

O HERALDO

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A moral compass for the AI age

When Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost proclaimed himself Pope Leo XIV on 10 May 2025, his choice of name was a deliberate signal of his mission: to confront artificial intelligence (AI) as a profound threat to human dignity, justice, and labour. By invoking Pope Leo XIII — who in 1891 issued *Rerum Novarum* to address the dehumanising impact of the Industrial Revolution — Leo XIV casts AI as a modern equivalent: a 'new industrial revolution' that risks commodifying humanity. His papal name is not mere homage; it is a clarion call to resist AI's potential to erode what makes us human. Yet, like cloning or nuclear energy, AI's inevitability demands that we harness it responsibly, balancing ethical concerns with its capacity to advance humanity — particularly in medicine and research.

Rerum Novarum responded to a world transformed by mechanised production. While factories created wealth, they also displaced agrarian workers, deepened inequality, and trapped labourers in gruelling conditions. Leo XIII rejected both communism and unfettered capitalism, advocating living wages, trade unions, and the right to family and faith. His ideas reshaped societies, inspiring minimum wage laws in the United States and Catholic labour movements in Mexico. Today, Leo XIV sees AI as a similarly disruptive force. Its algorithms threaten jobs — from translators in European parishes to academics contending with AI-generated essays — while concentrating power in a handful of tech conglomerates.

For individuals, AI provokes inner conflict. Language models promise efficiency but stir unease: is using AI a form of plagiarism? Will it breed laziness or overdependence? Many feel guilt for choosing the "easy route", much like an artist who, after mastering pencil and brush, hesitates to adopt digital tools. Yet artists now create breathtaking works using AI prompts, redefining creativity itself. Still, ethical questions remain: is AI art truly original? For those who've spent decades honing their craft, it can seem unjust that an algorithm might replicate their skill. These dilemmas echo Leo XIV's concerns — that AI reduces labour, seen theologically as a path to self-realisation, to mere automation. The darker aspects of AI deepen these anxieties. Misinformation, spread by AI bots on social platforms, erodes trust and fuels division. Algorithms designed to maximise engagement have been linked to youth mental health crises, intensifying anxiety and isolation. These outcomes reflect Leo XIV's warning that AI risks alienating humanity from its moral compass. Yet AI, like earlier technologies, is part of the arc of progress. Spellcheck didn't destroy writing; Google didn't end curiosity. Each innovation was met with apprehension but ultimately expanded human potential. If guided by intention, an artist's AI prompt can be as valid as a quill.

AI's benefits, importantly, are transformative. In medicine, it speeds up drug discovery and enables personalised treatment. In climate research, AI helps predict environmental shifts and guide mitigation. Historians use AI to restore ancient texts, preserving cultural heritage. These applications align with the Church's call for the common good, as Pope Francis stressed in 2024, when he urged support for a global AI treaty. Leo XIV's mission, rooted in the legacy of *Rerum Novarum*, seeks a third way — neither techno-utopianism nor fearful rejection, but a moral framework in which AI serves humanity.

To support Leo XIV's vision is to defend human dignity while recognising AI's inevitability. Workers must be reskilled to thrive in AI-driven economies. Artists need transparent systems that respect originality. Policymakers must curb misinformation and regulate addictive algorithms — perhaps through the treaty Pope Francis envisioned. The Church's moral voice, with over a billion Catholics, can hold tech giants accountable, just as Leo XIII galvanised resistance to industrial tycoons. But we must shed Frankensteinian fears: AI is no autonomous monster — it is a tool we shape. The doctor using AI diagnostics, the historian re-creating lost manuscripts, the teacher integrating AI ethically — these are acts of stewardship, not surrender.

Leo XIV's papacy, like that of Leo XIII, can be a catalyst for global reform. *Rerum Novarum* helped tame the excesses of industrialisation; today, we need a new vision for the AI era — one that upholds human dignity while embracing progress. From climate scientists to medical researchers, those wielding AI for the common good exemplify this balance. As Leo XIV leads this moral crusade, we must heed his caution — but also seize the moment. AI's future is not preordained. It is ours to shape with intention, ensuring it elevates the human spirit rather than undermines it.

