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Pope Leo XIV in Peru Denounces Machismo and Calls for Respect for Women

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"It is sad to see that a machista mentality persists, manifested in the absence of fathers from family life, in abuse and violence against women, ignoring the newness of Christianity, which recognizes and proclaims that both share equal dignity and responsibility,"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

Pope Leo XIV denounced machismo and called for respect for women during his Peru visit on Thursday, 12 November 2026, telling about 40,000 people gathered in Lima's Plaza Mayor to value women and to protect and respect girls. The Pope, who spent eight years as Bishop of Chiclayo before his election, was speaking on the first full day of his return to the country he calls his adopted home. His words drew applause from the crowd outside the Cathedral Basilica of St John the Apostle and Evangelist.

For the women listening in the plaza, this was not a distant lecture. Peru recorded 1,261 victims of femicide between 2016 and 2024, according to the country's National Institute of Statistics and Informatics, and killings of women because of their gender rose 44 percent over that span. The Pope named the wound plainly, in the language Peruvians use for it, and then told the men in the crowd that the faith they profess leaves no room for it.

Pope Leo Peru November 2026: "Let Us Value Women"

The Pope was speaking at a meeting on the challenges and hopes of the Peruvian people, after listening to four testimonies that laid out the country's most pressing concerns: the difficulties facing families, the richness and challenges of cultural diversity, violence and discrimination against women, and the insecurity confronting entrepreneurs and workers. The third testimony, on women's lives, drew the strongest words of the day.

"It is sad to see that a machista mentality persists, manifested in the absence of fathers from family life, in abuse and violence against women, ignoring the newness of Christianity, which recognizes and proclaims that both share equal dignity and responsibility," the Pope said. He added that recognition of human dignity requires the Church and society to effectively promote the presence, respect and participation of women, whose contribution to every sphere of society and the Church is indispensable.

"It pains us to see that violence against women, who could be our grandmothers, mothers, sisters or daughters, continues to be a reality that wounds all of humanity," he said. He noted that women who live in poverty, or who belong to Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, can suffer twice over.

Then he closed the passage with an appeal to every man and woman of goodwill: "Let us value women! Let us protect and respect girls!"

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

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