

The Apostolic Journey to France

Lourdes, the Pope Speaks Out Against Abortion and Euthanasia

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What will be remembered most about Pope Leo XIV's trip to France is the image of the sea of people who filled the Champs-Élysées on Saturday for the Mass at Place de la Concorde. It is a testament to the great vitality of the faith in a country emerging from a

period of intense secularization. The “secular” public was struck by the lines stretching along the avenue of people waiting to go to confession with one of the many priests available during the papal celebration.

After leaving Paris, the Pope prayed in the grotto at Massabielle on Saturday evening and then, yesterday morning, he went to the Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes for a meeting with the French bishops, to whom he spoke about the abuse of minors committed by members of the clergy. He called it a “scourge,” but one to be addressed with “determination” and “courageous measures,” and stated that it is “appropriate to continue along the path we have taken, while maintaining the utmost vigilance.” He also alluded to the abuse in his homily during Mass on the sanctuary’s esplanade, calling on the Church to undergo conversion “to heal from the deep wounds, the infidelities, and the painful missteps committed within its ranks.” “Recognizing our mistakes is essential,” the Pope said on the same day he also met privately with seven victims.

The defense of human life took center stage during the Mass in Lourdes before 150,000 faithful, many of whom were sick. “In the face of current trends that seek to redefine the value of human life in the face of illness, suffering, or old age, the grotto of Massabielle stands as a sanctuary of Christian hope,” the Pope said in his homily, adding that “this land of France challenges our contemporary mindsets” because “here, no form of frailty is rejected” and “your crutches, your wheelchairs, your hidden tears are not obstacles.” For Prevost, “Lourdes is the blessed place of a profession of faith in the beauty and sacredness of life.” This concept was reiterated and reinforced in his greeting to the staff and patients at the Accueil Notre-Dame Center in Lourdes, when the Pontiff affirmed that “the human person is dignified by the mere fact of existing and having eternity as their end” and therefore “their dignity cannot be measured or questioned.”

In a country that has recently enacted legislation on assisted suicide, Leo XIV was explicit and, addressing the sick and disabled directly, said that “the temptation to take life under the pretext of false compassion must be firmly rejected.” The Pope criticized those societies that “tend to look away or close their eyes in the face of the dignity of human life.” Still addressing the sick, Leo reiterated that “no human law should cause you to lose the certainty of your dignity” because “no one has the right—ever—based on laboratory algorithms, to decide the fate of a particular embryo or an elderly person” and “medicine can never become a servant of planned death.”

And further: “You are not a burden; you are the beating heart of our humanity and a precious treasure for the Church.” A speech destined to endure and reinforce the

Church's long-standing position on abortion and euthanasia.

The Pope also spoke about peace in Lourdes and asked that the Rosary be prayed for this intention in October. Before meeting with the victims, Leone also met privately with the cloistered nuns of the Carmelite monastery. Finally, in the evening, there was a recitation of the Rosary and a torchlight procession in the square in front of the shrine. Today, the group departs from Lourdes for their final day in France, in Metz.