comment



SHANTI MARIA FONSECA

Peace favours the brave: Pak and India must shun war

After millions of lives were lost in the two World Wars of the last century, a world envisioned, "without a war" with the attendant slogan "NEVER AGAIN", became a clarion call world-wide. And ironically such a spirit emerged on the heels of the ghastly events that occurred nearing the end of the Second World War. Not only is a 'war-free' world desirable, it is now necessary if humankind is to survive! The massive destruction of cities in a flash heralded a new age, viz. the nuclear age, whose chief characteristic is: for the first time in the history of civilization, the human race had acquired the technical means to destroy its own species *en masse* thereby potentially rendering them an endangered species. Morality and ethics are at the core of the nuclear issue. We all crave for a world of peace and equity isn't it? But how can we talk about a culture of peace if peace is predicated on the unabashed production and use of weapons of mass destruction by nations?

War, however horrible has always held a strange fascination for man. Questions often asked are: Where will the next war occur? Who will fight it? Why will it occur? How will it be fought? Tensions between India and Pakistan intensified on Wednesday, May 7 after India's armed forces launched strikes against our neighbouring country in response to a militant attack in which terrorists shot dead 26 civilians near Pahalgam on April 22, in an Indian-administered area. This incident triggered a series of reactions including the heightened fear of war between



the two nuclear-armed rivals. Indian-administered Kashmir is a heavily militarised zone. Amid escalating tensions between India and Pakistan, diplomacy failed to find a middle path. The international community, including the Trump administration clearly said that it is not going to get involved in a war that's "fundamentally none of its business". Named Operation Sindoor, it was a clear message to the Indian women who were widowed in Pahalgam's jihadi massacre. In October 1947, the first war over Kashmir broke out when armed Pakistani tribesmen invaded the territory. The monarch of Kashmir had then sought India's assistance to drive out the invading tribesmen. Since then India and Pakistan have fought four major wars. The seeds of the India-Pakistan conflict were sown when their independence from British rule in 1947 was accompanied by

a bloody partition of the Indian subcontinent to create Pakistan.

To live along the Line of Control (LoC) — the volatile *de facto* border that separates India and Pakistan — is to exist perpetually on the razor's edge between a fragile peace and open conflict. It is a quiet reminder of how fragile peace is, when your window opens to a battlefield. Families on the LOC are subject to Indian and Pakistani whims and face the brunt of heated tensions. India and Pakistan share a 3,323 Kms (2,064 mile) border, including the 740 km-long LOC and the International Border (IB) spanning roughly 2,400kms. Each time firing resumes, many are thrust into bunkers, peoples' livestock and livelihood are lost, infrastructure such as homes, hospitals, schools, roads and water bodies are damaged. The vulnerability and volatility experienced has grave repercussions for their everyday lives. The LoC carved out by India and Pakistan, and militarisation and weaponisation, was done without taking the Kashmiris into confidence. Days after India and Pakistan agreed to a ceasefire, questions now remain over what lies ahead for the two South Asia neighbours. We hear the grim statements: "water and blood cannot flow together, terror and talks cannot happen together!"

Terrorists should know there's no place to hide from their heinous crimes. Besides taking immediate action, India was burdened with the ever more complex task of ending the regular cycle of attacks from Pakistan. It is time for Pakistan's Bonsai 'democracy' to take some deeper roots. Witnessing the agony and pain of the victims, the bombing of infrastructure and the needless loss of life which resulted due to the recent conflict, we need to ask: why does man feel the need to revel in his animalistic tendencies every now and then? Why do human beings find it difficult to live in peace with one another? Between 1740 and 1897, there were 230 wars and revolutions in Europe, and during this period countries were almost bankrupting themselves with their military expenditure. The death toll from these wars rose sharply. And 30 million people died in all the wars between 1740 and 1897. The estimates of the number of dead in the First World War range from 5 million to 13 million and a staggering 50 million people died during the Second World War!

In the course of many thousands of years, the human species has undoubtedly and painstakingly crafted a great civilization, developed a rich and variegated culture, has accumulated enormous treasures in arts and literature and it has also created the magnificent edifice of science. It is indeed a supreme irony that the very intellectual achievements of humankind have readily provided the tools of self-annihilation of its civilization, culture and life itself. Must we allow this to happen? As cognitive beings it is our paramount duty to preserve human life and

ensure the continuity of the human race: that is the least of the debt we owe to humankind. There are no periods in history that have been free from war. Much of the recorded history has also been filled with imperial or colonial occupations, where a powerful nation used force to rule over other nations. Independent India has been known not to invade another country or carry out acts of terror on our neighbours. But when there is infiltration, killing and strident attacks on its territory, what does one do? Either stay quiet or retaliate with adequate force in order to protect its people and territory?

