

Beat: News

Pope Leo XIV ends his visit to Spain with a strong appeal for human fraternity

Leo XIV calls for fraternity

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USPA NEWS - Pope Leo XIV concluded his apostolic visit to Spain with a strong appeal for human dignity, after meeting with migrants in Tenerife and presiding over a large celebration of the Sacred Heart in Santa Cruz. His departure, marked by an aircraft incident resolved through the intervention of King Felipe VI, closed a day that underscored the urgent need for a fraternity capable of transcending borders.

The final day of Pope Leo XIV's apostolic visit to Spain was marked by an unmistakable message: human dignity recognizes no borders. The Pontiff began the morning at the Las Raíces reception center in Tenerife, where he listened to the testimonies of several migrants who had crossed dangerous routes in search of a possible future. In this facility, which has received more than 54,000 people since 2021, the Pope emphasized that "the love of God knows no limits" and urged Europe to "learn the language of closeness" in the face of the indifference that wounds and dehumanizes. His remarks, delivered in French—the mother tongue of many present—were received with emotion by those who saw in his visit a gesture of recognition. "Your presence today in the Canary Islands is a light for those of us who often have no voice," said Bousso, one of the migrants welcomed at the center.

After the encounter, Leo XIV traveled to the Port of Santa Cruz de Tenerife to preside over Holy Mass on the solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a large celebration that combined island tradition with spiritual symbolism. The cover of the liturgical booklet featured a historic stained-glass window from the Cathedral of La Laguna, evoking devotion to the Heart of Christ and the memory of those who promoted the construction of the cathedral. The altar, dressed with a cloth crafted by the Poor Clare nuns—who also prepared nearly 40,000 hosts for Communion—became the focal point of a carefully prepared liturgy: historic chalices from the cathedral museum, relics of Saint Brother Peter and Saint Joseph of Anchieta, and floral arrangements dominated by the strelitzia, the emblematic "bird of paradise" of the Canary Islands.

The liturgical ministries reflected the diversity of the archipelago: young readers from El Hierro, La Palma, and Tenerife; permanent deacons and seminarians; religious sisters and committed laypeople; and a broad representation of migrants who proclaimed the universal prayers. The offerings, presented by families, faithful in traditional island dress, and members of congregations linked to the charism of Brother Peter, highlighted the communal dimension of the celebration. More than 300 extraordinary ministers distributed Communion from fourteen Eucharistic tents set up throughout the port area, each with its own tabernacle and volunteers carrying white umbrellas as a sign of reverence.

Institutional presence was equally significant. King Felipe VI accompanied the Holy Father during the final events of the day, together with the Minister for Territorial Policy and Democratic Memory, Ángel Víctor Torres; the Minister of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration; and the President of the Canary Islands, Fernando Clavijo. The official farewell at Tenerife North-Ciudad de La Laguna Airport was marked by a technical setback: the Iberia aircraft scheduled to return the Pope to Rome suffered a malfunction that required passengers to disembark while another plane was sent from Madrid. To avoid a prolonged delay, the King placed a Royal Air Force Falcon jet at the Pope's disposal, and Leo XIV ultimately departed for Rome aboard the monarch's aircraft.

With his departure, the apostolic visit to Spain comes to a close, leaving a profound imprint on the archipelago and the country. Leo XIV leaves having drawn attention to the reality of migration, the need for a culture of encounter, and the shared responsibility to safeguard the dignity of every person. His time in the Canary Islands—between testimonies of suffering and celebrations of faith—delivers a message that transcends geography: fraternity is not an abstract ideal but an urgent task for contemporary societies.

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