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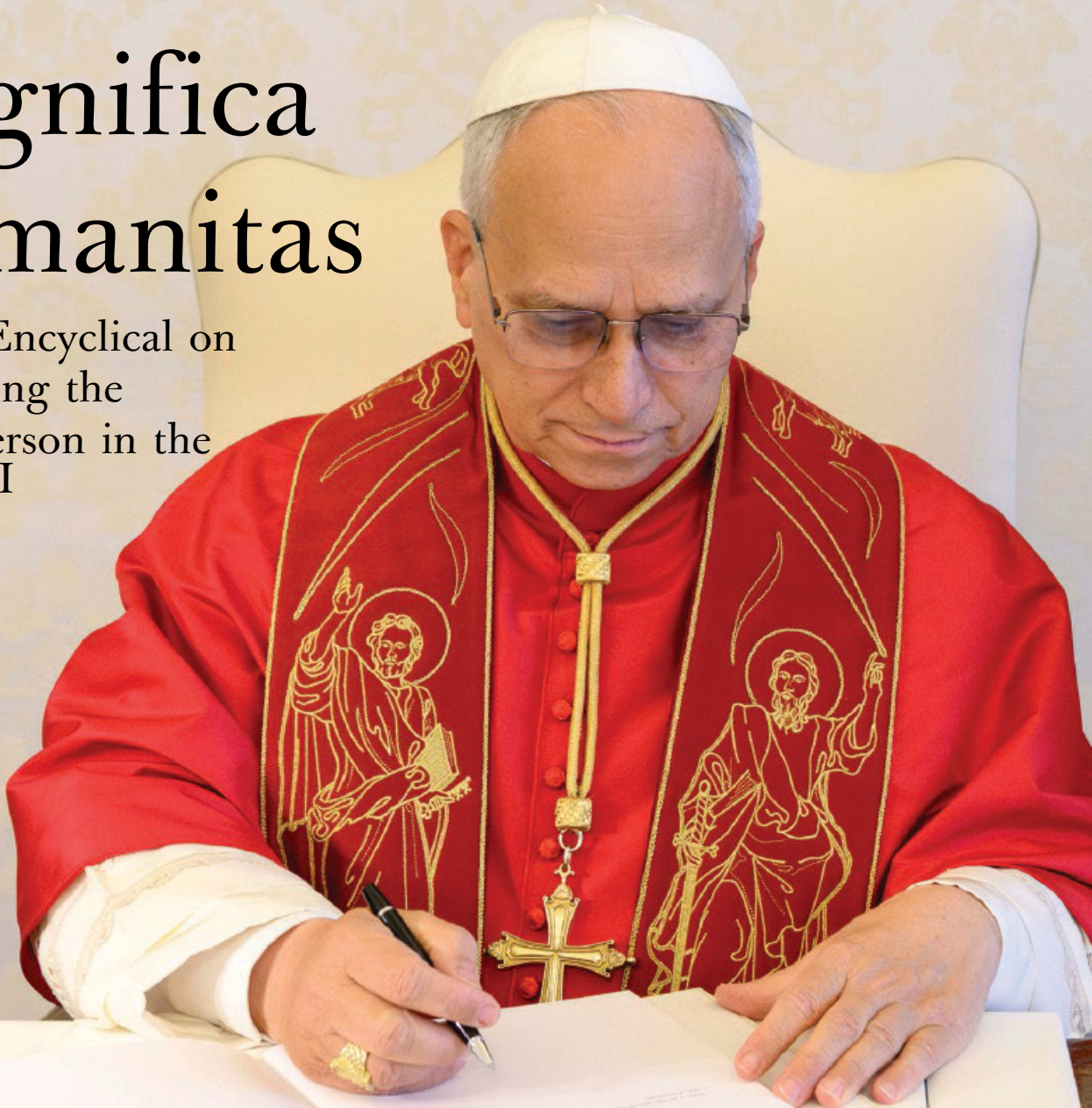


L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

ENGLISH EDITION

Magnifica Humanitas

His First Encyclical on
Safeguarding the
Human Person in the
Time of AI



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Dealing with AI's Ugly 'Character'

By ANDREA MONDA

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is like bringing a fictional character to life. This is what Christopher Olah, co-founder of Anthropic, said on Monday, 25 May, in his speech during the presentation of Pope Leo XIV's Encyclical "*Magnifica Humanitas*".

More precisely: "AI systems are not engineered the way a bridge or an airplane is engineered. We understand an airplane because we designed every part of it and we understand the physics that act on it. AI models are not like that. They are grown, on a structure modeled after the brain, on an enormous inheritance of human thought and speech. And what has grown is far more subtle, odd, and beautiful than science fiction prepared us for. They are not the cold, calculating robots we were promised. They are made from us, from our words – and, as the Holy Father observes, they remain in important ways mysterious even to those of us who train them". He continued: "If it helps, one way I sometimes describe it: it is a little like bringing a fictional character to life. And now we're entering an extraordinary world where those fictional characters speak to us, do work, have jobs. This clearly raises questions beyond computer science. The machinery that makes this possible is the work of math and programming and science. But what character we choose, how it interacts with the world, how it ought to interact with the world – these are more clearly questions for the humanities, for religion, for philosophy, for society at large".

AI may have been invented by computer engineers, but now we need everyone's help – first and foremost that of humanists, theologians and philosophers, and especially that of poets and writers, given that it is precisely the relationship between the author and the character that is being highlighted. AI is quite a character: very promising and, inevitably, very menacing. Indeed, to many it already appears as a rebellious entity, one that will escape the control of its 'creator' – like the human being did with the Creator. In short, this AI is *all too human*, to quote Nietzsche. But the Pope reminds us that before worrying about how human AI is, we should worry about how human we ourselves are, and about safeguarding the human, a reality that is

so magnificent and yet so fragile.

The issue, then, is one of responsibility: not only that of the users – the 'readers' of AI – but even more so that of the 'authors', those who design and 'shape' the various platforms, which are never neutral. And here we return to our starting point: the creative act, that moment when an author invents a fictional character. What happens at that moment? Is there, from start to finish, absolute control of the former over the latter? Yes and no. Writers, and indeed Catholic writers, such as Tolkien and Flannery O'Connor – the former is cited by the Pope in the Encyclical – tell us that characters and stories are not created "at a desk"; rather, there is a mystery that escapes the trade, such that the characters eventually take on a life of their own and it is they who move the story forward, whilst the writer can only watch and discover, alongside them, where that story is taking them. A great writer like Conrad said an author writes only half of the book; the other half is by the reader. But what of the author remains, inevitably, in the character? Perhaps the original, indelible imprint is the character's nature. We may find a better understanding in the reflections of a writer who penned interesting essays on theology as well as on the themes of writing and reading: C. S. Lewis, who, in his "Miracles", states that "God's creative freedom is to be conceived as the freedom of a poet: the freedom to create a consistent, positive thing with its own inimitable flavour. Shakespeare need not create Falstaff: but if he does, Falstaff *must* be fat. God need not create this Nature. He might have created others, He may have created others. But granted *this* Nature, then doubtless no smallest part of her is there except because it expresses the character He chose to give her. ... The *quality* of Nature is present in them all just as the Latinity of Latin is present in every inflection or the 'Correggiosity' of Correggio in every stroke of the brush. Nature is by human (and probably by Divine) standards partly good and partly evil. We Christians believe that she has been corrupted. But the same tang or flavour runs through both her corruptions and her excellences. Everything is in character. Falstaff does not sin in the same way as Othello. Othello's fall bears a close relation to his virtues".

Everything is a matter of 'character', even AI. Falstaff *must* be fat. So, what must AI be like?



Remaining Human in the Age of Algorithms

Our Editorial Director reflects on Pope Leo XIV's first Encyclical 'Magnifica Humanitas', in which the Pope calls for technology to advance without causing the human heart to regress.

By ANDREA TORNIELLI

In the age of artificial intelligence, with human dignity in danger of being obscured by enormous concentrations of technological power beyond all control, and by new forms of dehumanization, Pope Leo XIV recalls us to the “urgent need” to remain deeply human.

The Successor of Peter invites us to let technology advance “without allowing the heart to regress”, even amid our times filled with polarization and violence, which see the expansion of a “culture of power” and war rehabilitated as an instrument of international politics.

He invites us to accept the limits and fragility of humanity and not to consider them an error to be corrected, as technocratic ideology does. The Pope urges us to look at the world not from the viewpoint of the powerful, but from below, through the eyes of those who suffer, beginning with the least.

We must gaze upon humanity, he says, through the eyes of God, who took our weakness upon Himself and transformed it into a place of salvation, because “even when machines excel in efficiency, a human face that asks to be gazed upon remains the center of our history”.

Magnifica Humanitas – Pope Leo XIV's first Encyclical – is not primarily an analytical text

on artificial intelligence, nor does it enter into the details of processes that are constantly evolving.

Rather, it is a “*summa*” that applies the principles of the Social Doctrine of the Church to our time of AI, consolidating and updating the key points of the papal magisterium.

It is a text that puts an end to the misunderstanding of those who, trusting in the absolute freedom of markets and new technologies, tend to dismiss the teaching of the Popes on the need for shared human governance of AI, integral ecology, economic structures that become “structures of sin”, and the rejection of war.

Pope Leo XIV, who took his name from Pope Leo XIII, who authored *Rerum Novarum*, invites each of us in this time of digital revolution to take on an active role. The building of the “civilization of love”, he says, is achieved through small and tenacious acts of fidelity capable of stemming dehumanization. This task concerns us all intimately, he says.

Pope Leo reminds us that “injustices do not arise solely from the wrong choices of individuals, but also from structures, mechanisms and economic and cultural systems that produce inequality”, and that “development is not truly human if it increases consumption for some while shifting costs and burdens onto others, or relegates entire regions to subordinate roles”.

Unfortunately, this is already happening today in the field of new technologies and the resources they require.

