



Pope: Church must help broken families heal from drug abuse

Meeting with the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, Pope Leo XIV encourages the Church in Latin America to accompany families that undergo the pain of substance abuse, violence, or poverty.



By Devin Watkins, Vatican News (article published on Vatican News on Thursday, August 27, 2026)

Pope Leo XIV met on Thursday with participants in a meeting promoted by the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, which focused on the topic “Addiction in Latin America.”

In his address, the Pope greeted the many people from faith-based centers who work for the accompaniment, prevention, recovery, and integration of young people affected by drugs.

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Reflecting on the impact of substance abuse, he noted that “suffering and hope know no borders,” as attendees hailed from Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas.

Pope Leo then pointed to four “bridges” that converged at the meeting, representing four paths of cooperation.

First, he said, the Church works closely with international organizations in order to combat the abuse of drugs.

He noted the Commission's collaboration with the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops' Council (CELAM), saying they help train people for faith-based community organizations.

Second, the Pope said science and faith form another bridge, since the Church does not want to compete with neuroscience, psychiatry, or public health.

"Rather, she seeks to shed the light of the Gospel upon it through an integral understanding of the human person," he said.

Third, the Church serves as a bridge between all continents, as people with common goals come together to "share their suffering, hopes, and pastoral enthusiasm."

Fourth, the Church and other ecclesial communities employ faith as a common language with which to practice concrete love for those who suffer from addiction.

Pope Leo went on to highlight the centrality of the family, calling it the "domestic Church" which runs through every aspect of efforts to combat substance abuse.

The family, he said, "is the place where life is nurtured, cared for and given direction. There is no better protection against drugs than a good family." As Pope Francis said, the Church seeks to "touch human misery, to touch the suffering flesh of others."

"Today," lamented Pope Leo, "we witness the suffering of many broken families, whether because of drug use, violence, the criminal recruitment of a child, poverty, or the lack of opportunities that pushes people to the margins."

In conclusion, Pope Leo XIV encouraged the work of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America and all those working in the area of addiction.

"May the Church be the family of all those left by the roadside," he said.

"Let us build a Church that stops, draws near, is moved with compassion, anoints wounds, provides nourishment, and becomes a home."