

**Apostolic Journey**

## From Angola, Pope Leo issues a warning against syncretism

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Today marks the eighth day of the apostolic journey to Africa. Yesterday, the Pope spent his second day in Angola, celebrating Mass with 100,000 worshippers in Kilamba. He encouraged the Angolans, saying, "Today, we must look to the future with hope and

build a future of hope. Do not be afraid to do so." He thundered against corruption once again and called for the creation of 'a new culture of justice and sharing' in Angola.

**However, above all, on the esplanade at Kilamba,** the Pope warned against superstition, saying, "We must be vigilant regarding those forms of traditional religiosity that undoubtedly form part of your cultural heritage, but which, at the same time, risk incorporating magical and superstitious elements that hinder spiritual growth." He then appealed to the faithful to remain "faithful to what the Church teaches, trust your Pastors, and keep your gaze fixed on Jesus, who reveals himself particularly in the Word and in the Eucharist".

**After Mass, he prayed the Regina Coeli** and expressed sorrow regarding the recent intensification of attacks against Ukraine, which continue to affect civilians. The Pope also spoke of a 'reason for hope' in the 'ceasefire announced in Lebanon, which represents a glimmer of relief for the Lebanese people and for the Levant'. He encouraged those working towards a diplomatic solution to continue the peace talks and make the cessation of hostilities permanent throughout the Middle East.

**In the early afternoon,** the Pope travelled by helicopter to the shrine of Mama Muxima, a popular Marian pilgrimage site where the image of Our Lady of the Conception is venerated. There, he led the Rosary in the presence of 30,000 faithful.

**However, it was a clarification made by the Pope on the flight** between Cameroon and Angola on Saturday that attracted the attention of global public opinion. Prevost seemed irritated by attempts to interpret his prepared public statements in Africa as responses to jibes directed at him by Donald Trump.

**Shortly after take-off,** the Pope confronted the journalists present about the circulation of 'an inaccurate version of events', caused by 'the political situation that arose when, on the first day of the trip, the President of the United States made certain remarks about me'.

**In short,** the Pope had grown weary of his African tour being portrayed as a ping-pong match with Trump and wanted to make it clear that he had no intention of responding to the president again. He also clarified that he was not referring to Trump when he spoke of a 'world destroyed by a few rulers' in the Cathedral of St Joseph in Bamenda. He explained that his speeches for this trip had been prepared long before Trump started the controversy. The White House's second-in-command, the Catholic JD Vance, welcomed this attempt to defuse the situation, saying he was "grateful to Pope Leo for

these words” because “while the media narrative constantly fuels conflicts — and yes, there have been and will be real disagreements — the reality is often much more complex”.

**Will calm return between Washington and the Vatican?** Meanwhile, today the Pope will depart for Saurimo, where he will visit a care home for the elderly and celebrate Mass in the square. He will then return to Luanda for a meeting with the clergy at Our Lady of Fatima parish.