence in relationships, and especially violence against women, has always been “a source of great suffering for me.”

“In a world often dominated by violent thought, we should support ‘feminine genius’ even more – as St. John Paul II called it – the ‘genius of women,’” he said, saying women are “protagonists and creators of an indispensable culture of care and fraternity for giving a future and dignity to all of humanity.”

Wondering aloud, Leo pondered whether women are specifically targeted and killed “because they are a sign of contradiction in this confused, uncertain, and violent society.”

“They point us toward values of faith, freedom, equality, generativity, hope, solidarity, and justice,” he said.

These are important values but which are fought by “a dangerous mentality that infests relationships, producing only selfishness, prejudice, discrimination, and a desire for dominance,” the pope said, and lamented the number of femicides that occur regularly.

“Violence – any violence – is the frontier that divides civilization from barbarism,” he said, saying, “We must never underestimate an act of violence, and we must not be afraid to denounce it, including that climate of justification that seeks to mitigate or deny responsibility.”

To walk together in mutual respect for humanity “is not a dream,” Leo said, but it is rather “the only possible reality for building a world of light for everyone.”

Pope Leo stressed the need to build a stronger educational alliance in combatting a mentality of violence, saying the Church, together with families, schools, parishes, movements, associations, religious orders, and also public institutions must join together and do their part “to prevent and stop violence against women.”

He closed his response saying that to end the cycle of violence begins with the education of the young.

“We must begin by opening everyone’s hearts to say that every person is a human being who deserves respect – that dignity for both man and woman, for everyone,” he said, saying, “We must remove this violence and find a way to shape the mentality; we must be people of peace who wish the best for everyone.”

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