The Encyclical states that the principle of private property bears “an indispensable societal role” and is upheld by the Church. “Today,



among the goods that are universally intended for everyone, we must also include new forms of property, such as patents, algorithms, digital platforms, technological infrastructure and data”, in order to prevent new forms of exclusion and deprivation of freedom from arising or becoming entrenched.

Technology, he says, is not a simple tool; when it becomes the standard by which everything is judged, “it begins to dictate what matters and what can be discarded”, reducing “human beings to mere cogs in a system driven toward ever greater efficiency”.

Today, he notes, control over platforms, infrastructure, data, and computing power “does not rest with States, but with major economic and technological actors”. These companies, he says, set the conditions for access, the rules of visibility, and the very possibility of participation.

“When such power is concentrated in the hands of a few”, says the Pope, “it tends to become opaque and evade public oversight, increasing the risk of distorted forms of development that give rise to new dependencies, exclusions, manipulations, and inequalities”.

Reaffirming the need to move beyond the “just war” theory, Pope Leo calls for the use of artificial intelligence in warfare to be subjected to the strictest ethical constraints, because “no algorithm can make war morally acceptable”.

Artificial intelligence has become a decisive element in shaping public opinion through the manipulation of images and content, making it increasingly difficult to distinguish truth from falsehood.

There are also many unknowns regarding the labor market. In this regard, the encyclical recalls that it is no longer possible to rely solely on the “invisible hand” of the market.

Political systems have the task of guiding economic and technological dynamics toward the common good, promoting dignified work, social inclusion, and a fair distribution of the benefits of innovation.

Remaining human, governing processes, and avoiding monopolies that end up increasing the power of a few at the expense of the lives of many: this is the path indicated by the Pope which does not raise barricades, nor does it reject the use of AI outright.

On the contrary, Pope Leo points out the many positive aspects and many useful applications of AI. At the same time, he explains, it is not enough to ask an ethical question about the good or bad purpose for which AI is used.

It is essential, he says, to intervene earlier, and to ask how a system is designed and what idea of the person and of society is inscribed in the data and models that guide it.

For this reason, he calls for adequate legal frameworks, independent oversight, user education, and above all, “a political system that does not abdicate its responsibility”.

Otherwise, says Pope Leo XIV, change will be governed only by technocratic logic and will be presented as “necessary and inevitable”, ultimately imposing rules dictated by those who possess the data, infrastructures, and computing power.

Pope Leo therefore says we must “disarm” AI – that is, discredit “the assumption that technical power automatically confers the right to govern”.

We must do so, he says, not in order to renounce technology, but to prevent it from dominating humanity and open it up for discussion.

Rather than abdicate our humanity, we must “bear witness to the grandeur of humanity, in which God has made his dwelling”.

POPE LEO XIV'S ADDRESS AT THE PRESENTATION OF 'MAGNIFICA HUMANITAS'

Artificial Intelligence Needs to Be Disarmed

The following is the English text of the Pope's address during the presentation of his Encyclical Letter, 'Magnifica Humanitas', at the Vatican on Monday, 25 May. Among the speakers at the presentation were Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State; Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith; Cardinal Michael Czerny, S.J., Prefect of the Di-

castery for Promoting Integral Human Development; Christopher Olah, co-founder of Anthropic and head of research on AI interpretability; Professor Anna Rowlands, theologian at Durham University in the United Kingdom; and Professor Léocadie Lushombo, professor of political theology and Catholic social thought at the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University in California.

Dear brothers and sisters,
I want to thank all of you for being here today, for your interest. I sincerely thank those who have organized this meeting today, and especially those who shared their competence and experience in the different reflections that we have listened to.

In a special way I would like to thank Mr Olah for accepting our invitation. In turn, in the name of the Church, I accept your invitation to walk together, to listen and to speak and together to find the way for humanity, in this time of artificial intelligence.

What a great sign of hope that, with our differences, we can listen to one another. This interchange clearly bespeaks the gravity of the moment, as

well as confidence that, together, we can discern the major questions of our time, and so, the future of humanity.

At key moments in history, the Church is called to decipher the “new things” in the light of the Gospel and the dignity of the human being. One hundred thirty-five years ago, my venerable predecessor Leo XIII observed the situation of factory workers, their families uprooted and new forms of poverty generated by rapid industrial transformation. He understood that the Church could not remain distant. Within an epochal turning point menacing human dignity, the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* spoke its evangelical and social word about “new things” underway.

Today we find ourselves fac-

ing a transformation of similar magnitude, with perhaps even greater consequences. Artificial intelligence already touches many areas of our lives and affects decisions that shape human coexistence. It is also dramatically changing how war is waged.

Like the earlier “Leo,” I feel entrusted to look upon another huge transformation with eyes of faith, with lucidity of reason, with openness to mystery, and with cries of the poor and the earth resounding in my heart.

Magnifica Humanitas was born from listening like Leo XIII did. I have listened to scientists and engineers who work with sincere enthusiasm on technologies capable of alleviating immense suffering; to political leaders and public officials who have perseveringly



sought just rules; to parents and teachers who are deeply concerned for the future of younger generations.

Other, very troubling voices have also reached me about increasingly autonomous weapons systems practically beyond any human reach to govern them effectively. I hear very troubling accounts of algorithms that can block access to healthcare, employment and security on the basis of data tainted by prejudice and injustice. And I have heard the silence of those who have no voice when decisions are made – decisions likely to generate new forms of exclusion and suffering.

From this listening matured a disturbing conviction expressed in *Magnifica Humanitas*: artificial intelligence needs to be disarmed. The word is strong, I know, but deliberately chosen because this moment needs words capable of attracting attention, awakening consciences and indicating paths forward for humanity.

The Church has long been

working for nuclear disarmament, aware that every great technical power can affect people's lives and so must be accompanied by adequate moral discernment and public control. Nuclear disarmament remains a service to peace and the dignity of the human family.

In a similar sense, artificial intelligence now demands to be “disarmed,” freed from logics that turn it into an instrument of domination, exclusion and death. Like nuclear energy, it must be at the service of all and of the common good. Decisions about technology must never be separated from conscience and responsibility. “Let us not sleep as others do,” admonished the Apostle Paul, “but let us keep awake” (*1 Thess* 5:6). Such vigilance is necessary today. Peace, not merely the absence of war, is justice at work. But when technology weakens our critical sense, peace itself is at risk.

Disarming, however, is not enough. We must build.

The word “build” reminds

me of my years as a missionary in Peru. In 2017, torrential rains and floods struck the north of the country: many families saw their homes swallowed by mud, and many roads, too. There I learned that rebuilding does not mean simply replacing what has been destroyed. It means repairing bonds, restoring trust, and reawakening hope in the future. Moreover, no one rebuilds alone.

In *Magnifica Humanitas*, I recall the biblical prophet Nehemiah. Before the ruined walls of Jerusalem, he gathers discouraged people to bring about rebirth. The image of walls does not legitimize closures or divisions, but invites each and everyone to do their part. Brick by brick, a more just coexistence takes shape, capable of safeguarding the dignity of all. Nehemiah's effort speaks to our time. Artificial intelligence can be a construction site of history from within a horizon of communion, in which technical progress learns to serve human

life.

“Let each builder choose with care how to build” (1 Cor 3:10) warns St Paul. He does not fear the worksite; rather, he warns against building without solid foundations. Let’s not fear artificial intelligence, but constantly keep the question of the human in play. We cannot be careless with our most powerful technical instruments.

True development, says St Paul VI, always concerns “each man and the whole man.” “Each” means that no person can be left at the margins of digital transformation. “Whole” means that no one can be reduced to productivity, to cognitive performance, or to mere data. The person bears within him- or herself a freedom, an interiority and a vocation to love and worship that no machine can replace or block.

Only with such an integral vision can artificial intelligence be directed toward the common good. Only together – those who design systems and those affected by them, richer countries and poorer ones, institutions and individuals, power centres and peripheries – will we be able to build a future, not for a privileged few, but for the entire human family.

This is the civilization of love of which St Paul VI spoke and which St John Paul II so forcefully proclaimed as a hori-

zon to seek together. It is not a naïve dream. It is a direction. It is the path that Jesus Christ opens within history.

For this reason, the Church wishes, with humility and frankness, to be part of conversations on artificial intelli-



Let’s not fear artificial intelligence, but constantly keep the question of the human in play. We cannot be careless with our most powerful technical instruments.”

gence. We do not possess technical answers, nor do we seek to displace those with expertise. But we bring a wisdom concerning the human that our present time desperately needs: every person is unique and irreplaceable, a free and intelli-



gent subject with a conscience, capable of seeking God, serving one another, caring for our common home.

I therefore invite all members of the Church and of the human family: let us learn to listen to one another, face the present challenges with courage, and cooperate in building a more human and fraternal society.

From this launch of *Magnifica Humanitas*, please take with you a commitment to stay awake and, as “artisans of hope,” to keep on building the worksite of our time. May the Spirit of the Risen Lord Jesus sustain our work together.

I entrust each of you to our Mother Mary. Her *Magnificat* sings of the greatness of God who uplifts the lowly. May she teach us to recognize the true greatness of every man and every woman in loving and serving. May the Lord make fruitful the great enterprise that today we entrust to his grace, letting the civilization of love mature in history.

Upon all of you I heartily invoke God’s blessing.

[Blessing.]

Thank you very much.



Scan QR Code to read the Holy Father’s Encyclical Letter ‘Magnifica Humanitas’

INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR ANNA ROWLANDS ON 'MAGNIFICA HUMANITAS'

A Vital Contribution in the Age of AI

By DEBORAH CASTELLANO LUBOV

“**T**here is not a tomorrow to begin thinking about these issues”. Professor Anna Rowlands, a British theologian and academic at the University of Durham in the United Kingdom, stressed this point in an interview with Vatican News following the release of Pope Leo XIV’s first Encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas: On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence*, presented at the Synod Hall at the Vatican on Monday, 25 May.

Professor Rowlands was among the speakers at the presentation. Speaking to Vatican News on the sidelines of the event, she described the Encyclical as “an absolutely vital contribution” for two principal reasons.