A world without war: is it desirable? Is it feasible? Are we going to base our world on a culture of peace or a culture of violence? Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein tried to warn governments and the public in a statement which has become known as the Russell-Einstein Manifesto. As members of the human species they asked: Do we put an end to the human race, or shall mankind renounce war?" According to Lorenz, humans engage in warfare and derive pleasure from violence because war allows the release of pent-up frustrations resulting from the unnatural suppression of an instinct that is natural. So can we dare to hope for peace on earth? Our world today is in a deep prolonged crisis. The threat of global nuclear war, the ongoing local wars, the imperiled environment, mass starvation, destitution and homelessness are evidence to the prevailing crisis. In such a situation how can we persuade the young generation to cast aside the culture of violence and embrace the values and trappings of peace?

While this article is being written, one does not fail to notice that the conflict between India and Pakistan has not abated and continues to simmer. Take a look at the social media platforms of both the countries to understand the depth of mistrust and hate between the two nations and its governments. There is no guarantee that this tenuous ceasefire will endure. The stalemate in the relationship between India and Pakistan continues to haunt both the nations and its people. The recent war it appears has not served the objective of ensuring lasting peace. Despite public posturing by several world leaders condemning the Pahalgam terrorist attack and expressing solidarity with India, one sadly noticed that India was all alone in its fight against terrorism. Pakistan on the other hand had the tacit support of a number of countries including China who publicly declared its support to Pakistan. While we search for answers beneath the huge pile of rubble left by the recent Indo-Pak war, Truth eludes the concerned citizens who are scrutinising the anatomy of the Indo-Pak 'cease-fire'. Who was the architect of this so-called sudden truce between India and Pakistan?

(The writer a social scientist and is a senior practising criminal lawyer)

people's edit

COMPASSION: A MANY-SIDED EFFORT

ANANTHA PADMANABHAN

The bustling chaos of the flower market surrounded me — the persistent calls of vendors, the rich tapestry of colours. I was there to get fresh flowers for an ensuing function.

Then, a sudden, violent sound ripped through the air. A swanky car, driven likely speeding in a no-entry area, had crashed into a small handcart. The impact sent a kaleidoscope of marigolds, roses, and other bright blooms scattering across the dusty ground.

The driver emerged from his vehicle, his immediate concern solely for his car, showing no sign of remorse as he carelessly chucked a wad of cash towards the boy. However, seeing the boy's rejection of his insulting offer, the driver slapped him.

A gasp escaped my lips, and several nearby vendors and shoppers, drawn by the sound and the unfolding injustice, turned towards the commotion.

The boy, though clearly hurt and momentarily stunned by the unexpected violence, stood his ground, a flash of anger briefly igniting in his eyes.

He tried to speak, a protest forming on his lips, but the driver, his face twisted with rage at being challenged, smacked him again.

Sensing the shifting expressions of the small crowd gathering around the blatant abuse and the potential for intervention, the driver quickly hopped into his car and sped off, leaving behind the wreckage.

Instinctively, I stepped forward and said, "Let me help you out. I'll buy most of what's left."

The boy, his eyes still reflecting the shock of the crash, replied, "Uncle, please only buy what you actually need. I am here to sell, not seek charity."

I enquired further, wanting to understand his point of view. "Are you sure, my boy? This looks like it was your entire stock."

He explained quietly, "My dad's not well. I've been selling flowers for him this past week. I've had to skip school to do it."

Wanting to ease his burden while respecting his dignity, I picked out the flowers I needed and offered to pay a fair price.

He refused any extra money beyond the actual cost of the flowers I had chosen. "Keep the rest, uncle," he insisted, pushing back the extra notes I offered, his small hand surprisingly firm.

This simple interaction, tragically punctuated by the driver's callous violence and yet brightened by the boy's unwavering integrity, became a profound lesson.

True compassion isn't merely about the act of giving; it's fundamentally about recognising and respecting the inherent dignity and worth of each person, acknowledging their struggles whilst also honouring their self-respect.

Faced with loss, violence, and hardship, this young boy refused to compromise his honesty or accept charity beyond what was fair, embodying a deeper understanding of self-worth. His resilience, shining through his weary eyes even after the assault, really struck me.

