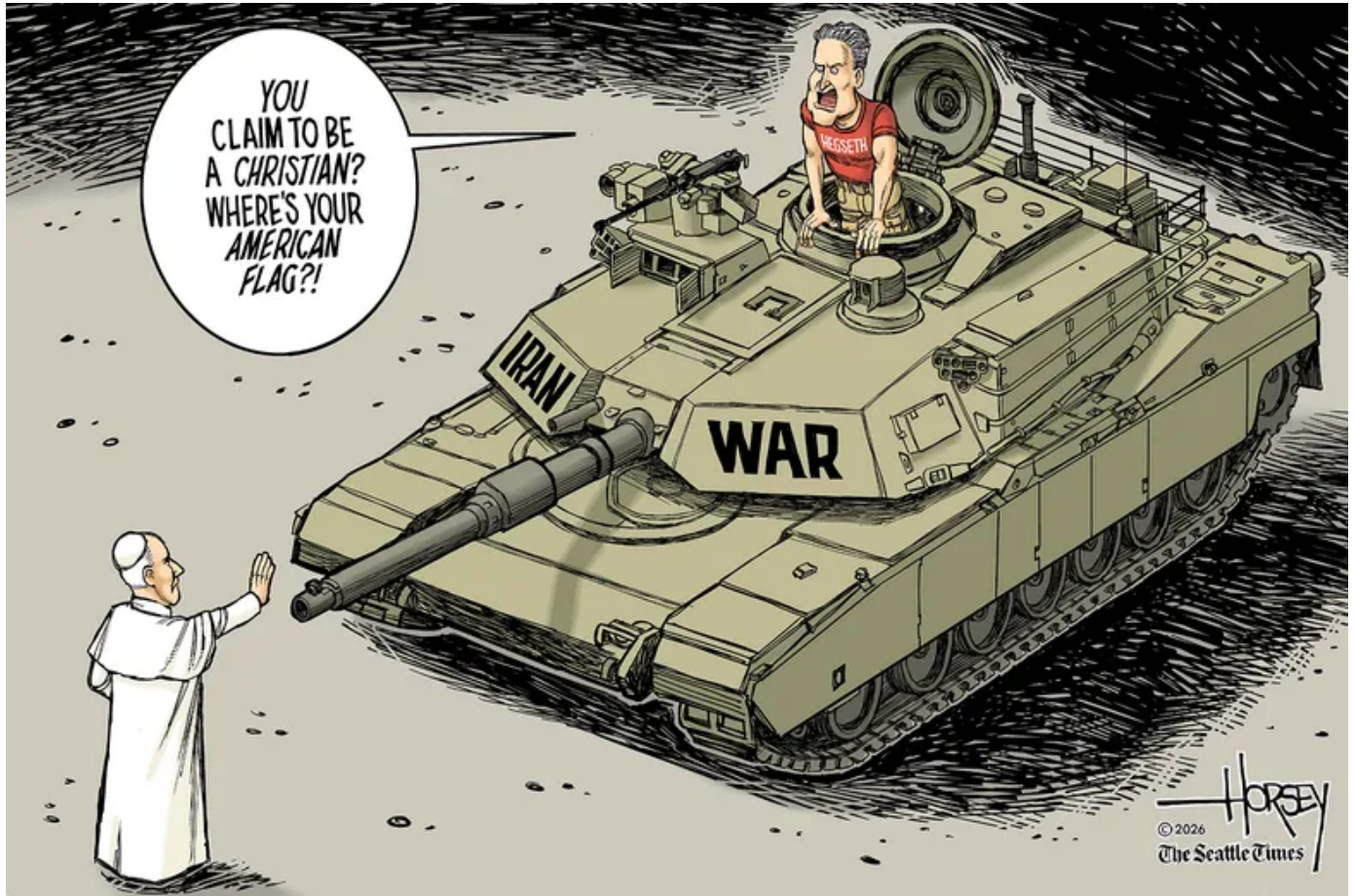


## The pope schools the 'secretary of war'

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By  
[David Horsey](#)  
Seattle Times cartoonist

This year's Holy Week brings us two competing visions of Jesus Christ; one from a very traditional source, Pope Leo XIV, and one from the self-labeled secretary of war, Pete Hegseth.

[Hegseth is an active member of a church that promotes Christian nationalism](#), the movement that asserts that the United States is a Christian nation in which Christians should dominate all sectors of society, from government and academia to business and culture. Hegseth has added to that his own spin that owes as much to the wrathful God of the Old Testament – or, perhaps, Conan the Barbarian – as it does to the young rabbi from Nazareth.

In the most recent monthly worship service that he leads at the Pentagon, Hegseth offered up a prayer for the U.S. troops battling Iran: "Let every round find its mark against the enemies of righteousness and our great nation," Hegseth prayed. "Give them wisdom in every decision, endurance for the trial ahead, unbreakable unity, and overwhelming violence of action against those who deserve no mercy."

On Palm Sunday, [the Pope offered a distinctly different message to the world, implicitly condemning both Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine and U.S. President Donald Trump's attack on Iran](#): "Brothers and sisters, this is our God: Jesus, King of Peace, who rejects war, whom no one can use to justify war. He does not listen to the prayers of those who wage war, but rejects them, saying: 'Even though you make many prayers, I will not listen: your hands are full of blood.'"

Pope Leo is backed by 2,000 years of Christian tradition, but Hegseth is empowered by something more personal: He doesn't mind having blood on his hands.

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