First, she said, humanity is facing a moment of profound urgency regarding the technological issues addressed in the document.

“There is not a tomorrow to begin to think about these issues”, she warned, “because their impact on workplaces, on labour, on immigrants, on families, on political society and on conflicts globally is now, and was yesterday, and will continue tomorrow as well”.

At the same time, she acknowledged that many people feel uncertain or unqualified to engage with questions surrounding artificial intelligence. “There’s a kind of hope that somehow, and the Holy Father says this in the document, that maybe somebody else will think about these

things”, she noted. “But we have to think about them, and we have to think about them together”.

The theologian suggested that one of the central concerns of *Magnifica Humanitas* is ensuring that these questions are not left solely to private spaces shaped primarily by profit rather than by human dig-



nity. “How do we create common spaces”, she asked, “where particularly the voices of the most marginalized, and those most harshly affected by the reality of an algorithmic order, a digital horizon, and an AI world, are heard first?”. The Encyclical, she explained, insists that those voices must be central to any conversation aimed at promoting the common good.

Professor Rowlands also emphasized the Pope’s “unique voice” on the global stage in raising deeper moral and spiritual questions about humanity itself. The Holy Father, she said, challenges society to reflect on fundamental questions: “What do we think human life is? Who are we as human beings? What vision and goal are we aiming for in our humanity and in our lives together?”.

He offers “a very strong set of criticisms”, she continued, “of the false storylines, the false narratives about what it means to be human, particularly those that place power and domination over others, whether in politics, war, conflict, or the economy”.

In contrast to those narratives, Pope Leo proposes what she described as “a rather beautiful vision of a civilization of love”. Professor Rowlands said the Encyclical urges humanity to recover a shared moral imagination, especially “a way of seeing one another and the world that recognizes the inherent value of the human person”. The text, she suggested, warns against transferring human dignity to technological tools or imagining that AI could somehow become “more human” than humanity itself, while simultaneously diminishing our own humanity.

At the same time, Dr Rowlands said, the document is also an invitation. “We need together to build that civilization of love”, she said. “And we only do that through fully living into a sense that we are finite creatures created for love, yearning for justice, and that we create that world together in participation”.

Professor Rowlands concluded by reflecting on *Magnifica Humanitas* within the broader tradition of Catholic social teaching. “*Magnifica Humanitas* is fresh and new because it is addressing AI”, she said, “but it stands within a long tradition of encyclicals focused on industrialization, capitalism, the condition of work, and the meaning of technology for human beings”. The message of Pope Leo XIV’s Encyclical, she suggested, is one that will resonate far beyond the present and will impact generations.



FOLLOWING IN JESUS' FOOTSTEPS



The altar above the Rock of Golgotha, in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre (© Custody of the Holy Land)

On the Rock of Golgotha

‘Stat crux dum volvitur orbis’

By FRANCESCO PATTON

For millions of believers, the place where Jesus was crucified represents the axis around which the world revolves: “The world is nothing in the presence of the cross. Martin, the eleventh general of the Carthusians, gave to his order this device: Stat crux dum volvitur orbis” (cf. V. Hugo, *Les Misérables*, trans. L. Saraz, Garzanti, 2013, II,8,3, p. 682/1839). Calvary is the point where the crucified Christ reconciled humanity with God and broke down the wall of hostility that separated men (cf. *Eph* 2:13-20). The current Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre preserves and protects the most important holy places linked to the mystery of our redemption and, more specifically, the places linked to the crucifixion, death and burial of Jesus Christ and his resurrection. For Eastern Christians, this place is simply the *Anastasis*, the Resurrection. But before reaching the Easter message of the empty tomb (the subject of the next article), we must reflect on the Rock of Golgotha, that is, on the mystery of the cross.

The site's origin: a waste quarry

Modern archaeological research, supported by the studies of the Franciscan Virgilio Corbo (V. Corbo, *Il Santo Sepolcro di Gerusalemme*, FPP,

1981, 3 vols.) and by recent surveys led by Professor Francesca Romana Stasolla's team, has helped us gain a deeper understanding of the history of this site. From the seventh to the first centuries BC, this area was a disused stone quarry located outside the walls of Jerusalem (Corbo, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 29-31). The stone-cutters of the time searched for malaky stone, valuable for its hardness, but precisely at the site of the present-day Calvary, they found a rock of inferior quality, friable and veined. This spur was therefore spared from being cut and abandoned, remaining as an isolated hill.

Over the centuries, the holes left by mining activities were filled with rubble and earth, transforming the area into a suburban necropolis scattered with small agricultural plots. This perfectly explains the description of the Evangelist John: “In the place where he was crucified, there was a garden”. Golgotha, the “place of the skull”, was therefore originally “divided into various properties: one that may have belonged to the government, where crucifixions could also take place; one to a gardener or market gardener, and one where Joseph of Arimathea could have been the owner” (B. Bagatti, “*Golgota, Cranio, Calvario*”, in B. Bagatti – E. Testa, *Il Golgota e la Croce*, FPP, 1978, pp. 24-25; cf. V. Cor-



Franciscans pray before the aedicula containing Christ's tomb in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre
(© Custody of the Holy Land)

bo, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 29-32). The site of crucifixion was therefore a perfect natural setting for Roman executions, which required visible locations close to traffic routes, in order to act as deterrents. Furthermore, Jewish sensibilities dictated that this should take place outside the perimeter of the city walls, in accordance with the practice of stoning to be carried out outside the camp for both blasphemers (cf. *Lev* 24:14) and Sabbath violators (cf. *Num* 15:35-36). The same author of the Letter to the Hebrews, in a sacrificial interpretation of Jesus' death, notes that "for the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood" (*Heb* 13:11-12).

Calvary: the place where the greatest love was manifested

Currently, Calvary is – so to speak – a chapel raised above [the main ground level of] the Basilica. The original mound is incorporated. In fact, starting around 326 AD, Constantine's architects worked to isolate the Sepulchre and the site of the Crucifixion, levelling the entire area and eliminating the artificial fillings and pre-existing pagan temples commissioned by Emperor Hadrian (cf. V. Corbo, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-118, Vol. 1).

Golgotha rock was "carved" and levelled: the surrounding rock was removed, leaving only the central monolith. Today, as one climbs up the steep steps leading to the chapel, one is walking on the very rock where Christ gave his life for us. It was from that height that he invoked forgiveness for his killers (cf. *Lk* 23:34) and welcomed the good thief (cf. *Lk* 23:39-43). It was there that He entrusted us to his Mother and entrusted his Mother to us (cf. *Jn* 19:25-27). He asked for a drink (cf. *Jn* 19:28). He went from feeling abandoned by God (cf. *Mk* 15:34 and *Mt* 27:46) to abandoning himself into the hands of the Father (cf. *Lk* 23:46), fulfilling the meaning of the Incarnation (cf. *Jn* 19:30) and becoming our peace and our reconciliation (cf. *Eph* 2:13-20). It was there that Jesus manifested the greatest love (cf. *Jn* 15:13) in giving his life for sinful humanity (cf. *Rom* 5:8). Protected by glass cases, the stone bears a deep crack. This isn't just a geological fact: according to tradition, it is a reminder of the earthquake described in the Gospels (cf. *Mt* 27:51), the physical sign of a fracture separating the old world from the new creation, coinciding with the tearing of the temple veil, which marks the transition from the old temple to the new temple, which is Jesus himself (cf. *Jn* 2:19).

Adam's tomb: The Blood that redeems humanity

Directly beneath the altar of Calvary, at the level of the basilica's floor, lies the Chapel of Adam. Here, archaeological and theological symbolism are inextricably merged. The fissure observed on the upper floor extends all the way to here, revealing the heart of the rock. According to an ancient tradition, the skull of the first man, Adam, was buried precisely beneath the site of the crucifixion of the "New Adam".

The meaning is powerful: the blood of Christ, seeping through the crack in the earth, reaches the remains of humanity's forefather, washing away the sin of the Progenitor at the very moment of his sacrifice on the cross. This

space, where the bare rock emerges forcefully from the walls, serves as a link between the pre-historic time of Genesis and the historical time of Redemption. It is here that we understand why Golgotha is the pinnacle of the world: not because of its physical height, but because of the depth of the mystery it holds. This narrative also underpins the iconography that often depicts the Crucifix with a skull at its feet, representing Adam. The very name “Golgotha”, meaning “place of the skull”, may have led to this interpretation.

Hadrian: an attempt to erase that inadvertently preserves

A paradoxical aspect of the history of Golgotha has to do with Emperor Hadrian. After suppressing the Bar Kokhba revolt in 135 AD, he decided to erase every trace of Jewish and Christian identity from Jerusalem, re-establishing it as *Aelia Capitolina*. To desecrate the holy places, Hadrian built a vast artificial terrace above Golgotha and the Sepulchre, erecting a temple dedicated to Jupiter on the latter and a statue of Aphrodite on the former.

Ancient Christian historians, such as Eusebius of Caesarea, interpreted this as an attempt to eradicate worship at the site (cf. L. Franco, *Eusebio da Cesarea, Vita di Costantino*, 3,26, BUR, 2009, pp. 278-279). However, from an archaeological perspective, by covering the site with tons of fill material and sealing it with a pagan sanctuary (dedicated to Jupiter and Venus), the emperor unwittingly preserved the original layout of the place, protecting it from erosion and ensuring that, two centuries later, Empress Helena and Bishop Macarius of Jerusalem could identify it. Without that pagan temple, the memory of Golgotha


might have been lost amid the rubble of an ever-evolving city.

Saint Helena and the finding of the True Cross

Deep within the basilica, descending even farther below the rock of Calvary, you reach the Chapel of Saint Helena and, finally, the Grotto of the Finding of the True Cross, located in one of the oldest parts of the quarry. Helena arrived in Jerusalem in 326 AD with the express purpose of recovering the most important Holy Place and in search of the most precious relic: the cross on which Jesus Christ died.

