



[Trump's Feud with Pope Leo XIV and Its Risks of Alienating a Key Voting Bloc of Conservative Catholics](#)

President Trump's unprecedented attacks against Pope Leo XIV have created a significant cultural and political rift that is fueling deep unease and discomfort among many conservative Catholics. Pope Leo XIV – the first American-born pontiff – has been a vocal critic of the current administration's military actions in Iran and has recently drawn the ire of Trump. The American president's personal insults against the Pope and his use of blasphemous messianic imagery have garnered heavy criticism from Catholic advocacy groups. These have been seen by many as a sharp deviation from the high levels of respect typically afforded to the papacy by leaders from around the world. All of this has led analysts to speculate that the rift risks dampening Republican turnout among more traditionally conservative-leaning Catholics in the upcoming 2026 midterm elections.

The questionable nature of the Trump administration's military actions and rhetoric in Iran has prompted Pope Leo XIV – like many others – to speak out against this. In turn, Trump's attacks against the Pope and his posting this week of an AI-generated image depicting himself in a Christ-like form have sparked intense backlash. Prominent conservative allies have condemned these as blasphemous and outrageous, arguing that they cross a line by on the one hand attacking a highly revered religious figure and on the other equating the president with Jesus Christ. On top of the near across-the-board denunciation that they have garnered, observers also highlight the significant risks of political fallout as a result of them as well. Conservative and moderate Catholics were a key demographic in Trump's electoral triumphs and form a considerable chunk of his political base. In fact, Trump won a significant majority of this demographic back in the 2024 presidential election, securing 55% of the Catholic vote.

Trump's attacks against Pope Leo XIV are made potentially even more damaging considering that the latter is the first American-born pontiff. Given that he was born and raised on the South Side of Chicago, his legitimate critiques of the president's actions carry weight and relatability among many Americans, let alone Catholics in particular. As the first American to lead the global Catholic Church, Pope Leo XIV is a source of immense national pride for the more than 50 million Catholics across the United States. Experts note that his background provides him with a unique credibility among much of the American electorate, with Trump's

attacks being viewed as especially egregious and forcing even some of the president's most loyal conservative allies to publicly defend the Pope.

For his part, Pope Leo XIV has conveyed that he has no fear of the Trump administration and declared that the Catholic Church is meant to encourage peace – and therefore, he will continue to speak out against unnecessary war and aggression. The Pope has remained undeterred, insisting that his message of "disarmed peace" is rooted in the Gospel rather than politics. As the Trump administration continues to navigate the Iran war and the immense levels of criticism that it has brought about, the Pope's response to Trump's offensive and personal attacks signals a papacy that will continue to prioritize its role as a global moral authority. Ultimately, the back-and-forth between Trump and Pope Leo XIV has risked fracturing yet another notable segment of the population as a result of opposition to the Iran war. Many within the president's base were already disenchanted with the highly criticized war efforts, and now, Trump's feud with the Pope has exacerbated this even further. The attacks on the Pope are likely to alienate a demographic that has been integral to Trump's past successes at a time when Republicans are already facing the threat of serious electoral losses in the lead up to the upcoming 2026 midterms.