This experience reminded me that true compassion isn't rooted in pity or being condescending; rather, it lies in recognising the inherent strength and perseverance within every individual. Proper support, I realised, empowers others whilst also upholding their dignity, allowing them to maintain their sense of self in the face of adversity.

Compassion is clearly a many-sided effort, requiring us to step beyond our own perspectives and truly empathise — understanding their struggles, appreciating their resilience, and recognising that every individual, regardless of their circumstances, is inherently worthy and deserves our respect and dignity.

Pausing to truly see others and acting with compassion, acknowledging their needs and inherent worth, is vital in our fast-paced world. It fosters connection and creates positive impact.

Navigating the nuclear debate

The proposal for a nuclear power plant would change the dynamics of Goa's serene coastline, lush forests, and cultural heritage which has long been its defining identity. Now, this delicate balance faces a looming challenge. While Union Power Minister Khattar's vision may aim at energy security, the risks and repercussions cast a long shadow over Goa's pristine landscape. The state thrives on its natural abundance, from its rich biodiversity to its clean water reserves. A nuclear power plant would introduce complexities of waste disposal, radiation concerns, and land acquisition — posing irreversible damage to the state's ecological foundation.

With lessons from nuclear accidents like Chernobyl and Three Mile Island still fresh in global memory, Goa cannot afford to gamble with its future. India currently operates eight nuclear power plants with an installed capacity of 8,080 MW. However, the shift toward renewables is gaining momentum.

letterstotheeditor

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Goa, heavily reliant on the Karnataka-Maharashtra energy grid, could benefit from hydro, solar, and wind alternatives instead. A Dudhsagar hydro run-off project offers a feasible, cost-effective solution, reducing dependence on external power sources while maintaining environmental harmony. Energy pricing is another contentious issue. Periodic tariff hikes strain household budgets. Investing in renewables could stabilise costs over time, sparing Goan families from unpredictable price surges while ensuring a clean and sustainable energy supply. The nuclear debate is not just about power — it's about safeguarding Goa's identity, economy, and environment.

Everette Assis Telles, Margao

Stop road digging, fill up open trenches

The Public Works Department

(PWD) has banned new road digging across the state from May 15 until the end of the monsoon. This ban is aimed at preventing further deterioration of roads during the heavy rains. The directive clearly applies only to new digging works. Projects that are already in progress will reportedly go on since they were approved earlier and are time-bound. It would have been in the fitness of things to approve only projects which can be completed before May 15. It is a fact that halting the work midway is not feasible. Some projects which require road digging may continue well beyond the date when the ban will come into effect. As a result the ban will serve very little purpose.

In Goa, it is observed that roads which have been repaired are being re-dug ostensibly for some other work. Open trenches pose danger for road users and pedestrians. Hence it is vital to cover the dug up areas much

before the onset of monsoon. It is learnt that a 32-year-old man from Oxel-Siolim sustained injuries after his two-wheeler plunged into a deep trench at an ongoing roadside work site near Marna-Siolim on Wednesday. The victim suffered injuries to his head and hand and had a providential escape. It is learnt that the area was inadequately lit and lacked proper warning signs and barricades thereby creating a hazardous environment for road-users. All road-digging work for underground cabling work needs to be suspended well before the onset of monsoon.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Faking the Frontlines

As tensions flared between India and Pakistan since April 2025 following clashes along the Line of Control, both countries witnessed an increase in media mis-

information that blurred facts.

Social media, especially Instagram Reels, became a hot-spot for misinformation. A reel showing a Pakistani F-16 crash was actually footage from a 2022 US air show, while another clip claimed to show Kashmiri protests in April 2025 but was traced back to 2016. A bombing originally from Gaza was falsely circulated as an Indian airstrike on Pakistan.

Claims that Pakistan had taken down India's S-400 missile system, along with rumours of an Indian female officer being captured and detained by Pakistani forces, further fueled the spread of misinformation.

The flood of unverified reports, falsified visuals and conflict-fueled headlines on both sides only highlights a growing crisis: Social media as a weapon rather than a guardian of truth. Such reporting not only misguides the public but also escalates tensions between nuclear-armed nations. As the conflict continues to unfold, upholding truth is high necessary to avoid further harm.

Stesha Pereira, by email