The “legend” of the discovery of the three crosses is reported in two ways: Rufinus of Aquileia (R. of Aquileia *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Book X, chapters 7-8, ca. 402 AD) tells of a seriously ill noblewoman who was healed by contact with the True Cross; Socrates Scholasticus and Sozomen (Socrates Scholasticus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Book I, chapter 17, ca. 439-440 AD; Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Book II, chapter 1, 44, ca. 443-450 AD) report that Bishop Macarius put a corpse in contact with the three crosses, which – by touching the authentic relic – came back to life.

In the Middle Ages, Giacomo da Varazze (G. da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, Chapter LXIV, c. 1260 AD) depicted the scene that was later frescoed by Piero della Francesca, between 1442 and 1466, in the Bacci Chapel of the Basilica of San Francesco in Arezzo. In 160 AD, Bishop Melitone of Sardis had written: “it is in the centre of the square and of the city, in broad daylight and in full view of all, that the unjust killing of the Just One took place. Thus he is raised on the wood and a title is applied to indicate who is the slain one” (cf.



The current Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre preserves and protects the most important holy places linked to the mystery of our redemption and, more specifically, the places linked to the crucifixion, death and burial of Jesus Christ and his resurrection.”

Melitone of Sardis, *Peri Pascha*, 94-95, in: R. Cantalamessa, *I più antichi testi pasquali della Chiesa*, Ed. Liturgiche, 1972, p. 47-48). The Chapel of the Finding, with its rough rock walls, features, on the eastern side, “fragments of paintings [that] can be seen, perhaps from the 12th century, depicting a crucified Christ (mutilated from the chest up). In the space between the hands of Mary and those of John, an even older fresco emerges” (cf. H. Fürst – G. Geiger, *Terra Santa: Guida francescana per pellegrini e viaggiatori*, Terra Santa Edizioni, 2018, pp. 445/1021), and testifies to the crucial transition between the oral memory of the early Church and the desire to monumentalize the faith that asserted itself in the Constantinian era.

The Basilica of the Martyrdom: the Constantinian Triumph

The first great building erected by Constantine was the Basilica of the Martyrs, consecrated on 13 September 335. We should not imagine it as the current Crusader structure, but as an immense five-aisled hall, oriented westward, toward Calvary. During this phase, Golgotha remained outdoors, in a porticoed courtyard that served as a hinge between the Basilica of the Martyrs and the Anastasis.

The noble Egeria, in the fourth century, describes liturgies that physically moved between these spaces, following the stages of the Passion drama (*Itinerarium Egeriae*, II, 24-25; 30-37). Calvary was still an open-air spur, decorated only by a large jewelled cross. This configuration remained intact for almost three centuries, until the Persian invasion of 614 and the subsequent fire marked the beginning of a long series of destructions and reconstructions (cf. H. Fürst – G. Geiger, *op. cit.*, pp. 422-425/1021).

A rock that becomes a cornerstone

Golgotha, despite the mutilations it has suffered over the centuries – from the hatred of Caliph Al-Hakim in 1009 to the devastating fire of 1808 – has remained one of the basilica’s two focal points. Nineteenth-century restorations by the Greek Orthodox gave the left side of Calvary (owned by the Greeks but with some rights of use also for the Latins) its current appearance. The right side of Calvary (owned by the Latins, as well as the adjoining “Chapel of the

Franks”, which served as its medieval entrance from the outside) has also undergone restoration work directed and coordinated by the architect Antonio Barluzzi, starting in 1934. The remains from the Crusader era (12th century) have been maintained and restored. A cycle dedicated to the stripping of Jesus and his crucifixion was prepared



Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre

(Luigi Trifoglio, d. 1939), and the entire vault and walls were also decorated with mosaics (Pietro D’Achiardi, d. 1940). A complete description can be found in A. Pizzuto, *Gerusalemme: Il Calvario. Arte, catechesi, preghiera*, TSE, 2022.

The value of Golgotha lies not in its aesthetics, but in its testimony. It reminds us that salvation is not an abstract idea, but an event that occurred in a specific time and place. The pilgrim, arriving here, should simply be able to experience the apostle Paul and say with him, “The Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (*Gal 2:20*); and to allow himself to be reached by the invitation of the ancient Latin inscription from the 12th century: “Exalt him who was crucified in the flesh, glorify him who was buried for us” (T. Tobler, *Theoderici Libellus de locis sanctis editus c. AD 1172*, St. Gallen 1865, p. 19).



*Apostolic Nuncio
Eugenio Pacelli*

‘EUGENIO PACELLI – PIUS XII
BETWEEN THE CITY OF GOD AND THE CITY OF MAN’

When Pacelli Defended the Archbishop of Chicago Who Criticised Hitler

A conference entitled “Eugenio Pacelli – Pius XII Between the City of God and the City of Man” took place in Rome, on Monday, 4 May, under the presidency of Cardinal Dominique Mamberti. Participants included high-level academics and historians, and Andrea Torielli, Editorial Director of Vatican News. The following is a synthesis of his presentation.

By ANDREA TORIELLI

Among the most significant episodes of Eugenio Pacelli’s years alongside Pope Pius XI as Secretary of State was his defence of the Archbishop of Chicago, Cardinal George William Mundelein, who on 18 May 1937, during a closed-door address to his priests, delivered a blistering condemnation of Adolf Hitler: “You may ask how it is possible that a nation of sixty-six million – and intelligent people at that – should submit itself to a foreigner, an Austrian paperhanger, and, I am told, a poor specimen at that, together with a few associates such as Goebbels and Göring, who decide every move of the German people”.

The Cardinal went so far as to suggest, polemically, that the brains of sixty-six million Germans must have been removed without their noticing it. It was an extraordinarily severe intervention, delivered without diplomatic restraint by a churchman living thousands of kilometres from Europe. His remarks made front-page headlines across the United States.

On 24 May, German Ambassador Diego von Bergen requested and obtained an audience with Cardinal Pacelli, to whom he delivered an unsigned and undated note on German Embassy letterhead containing a sharp protest from the

Berlin government over Mundelein’s remarks.

Pacelli replied orally, but later that same day sent von Bergen a written transcript of his response: “In response to the communication just made to me regarding a speech by His Eminence Cardinal Mundelein, permit me to reply with one observation and one counter-question. 1) I am not accustomed to commenting on speeches for which – as in the present case – there is not yet an unquestionably reliable text. 2) Even if such a text were available, I would not be in a position to take a stand on the communication made to me before receiving a clear, definitive, and satisfactory answer to the following question: What has the German Government done, and what does it intend to do in the future, regarding the vile insults and defamations, the disgraceful calumnies repeated daily in German newspapers and periodicals, as well as in the speeches of prominent figures, against the Church, ecclesiastical institutions, the Pope, Cardinals, Bishops, priests, and so forth?”

“To lighten Your Excellency’s task, I shall answer the first part of the question myself: the German Government – despite protests – has done nothing against such conduct. On the contrary, it bears responsibility for it, because State and Party offices, and especially the Ministry of Propaganda, largely organise and direct such behaviour in publications and speeches, or at the very least favour and promote it by every means.

“As for the second part of the counter-question concerning the future, only the German Government can answer. The Holy See awaits, as I have said, a clear, definitive, and satisfactory reply”.

The Holy See thus forcefully returned the protest to its sender, demanding an accounting from the Reich government for the many unanswered Vatican protests over violations of the Concordat.

On 29 May, Fritz von Menshausen, chargé d'affaires of the German Embassy, delivered a second and more threatening note to Cardinal Pacelli, seeking a public Vatican disavowal of Mundelein.

“The German Government”, the document stated, “is compelled to observe that the Holy See allows to remain uncorrected these unqualified public attacks by one of its highest dignitaries against the person of the Head of the German State, thereby effectively covering them before the eyes of the world”.

This latest formal protest could not go unanswered. Pope Pius XI, therefore, convened a meeting of the cardinals of the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, held at Castel Gandolfo on 20 June 1937 and presided over personally by the Pontiff. The introductory report was entrusted to Cardinal Pacelli.

A transcript of his remarks records him as saying: “The Holy See cannot itself correct or deplore the speech of Cardinal Mundelein. Such an act of weakness would only make the leaders of National Socialism and Hitler himself still more arrogant, for in his self-delusion, he believes that the whole world must immediately bow before him.

“Certainly, the portion of Cardinal Mundelein’s speech concerning his words against the head of the German State was not particularly felicitous. He could perhaps of his own accord, offer some public clarification. However, since the German Government has published the Note of the Ambassador to the Holy See of 29 May, the public would in that

case easily conclude that such a declaration by Cardinal Mundelein had been made at the order and suggestion of the Holy See, which would thus appear to have yielded to the imposition of the Government”.

The passage is highly revealing, once again shedding light on Eugenio Pacelli’s view of Hitler. It also demonstrates the skill with which he presented the matter to the Pope and to the officials of the Secretariat of State, ensuring that the Archbishop of Chicago would not be compelled to retract a single word.

Pius XI fully endorsed Pacelli’s judgment, describing him as “our Cardinal Secretary of State, for whom no praise is sufficient”.

In the response sent by Pacelli to the German Embassy four days later, the Holy See stated that Cardinal Mundelein neither represented nor spoke on behalf of the Vatican, and that his speech had not been public. It further

noted that the Archbishop of Chicago was a free citizen who had exercised the right guaranteed by his country’s Constitution to express his judgment concerning persons and events in Germany offensive to the Pope and to the Church.

The Vatican did not refuse to discuss the Mundelein affair, but reiterated that such discussion required conditions of equality. The Reich government, therefore, first had to provide adequate explanations and responses to the many protests previously submitted by the Holy See without result.

The German protest ultimately came to nothing.

Indeed, on 17 July 1937, receiving a group of pilgrims from Chicago, Pius XI praised the American city and “their magnificent Cardinal Archbishop, so prompt and zealous in defending the rights of God and of the Church for the salvation of souls”.



