

Pope Leo Sparks Outrage by Invoking 'Our Lady of Africa' Over Ceuta Migrant Crisis

Pope Leo XIV on Sunday voiced concern over a chaotic migrant surge into Spain's North African enclave of Ceuta and called for solutions through the intercession of Our Lady of Africa.

"I am following with concern the alarming situation in Ceuta, praying to God that, through the intercession of Our Lady of Africa, solutions may be found to bring peace, stability and justice," the pope said after reciting the Angelus.

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– Pope Leo XIV (@Pontifex) August 2, 2026

Tens of thousands of people, mostly young Moroccan men, crossed into the Spanish city of about 85,000 residents in late July, overwhelming border controls. Dozens died in the crush and drownings before most returned to Morocco.

The pope's measured language and Marian appeal drew sharp criticism online.

Evolutionary psychologist and author Gad Saad posted on X: "You repeatedly claimed that the West needs to be kind and empathetic, and allow entry to millions of people who hate Christianity and Judaism. Now you are alarmed?"



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Political and cultural commentator Mike Cernovich highlighted Vatican descriptions of the events as a "major migration emergency," while others labeled the influx an invasion and faulted the pope for not urging firmer defense of the territory.

Our Lady of Africa is a Catholic title for the Virgin Mary, linked to a 19th-century basilica shrine in Algiers, Algeria, that serves as a center of Marian devotion in North Africa.

Many non-Catholics, particularly Protestants, outright reject the practice of seeking the intercession of Mary or the saints, viewing prayer directed to anyone other than God as unbiblical and a form of idolatry.

James Lasher, a seasoned writer and editor at Charisma Media, combines faith and storytelling with a journalism background from Otterbein University and ministry experience in Guatemala and at the LA Dream Center. A Marine Corps and Air Force veteran, he is the author of *The Revelation of Jesus: A Common Man's Commentary* and a contributor to Charisma magazine. For interviews and media inquiries, please contact media@.