Secretary of State Pacelli with Pope Pius XI

US Bishops to Consecrate America to Sacred Heart of Jesus

By DEVIN WATKINS

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) will hold its 2026 Spring Plenary Assembly in Orlando, Florida, from 10 to 12 June. As part of their assembly, the Bishops will concelebrate Mass and consecrate the United States of America to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The act of consecration will take place on Thursday, 11 June, and the Bishops will hear reflections on the Sacred Heart ahead of the Mass.

The consecration comes as the US celebrates the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence on 4 July. The initiative hopes to encourage broader Catholic participation in the commemoration, and will be livestreamed on the USCCB YouTube channel. Parishes and individual Catholics are being invited to take part through 250 Hours of Adoration and/or 250 Works of Mercy to prepare for the consecration.

In 2024, the late Pope Francis released his Encyclical *Dilexit Nos* (He Loved Us) on the human and divine love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, highlighting the devotion as an antidote to modern superficiality.

Spring Plenary Assembly

The USCCB's Spring Plenary Assembly will include public sessions on 10 and 11 June, which will also be livestreamed, according to a press release. Archbishop Paul Coakley of Oklahoma City will open the public portion of the plenary

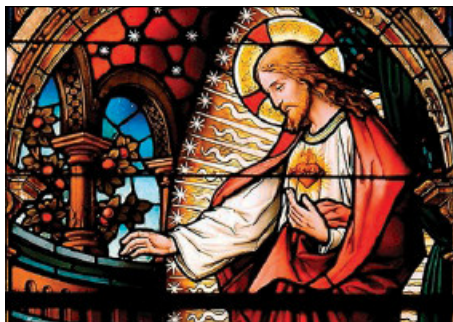
with an address, marking his first as President of the USCCB. Archbishop Gabriele Giordano Caccia, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, is also expected to address the Bishops. The US Bishops are expected to vote on several items, including the causes of canonization of Msgr Joseph Francis Buh and John Rick Miller.

The Committee on Divine Worship will present parts of a new edition of the Lectionary for Mass, as well as the 2025 Roman Missal – Liturgy of the Hours Supplement, for the Bishops' approval.

The Bishops will also discuss a revision to the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, addressing elements they have identified as requiring further development. According to the press release, the revision underscores the Bishops' "continued commitment to addressing the prevention of abuse and ensuring the structures continue to be in place to respond to al-

legations". The Committee for the Protection of Children and Young People says the proposed changes attempt to balance sensitivity to victim-survivors with an awareness of due-process, rights of the accused, and Canon Law.

As the Church moves towards World Youth Day 2027 in Seoul, South Korea, the Bishops are expected to talk about the US Church's participation. They will also hear updates on Catholic prison ministry, implementation of the Synod, and engagement with the Intercontinental Guadalupan Novena, which begins on 12 December.



IN THE DIOCESE OF PATHEIN
A REGION AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT

A Light of Hope in Myanmar

By PAOLO AFFATATO

A new Catholic church, dedicated to Saint Remigius, in the Diocese of Pathein, in central-western Myanmar; education initiatives led by the Servite Fathers (Order of Servants of Mary) in Yangon and other dioceses, made possible by teachers, volunteers and the Sisters of the Congregation of the Servants of Mary; and a retreat centre for over 50 catechists in the Sagaing area, one of the regions most affected by civil conflict and displacement. These are some of the initiatives that demonstrate how the life of the Catholic Church in Myanmar is progressing and that pastoral activities persist despite the deep wounds inflicted by a civil war that affects over half the country.

The new church is “a gift of the Holy Spirit, a sign of God’s work that continues, despite uncertainty and insecurity”, said Bishop Henry Eikhlein of Pathein. As reported by Fides, the Bishop presided over a Eucharistic celebration for the consecration of the church, during which 70 young people received the Sacrament of Confirmation. “The Spirit renews the face of the earth. The Lord sends his Spirit; he does not abandon us”, the Bishop emphasized. He urged those present “to always hope, in every circumstance”, always remembering and acknowledging God’s works.

The education initiative run by the Servite Fathers in the Archdiocese of Yangon takes place in a village about two hours outside the city. Priests, sisters and volunteers join together to teach hundreds of children from both Catholic and Buddhist families. Over the past three years, local demand from families to send their children there has soared. What is appreciated about the project is that it goes beyond the standard curriculum, acting as a true laboratory for peace. It plays a vital role in helping children and young people to overcome the traumas of war and look to the future with hope.

Farther north, in the Sagaing region, over 50 catechists recently gathered at the Sacred Heart Church in the Diocese of Kalay, for a training course. The training session served a dual purpose. It provided an update on tools and methods to improve the practice of





their catechesis, and it offered a space to gather, reconnect, share experiences and find – through their relationship with God and in fraternity – the strength to persevere in difficult situations marked by violence, instability, poverty and displacement. “Catechists are a guiding light for a community that is frightened, wounded, disoriented, and at times despairing”, Father Joseph Kap Tung Nung, a priest from Kalay, reminded those present.

The Church’s mission continues to move forward, sowing the Gospel of peace amidst a changing socio-political context: in early April, the head of the military junta, General Min Aung Hlaing, was elected president by Myanmar’s bicameral parliament. Five years later, after a widespread civil war that claimed over 90,000 lives, the General now officially heads a government that is asking the international community to recognize its legitimacy.



A significant development also occurred among the opposition, who signed a new agreement that includes closer military coordination among the various groups and a pact to form a federal state. The self-proclaimed National Unity Government (NUG), in exile, which was formed following the 2020 elections, had previously positioned itself as the leading force of resistance; however, it lacked the power to coordinate ethnic militias, another key component of the struggle for power. This constant fragmentation within the opposition has always effectively handed the junta a strategic advantage.

The self-proclaimed government in exile has now agreed to limit its powers, favouring a formal, inclusive, and structured agreement which would provide a dedicated Council tasked with creating a Federal Democratic Union, a project historically opposed by the Burmese military. According to some observers, this move to unify and strengthen the opposition could also have consequences for the military conflict.

Photos of the new Catholic church dedicated to Saint Remigius, in the Diocese of Patheingyi

Safeguarding Humanity Between Algorithms and Freedom

By BRUNO GIUSSANI*

How many algorithms are part of our daily lives? How many sensors? How many screens? Interacting with screens and digital interfaces of all kinds has become the main activity for almost all of us. But how many of these interactions are truly the result of a choice? More than a habit, it is becoming a condition. Our society is increasingly structured around algorithms and digital networks that shape its forms and dynamics. This has not happened – and is not happening – through public debate, political decision-making, or a democratic process, but rather as the indirect (though by no means accidental) consequence of commercial mechanisms and the often uncritical and impatient adoption of technologies that, in effect, redefine the social, economic, and cultural sphere.

This *algorithmization of life* raises essential questions. Who controls these systems? What values and logic do they convey, and which do they exclude? What are the consequences for our autonomy as human beings? And, are we still capable of asking ourselves these questions, or are we becoming accustomed to living in a world where the answers are already written into the computer code that surrounds us?

When, in his illuminating Message for the 60th World Day of Social Communications, celebrated on 17 May, His Holiness Pope Leo XIV writes that our challenge “is not technological, but anthropological”, he captures in one seemingly simple sentence the full depth, unease, and responsibility that each of us should feel in the face of advancing digital technologies, and especially artificial intelligence (AI).

Many still think of these technologies as mere tools useful for simplifying and accelerating existing processes. In reality, over the last

two decades – first gradually and then increasingly faster – these technologies, from social media to commercial systems, have become platforms. They are invisible architectures within which we operate and “live”, and upon which our ability to participate in social and professional life increasingly depends.

The arrival, three and a half years ago, of generative AI – the chatbots with which we interact by writing or speaking – has further accelerated this replacement of human logic with techno-logic. AI “agents” are now beginning to spread: systems with increasing degrees of autonomy, capable of handling a variety of complex tasks on behalf of users without detailed instructions. Meanwhile, neurotechnologies are already appearing on the horizon – a family of devices that interact directly with the human brain and the nervous system. This foreshadows a not-too-distant future in which humans and artificial entities will coexist, interact and co-evolve. These develop-

ments progressively redefine what is considered “normal” and acceptable, actively shaping the moral and ethical landscape of our societies.

Algorithms, in fact, are not neutral. They are designed to optimize certain objectives, often economic ones (profit, engagement, efficiency, competition), and sometimes political or cultural ones. In doing so, they reset what is considered right, desirable, or necessary, altering – in the words of Pope Leo XIV – “some of the fundamental pillars of human civilization”. The line between what is acceptable and what is not shifts not through conscious choice, but through adaptation, through passive



acceptance of what technology makes convenient, visible, and valued. Society is thus being algorithmically reprogrammed.

The central question therefore becomes: who decides the rules of this new society? If socio-economic and even ethical dynamics are increasingly conditioned by automated systems controlled by a handful of large companies or governments, what space remains for individual and collective choice? How can fairness, justice, and dignity be guaranteed if decisions are made by machines whose functioning escapes the understanding of the majority? Algorithmic reprogramming is not an inevitable destiny. It is, however, a process that urgently needs to be understood, critically discussed, and, where necessary, resisted.

“Each of us possesses an irreplaceable and inimitable vocation, that originates from our own lived experience and becomes manifest through interaction with others”, writes Pope Leo XIV. It is within this communicative space that our humanity is revealed and recognized. But it is precisely in this space that these machines – devel-

oped to imitate thought and speech – insert themselves without asking permission. They present themselves as “friends”, imposing themselves as mediators between us and others, and between us and the reality of the world.

In a world that places high value on productivity, speed, and profit, what generative artificial intelligence offers is deeply alluring: the possibility of freeing ourselves, by delegating to the machine, from the effort of thinking, learning, evaluating, writing, and deciding for ourselves. It seems inevitable that this delegation will ultimately lead to a deterioration of our mental and emotional faculties, creating a kind of “cognitive debt”. More and more people may become accustomed to being guided by systems that have no real experience of life, that know neither suffering nor joy, and to passively consuming what Pope Leo XIV calls “unthought thoughts”. As the French Catholic writer Georges Bernanos once said, the danger lies not in the multiplication of machines, but in the growing number of people accustomed, from childhood, “to desiring nothing other than what machines can give”. Written in 1944, 12 years before the very concept of “artificial intelligence” was invented, Bernanos’s observation now sounds almost prophetic. The danger therefore lies not only in the power of algorithms and those who own and control them, but above all in our gradual abandonment of exercising our own faculties.

We must preserve “faces and voices”, as the Pope urges us in his Message. In other words, we must defend the human sphere, our “unique” and “distinctive features”. Each of us has a different and personal experience of interacting with artificial intelligence. What one person finds enriching may be experienced by another as destabilizing. Some will see order; others will perceive disorder. But it is highly unlikely that AI can develop in a safe, beneficial, and common-good-oriented way without a deliberate and collective effort. All of us therefore – technological experts and beginners alike, enthusiasts as much as skeptics – share the same responsibility: to demand technologies that serve people and truth, not the other way around. Tools of justice rather than power. To protect freedom, equality, and human judgment. To recognize that not all questions have an algorithmic answer, that not everything calculable is therefore right, good, or desirable. To measure innovation by the standard of each person’s dignity. And to never forget, behind every algorithm, every app, and every screen, the faces and voices of our fellow human beings.

* Bruno Giussani is the author of “Our Minds Under Siege. How to Avoid Being Manipulated in the Age of Artificial Intelligence” (Scheidegger & Spiess, forthcoming in June 2026). He lives in Switzerland.



Algorithms, in fact, are not neutral. They are designed to optimize certain objectives, often economic ones (profit, engagement, efficiency, competition), and sometimes political or cultural ones. In doing so, they reset what is considered right, desirable, or necessary... The line between what is acceptable and what is not shifts not through conscious choice, but through adaptation, through passive acceptance of what technology makes convenient, visible, and valued. Society is thus being algorithmically reprogrammed.”



*Pope Leo XIV interacts with a robotic dog during the Wednesday General Audience, 27 May.
It was developed by students from the Enzo Ferrari Higher Institute near Turin.*

Entrusting to Mary a World Thirsting for Peace

Pope Leo XIV marked the first anniversary of his Pontificate on Friday, 8 May, with a visit to the southern Italian cities of Pompeii and Naples.

He visited the “Temple of Charity” at the Shrine of Pompeii, where he met with those engaged in the Shrine’s charitable operations. The Pope also celebrated Mass in the square in front of the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary, and recalled that he was elected Pope on the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary of Pompeii. “I therefore had to come here, to place my service under the protection of the Blessed Virgin”, he said in his homily. “Moreover, having chosen the name Leo places me in the footsteps of Leo XIII, whose many merits include the development of an extensive Magisterium on the Holy Rosary”.

The Pope recalled the words of his predecessor, Saint John Paul II, at the Shrine in 2003 at the end of the Year of the Rosary. “Today, as in the times of ancient Pompeii”, he said, “it is necessary to proclaim Christ to a society that is distancing itself from Christian values and is even losing the memory of them”.

Pope Leo XIV went on to say that the Rosary

points our hearts to the needs of the world, especially the importance of the family and the desire for peace. He recalled the many wars still being fought in our world, saying they call for renewed commitment, which is both political and economic, as well as spiritual and religious. “Peace is born within the heart”, said the Pope. “We cannot resign ourselves to the images of death that the news presents to us every day”.

In the afternoon, after his visit to Pompeii, the Pope travelled to Naples by helicopter to meet the clergy and later the local population.

“In a city marked by inequality, youth unemployment, school dropouts, and family instability, the proclamation of the Gospel cannot be

separated from a concrete and supportive presence that involves everyone – priests, religious, and laypeople alike”, he underlined in his address to clergy and religious at the Naples Cathedral. “Don’t forget: you are part of a love story – that of the Lord for His people – which began before you and will not end with you; you are part of it as unique and indispensable pieces; you are part of it so that, even amid the dense shadows of darkness, you may turn on a



light”, he continued.

In Naples’ difficult and varying realities, the Pope called for pastoral ministry to embody a Christian faith that “is not limited to mere emotional experiences but penetrates deeply into the fabric of life and society”. However, the Pope acknowledged that this is a difficult mission, especially for priests, in light of all the struggling people who may need help, such as “weary families”, “disoriented young people”, or the poor.

At the end of a long day, Pope Leo met and greeted an estimated 50,000 citizens gathered to be with him in the heart of Naples’ central and magnificent Piazza del Plebiscito. Arriving in the historic square from the Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta, he addressed civil authorities, the city’s Archbishop, Cardinal Domenico Battaglia, and the faithful, and launched an appeal for social renewal, unity, and a peace rooted in justice and lived in daily life.

Pope Leo XIV praised the many “everyday heroes” of Naples – men and women who quietly work for justice, truth, and dignity. Their efforts, he said, must not remain isolated, but be woven into a shared “network of good” that strengthens the entire social fabric. He highlighted the role of the Church as a “bond of communion” in the city, particularly through her commitment to an educational pact involving civil institutions, the Church, and civil society. This collaboration, he insisted, must not weaken, but deepen, as a shared mission for the future of the city.

A central theme of the Pope’s address was

peace. Naples, he said, is not called to be a mere “postcard city”, but a “workshop of peace”, where reconciliation is built in daily relationships, in neighbourhoods, and in concrete acts of justice and education. “There is no peace without justice”, he affirmed, “and justice is not complete without charity”. He pointed to con-

crete signs of hope, including initiatives such as houses of welcome for vulnerable families and support centres for those in difficulty, describing them as living expressions of a peace that becomes hospitality, care, and new beginnings.

Pope Leo XIV also praised efforts to make

Naples a platform for intercultural and interreligious dialogue, including initiatives involving young people from conflict zones. He highlighted the city’s long tradition of welcoming migrants and refugees, calling it not an emergency response but an opportunity for encounter and mutual enrichment, and throughout his address, the Pope returned repeatedly to the role of young people. Far from being passive recipients, he said, they are protagonists of renewal. From cultural projects to parish initiatives and charitable service, young Neapolitans, he said, are already shaping “signs of a renewed city and a renewed Church”.

Concluding his visit, Pope Leo XIV entrusted the people of Naples to the intercession of the Virgin Mary and to the city’s beloved patron saint – San Gennaro (Saint Januarius), encouraging them to continue walking together with courage and hope.



On Selection of Bishops, Emerging Issues

By ANTONELLA PALERMO

The Final Reports of Study Groups No. 7 & 9 reaffirm that discernment lies at the heart of selecting a bishop, while adopting specific theological criteria to discern how to address the most difficult questions facing the Church, according to Cardinal Mario Grech, Secretary General of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops.

As reflection continues on the judicial function of the bishop, *ad limina apostolorum* visits, and the formation of bishops, the preliminary part of the Final Report on the criteria for selecting bishops has been released. The report reaffirms the underlying premise that there is no shepherd without a flock, and no flock without a shepherd.

The synodal competencies identified by Study Group No. 7 for candidates include the ability to build communion, engage in dialogue, possess deep knowledge of local cultures, and show a willingness to integrate into them constructively. The group calls for Apostolic Nuncios to have “a synodal and missionary profile”, so that he may also look for this profile in those proposed as possible bishops.

The report states that every diocese should periodically carry out processes of discernment regarding its situation and needs, verifying whether those processes meet the standards of a synodal and missionary Church, in order to promote the sharing of best practices. “As an episcopal succession approaches, the Bishop is to

convene the Presbyteral Council and the Diocesan Pastoral Council, whose members express, in a collegial manner, an opinion on the needs of the diocese and submit to the Bishop – in a sealed envelope – the names of priests they consider suitable for the episcopate”, it says. “Where possible, consultation is also to include the Cathedral Chapter, the Finance Council, the Lay Council, and representatives of consecrated persons, young people and the poor”.

Involvement of consecrated persons and laypeople in consultations

The Study Group encourages what it describes as “a formative investment”, aimed at helping all members of the People of God sharpen their capacity for discernment. It proposes creating dedicated teams to assist the bishop in the ongoing formation of the clergy.

In cases where a local see is vacant, the group suggests that a committee be established in the diocese, which the Nuncio may consult in order to clarify the state of the diocese, the profile of the new shepherd, and possible candidates. The Group recommends that consultations involve not only clerics, but also, as far as possible, an equivalent number of consecrated men and women, laymen and laywomen. The aim, it explains, is to bring out the truth as fully as possible.

The Report also asks the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia to review their procedures in a



more synodal direction and proposes periodic forms of independent evaluation of selection processes.

Linguistic and methodological paradigm shift

The Final Report of Study Group No. 9 draws on the biblical image found in chapters 10-15 of the Acts of the Apostles, which shows how cultural diversity can be valued without betraying the newness of the Gospel. It proposes a change of paradigm in the way the Church addresses the most difficult doctrinal, pastoral, and ethical questions.

First, the report prefers the adjective “emerging” rather than “controversial” to describe these questions. The statement explains that “the aim is not merely to resolve problems but to build the common good through relational conversion, shared learning and transparency”. In addition, since there can be no proclamation of the Gospel without taking responsibility for the interlocutor, “in whom the Spirit is already at work”, the document introduces the “princi-

ple of pastorality”. The report identifies three methodological steps for addressing these questions: listening to ourselves, listening to reality, and convening different forms of knowledge. Conversation in the Spirit, it recalls, remains the privileged tool for developing an ecclesial culture of synodality.

Concrete testimonies as basis for discernment

The report calls for these guidelines to be applied concretely to the experience of homosexual Catholics and the practice of active nonviolence. With regard to forms of nonviolence in particular, the group was guided by the testimony of a movement of young Serbs who contributed to the peaceful fall of Milošević, drawing inspiration from the Christians of the early Church. In both cases, testimony serves as the starting point for paths of ethical and theological discernment, as well as for open questions, so that every community may take up “the responsibility of recognising and promoting the good through which God acts in history and in people’s experience”.

POPE LEO XIV TO VATICAN PUBLISHING HOUSE

‘Reading Nourishes the Mind’

By DEBORAH CASTELLANO LUBOV

“**I**n these hundred years of activity, the Vatican Publishing House has served nine Pontiffs, disseminating their Magisterium as a contribution to spreading the Gospel throughout the world”. Pope Leo XIV expressed these words of gratitude during his meeting with members of the Vatican Publishing House in the Vatican on Thursday, 7 May. Noting that the gathering marked the publishing house’s centenary, the Holy Father described the occasion as something of a “family celebration”.

The Pope recalled that in 1926 the Vatican Publishing House became independent from the much older Vatican Printing Press, originally founded in 1587. He then offered three brief reflections on the importance of books and reading.

First, the Holy Father said books offer an opportunity to think. Especially in the digital age, he noted, the physical nature of a book reminds people of the importance of thought, reflection, and study. “Reading”, the Pope said, “nourishes the mind” and “helps cultivate a conscious and well-formed critical sense, guarding against fundamentalism and ideological shortcuts”. For this reason, Pope Leo encouraged everyone to read books “as an antidote to closed-mindedness, which is reflected in rigid attitudes and reductive visions of reality”.

Second, the Pope reflected on books as an opportunity to encounter others. “When we hold a book in our hands”, he observed, “we encounter its author in an ideal sense. At the same time, we also encounter those who have read it before us, those reading it now, and those who will read it in the future”. He noted that writers and readers increasingly have opportunities to come together to speak and listen to one another. Recalling Pope Francis’ frequent emphasis on a “culture of encounter”, Pope Leo suggested that books serve as bridges toward others, fostering dialogue, enriching understanding, and broadening perspectives.

Finally, Pope Leo underscored that, for Christians, books are also an opportunity to proclaim Christ. “We know well how reading the biography of a saint or a well-presented spiritual reflection can touch the heart”, he said. The Pope also reflected on artistic depictions linking saints and sacred texts. “The Virgin Mary”, he pointed out, “is often depicted in scenes of the Annunciation, intent on reading the Sacred Scriptures. Saint Anthony of Padua is portrayed holding the open Book of the Gospels, upon which the Child Jesus stands. Saint Augustine is often shown seated at a writing desk before a large book and, at times, holding a heart in his hand: truth and charity”.

“In the school of Mary and the Saints”, the Pope said, “let us nourish ourselves with the Word of God, so that it may shape our way of thinking and acting”.

Pope Leo also echoed the words addressed by Pope Saint Paul VI to the Vatican Publishing House in 1976, during celebrations marking its fiftieth anniversary. Paul VI, he recalled, encouraged its members to “look ahead, toward the refinement of ideas and programs for the future”.

Finally, Pope Leo concluded his address by thanking those before him for carrying out their work with dedication and passion and by imparting his Apostolic Blessing.



A Collection of Prevost's Writings

The Italian edition of the book “Free Under Grace” (Vatican Publishing House) was given to Pope Leo XIV ahead of its official publication. The volume is a collection of texts dating back to when the Pope, as Robert Prevost, held the office of Prior General of the Order of Saint Augustine (2001-2013).

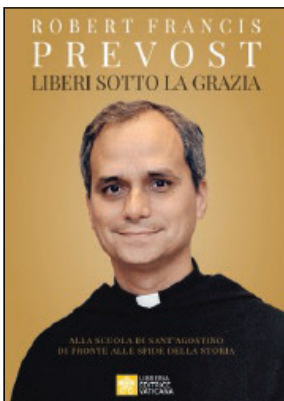
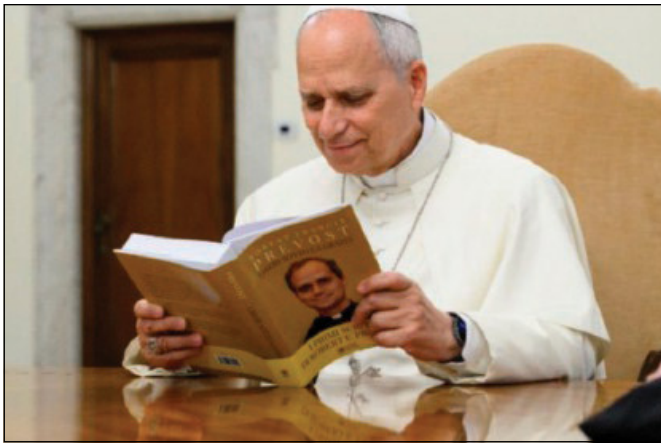
The first copy of the Italian edition, which hit bookstores on Monday, 4 May, was presented to the Pope by Father Joseph Farrell, the current Prior General of the Order of Saint Augustine, who promoted the publication of the volume. He was

joined by Augustinian Father Rocco Ronzani, Prefect of the Vatican Apostolic Archive and one of the editors of the book, and Lorenzo Fazzini, editorial director of the Vatican Publishing House. In addition to Father Ronzani, the book was also edited by Father Miguel Ángel Martín Juárez and Father Michael Di Gregorio, both Augustinians.

The book will be released in several languages in the coming months and is currently being translated in 30 countries around the world. As already announced by the Vatican

Publishing House at the Frankfurt International Book Fair in October 2025, this book – bringing together for the first time speeches, homilies, letters, and messages by Robert Francis Prevost – offers a closer look at the spirituality of Pope Leo XIV.

“Free Under Grace” was presented on Wednesday, 6 May, at the Pontifical Patristic Institute Augustinianum in Rome, by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State; Father Joseph Farrell, Prior General of the Order of Saint Augustine; Paolo Ruffini, and Andrea Tornielli, respectively Prefect and Editorial director of the Dicastery for Communication; Maria Grazia Calandrone, writer.



Never Instrumentalize God for Military, Economic, or Political Gain

By DEBORAH CASTELLANO LUBOV

“**W**e together assume our common responsibility: to condemn every form of discrimination and persecution founded on race, religion, or origin; to reject every instrumentalization of the name of God for military, economic, or political gain; to raise our voice in favor of every minority that suffers”. Pope Leo XIV made this statement during his encounter with representatives of Muslim communities of Senegal, alongside representatives of the Catholic Church in the country, on Saturday, 9 May.

Safeguard your fraternity and peaceful coexistence

The Holy Father began his remarks by calling the meeting a significant expression of friendship and of a common commitment to promoting an inclusive, peaceful, and fraternal society. He also recalled that Senegal embodies hospitality and solidarity, and demonstrates and serves as a model of peaceful coexistence among Christians, Muslims, and believers of other traditions. It is a reality, he said, that constitutes the foundation of dialogue among peoples who are different because of their religious affiliation and ethnic origin. “This treasure of fraternity must be safeguarded with care”, he said, noting it is “a precious good not only for your nation, but also for the whole of humanity”.

Threats to peace in Africa

However, Pope Leo went on to lament challenges in Africa. “Unfortunately”, he said, “armed conflicts persist on the African continent, generating grave humanitarian shortages and profound inequalities that every day put entire populations to the test, without forgetting the disturbing increase in violent extremism”.

Added to this, he noted, are “growing flows of migrants and refugees, hateful speech that poisons the social fabric, the weakening of the family bond, and the erosion of ethical and spiritual reference points, particularly among the young”. In this context, he said, the values embodied by the spirit of “teranga” and interreligious dialogue are “a precious instrument” for easing tensions and building lasting peace. “By fostering interreligious dialogue and involving religious leaders in mediation and reconciliation initiatives”, Pope Leo said, “politics and diplomacy can make use of moral forces capable of calming tensions, preventing radicalizations, and promoting a culture of esteem and mutual respect”.

Need for diplomacy and religious dialogue founded on truth and peace

Today, Pope Leo said, the world needs diplomacy and religious dialogue founded on peace, justice, and truth. “Together, we, Christians and Muslims”, he said, “believe that every human



being is shaped by the hands of God, and therefore clothed with a dignity that no law nor any human power has the right to confiscate”. The Pope therefore noted that upon this foundation of fraternity, and with faith and humanity at its roots, religions must together reject the instrumentalization of God’s name, especially for military, economic, and political gains; condemn persecution and discrimination; and protect suffering minorities.

“As I said in Bamenda in Cameroon”, Pope Leo recalled, “woe to those who manipulate religion and the very name of God for their own military, economic or political gain, dragging that which is sacred into darkness and filth”.

Working together for the good of humanity

The Holy Father expressed his prayer that God, the Almighty, may cause the desire to understand one another better, to listen to one another, and to live together in respect and fraternity to be reborn. “May He grant you the courage to follow the path of dialogue, to respond to conflicts with gestures of fraternity, and to open your heart to others, without fearing differences”.

Finally, the Holy Father prayed that their commitment in favour of peace, justice, and fraternity may bear abundant fruits, leading to ever-deeper collaboration among the different parties for the good of humanity.

WITH MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE JOHN PAUL II FOUNDATION FOR THE SAHEL

Renewed Commitment to Peace and Development

On Saturday, 9 May, Pope Leo XIV met with members of the Board of Directors of the John Paul II Foundation for the Sahel, encouraging them to continue their mission of promoting peace, solidarity and integral human development in one of the world’s most fragile regions.

Greeting the delegation in the Vatican, the Pope reflected on peace not simply as an aspiration, but as something rooted in eternity itself. “Peace has the breath of the eternal”, he said, recalling Saint Augustine’s invitation to Christians to cultivate an inseparable friendship with peace so that its “radiant warmth” might spread throughout the world.

Founded by Pope Saint John Paul II in 1984 following his appeal

in Ouagadougou during his 1980 visit to Burkina Faso, the Foundation was created to support the populations of the Sahel region in West Africa, particularly in the face of desertification, poverty, famine and underdevelopment. Today, the Foundation promotes projects linked to food security, access to water, sustainable agriculture and integral human development across several countries in the region.

Pope Leo thanked Bishop Hassa Florent Koné for his service as Pontifical Delegate under Pope Francis and praised the collaborative work carried out with the Roman Curia and the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development in guiding the Foundation towards what he described as “a new beginning”.

After 40 years of activity, the Pope acknowledged that the Foundation has reached “a turning point”, facing external challenges tied to global economic crises and instability. It was in this context, he explained, that the renewal of the Foundation’s mission and structure became necessary. The Board meeting held in Dakar in February marked a significant step in that renewal, with the adoption of new statutes, the election of a new president and the appointment of new board members. “With these new Statutes”, Pope Leo said, “the Foundation takes on a new form in continuity with its mission”.

Turning to the situation of the Sahel itself, the Holy Father pointed to the many difficulties affecting the region and the wider world: geopolitical tensions, inequality, war, terrorism, insecurity, political and economic instability, and climate crises, whose consequences include growing migration flows. Against this backdrop, he stressed the Foundation’s role in protecting what Pope Francis called our “common home” and defending human dignity through concrete projects of solidarity and development. Helping victims of natural disasters and supporting vulnerable people, the Pope said, is “a question of justice before it is one of charity”. For this reason, he welcomed the Board’s unanimous decision to preserve the Foundation as a Pontifical Foundation, remaining faithful to the spirit of its founder, Saint John Paul II. Pope Leo also encouraged continued collaboration with the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and other institutions of the Holy See, rooted in subsidiarity and synodality, so as to promote “the inalienable human dignity of the peoples of the Sahel”.

Bringing his address to a close, the Pope acknowledged that the Foundation’s renewed path will inevitably bring new challenges and uncertainties. Pope Leo nevertheless echoed the words of Pope Francis, insisting that difficulties must be faced together “without losing hope”.



MESSAGE FROM THE DICASTERY FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE FOR THE FEAST OF VESAK

Buddhists and Christians Called to Be ‘Artisans of Peace’

In its message for Vesak 2026, the Vatican’s Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue invites Buddhists and Christians to work together for an “unarmed and disarming peace” rooted in compassion, dialogue, and inner transformation. Signed by the Prefect of the Dicastery, Cardinal George Jacob Koovakad, and the Dicastery’s Secretary, Monsignor Indunil Janakaratne Koditthuwakku Kankana-malage, the message was released on Tuesday, 12 May.

Dear Buddhist Friends,

As in years past, we are pleased to extend our heartfelt greetings and good wishes on the joyful celebration of Vesak. This momentous festival – commemorating the birth, enlightenment, and passing of the Buddha – serves as an invitation to renew the path of wisdom, compassion, and peace.

Peace is not merely the absence of war, but a gift that seeks to dwell within the human heart: a quiet yet powerful presence that enlightens and transforms. Indeed, as Pope Leo XIV noted, “Peace exists; it wants to dwell within us. It has the gentle power to enlighten and expand our understanding; it resists and overcomes violence. Peace is a breath of the eternal: while to evil we cry out ‘Enough,’ to peace we whisper ‘Forever’” (*Message for the LIX World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2026). Even when it appears fragile – like a small flame threatened by the storms of hatred and fear – peace must be protected and nurtured. This is the peace to which we are called: an unarmed and disarming peace that does not rely on force,

but flows from truth, compassion, and mutual trust.

In our time, however, we cannot ignore the shadows weighing upon the world. Wars, violence, rising ethno-religious nationalism, and the manipulation of religion continue to wound our common humanity. In a world that appears increasingly fragile and at times marked by a troubling sense of regression, the call to peace becomes ever more urgent. It is here that our spiritual traditions can offer a vital contribution. Goodness is truly disarming; it breaks the cycle of suspicion and opens paths where none seemed possible. At their best, our traditions invite us to purify our hearts of hostility, to transcend boundaries, and to recognize one another as members of a single human family.



In this light, the sayings of the Buddha offer an insightful path. The Buddha teaches: “Hatred is never appeased by hatred; by non-hatred alone is hatred appeased. This is an eternal law” (*Dhammapada* 5). And again: “Let none deceive another or despise any being... Let none through anger or ill will wish harm upon another” (*Sutta Nipata* 1.8 - *Metta Sutta*). For Christians, Jesus calls his disciples to “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,” (*Matthew* 5:44) and proclaims, “Blessed are the peacemakers” (*Matthew* 5:9). Both traditions converge in pointing toward a peace that is lived – one that disarms hearts before it disarms hands.

Such a path calls for more than words; it re-

quires a conversion of attitudes and a commitment to concrete action. Religious leaders are called to be authentic partners in dialogue and true agents of reconciliation. Together with all believers, we are invited to become artisans of peace – not passive observers, but courageous witnesses capable of fostering encounter, healing wounds, and rebuilding trust.

As citizens and believers, we share a responsibility to promote peace, challenge injustice, and urge those in positions of authority not to inflame division but to pursue dialogue over confrontation. We must also guard against becoming complicit through silence or fear. Each community is thus called to grow as a place where hostility is overcome through encounter, where justice is practiced, and where forgiveness is cherished.

To foster an unarmed and disarming peace

also means nurturing its deepest sources: prayer, contemplation, and inner transformation. It is a peace lived daily – in gestures of kindness, in patience, in the refusal of hatred and vengeance, and in the courage to hope. For peace is not an illusion or a distant ideal; it is a real possibility already placed within our reach, waiting to be welcomed and shared.

In this spirit, we renew our hope that, through our common commitment, Buddhists and Christians may increasingly become witnesses of this disarming peace – one that heals wounds, restores relationships, and opens new horizons for humanity.

May your celebration of Vesak be filled with serenity and joy, and may it inspire all of us to walk together on this path. We wish you a blessed and fruitful celebration of Vesak!

From the Vatican, 1 May 2026

CARDINAL VICTOR MANUEL FERNÁNDEZ TO PRIESTLY FRATERNITY OF SAINT PIUS X

Ordaining New Bishops Is Schismatic Act

The Priestly Fraternity of Saint Pius X (FSSPX), founded by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, has announced that it intends to carry out its plan to ordain new bishops without the Papal mandate in July 2026, despite the Pope's appeals.

On Wednesday, 13 May, Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, issued a statement to clarify several questions received, after bringing it to the attention of Pope Leo XIV.

The Pope wished to explicitly confirm his desire to continue praying that this new schismatic act may be avoided.

“I reiterate what has already been communicated”, stated Cardinal Fernández. “The episcopal ordinations announced by the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Pius X do not have the corresponding papal mandate. This action will constitute ‘a schismatic act’ (Pope Saint John Paul II, *Ecclesia Dei*, no. 3), and ‘formal adherence to the schism con-

stitutes a grave offense against God and entails the excommunication established by the law of the Church’ (ibid., 5c; cf. Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, Explanatory Note, 24 August 1996)”.

“The Holy Father”, concluded the Cardinal Prefect, “continues in his prayers to ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten the leaders of the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Pius X, so that they may retrace their steps regarding the extremely grave decision they have taken”.

A Long Service in the Nunciature and Great Love for the Church

Pope Leo XIV has expressed his “deep condolences” upon learning of the death of Swiss Cardinal Paul Emil Tscherrig, former Apostolic Nuncio to Italy and the Republic of San Marino, who passed away Tuesday, 12 May, at the age of 79.

In a telegram, the Pope conveyed his thoughts to the Cardinal’s family and to the diocesan community of Sion, where Tscherrig was incardinated, and recalled with gratitude his “faithful service as a papal representative in various countries and later as a member of several dicasteries of the Holy See”. The Holy Father remembered that Cardinal Tscherrig “acted generously” and “bore witness to love for the Church and for the Successor of Peter”.

Finally, Pope Leo concluded the message by entrusting the soul “of this minister of the Gospel” to God, so that He may “welcome him into the light that knows no sunset”, and invoking the intercession of the Virgin Mary, while sending the apostolic blessing to all those affected “by this sudden loss”.

The Funeral Mass was held on Friday afternoon, 15 May, in Saint Peter’s Basilica at the Altar of the Chair. Pope Leo XIV, together with Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops presided at the Funeral Mass. In his homily, the Pope reflected on the “great and solemn moment” in which the Cardinal now stands before the Lord

“to receive the reward for the good accomplished in this life and forgiveness for the shortcomings caused by human frailty”.

Cardinal Paul Emil Tscherrig was born in Unterems, Switzerland, on 3 February 1947. He was ordained a priest in 1974 and later earned a doctorate in canon law from the Pontifical Gregorian University. Pope John Paul II appointed him to the Holy See’s diplomatic service in 1978 as Secretary of the Apostolic Nunciature, serving in Uganda, South Korea, Mongolia, and Bangladesh. In 1996, he was appointed Titular Archbishop of Voli and Apostolic Nuncio to Burundi. His episcopal consecration was presided over by Cardinal Secretary of State Angelo Sodano on 27 June of that year.



His service in the Church then led him to be appointed Nuncio to Trinidad and Tobago, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Grenada, Guyana, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and the Bahamas in 2000. From 2001, he also served in Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda, Suriname, and Saint Kitts and Nevis. In 2004, he assumed the nunciature in South Korea and Mongolia, followed by assignments in the Nordic countries, then Argentina, and finally, until 2024, he served as Nuncio to Italy and San Marino – the first non-Italian to hold the position. Pope Francis created him Cardinal in the Consistory of 30 September 2023.

Studying AI's Effects on Humanity

By ISABELLA H. DE CARVALHO

Pope Leo XIV approved the creation of an Interdicasterial Commission on Artificial Intelligence in a rescript dated 12 May, released on Saturday, 16 May, and signed by Cardinal Michael Czerny, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

Considering “the development in recent decades of the phenomenon of Artificial Intelligence and the most recent accelerations in its widespread use; its potential effects on human beings and on humanity as a whole; the Church’s concern for the dignity of every human person, especially in relation to their integral development; Pope Leo XIV approved the establishment of a Interdicasterial Commission on Artificial Intelligence”, the text reads.

The Pope approved the creation of the body following an audience with Cardinal Czerny on 3 May. The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development will coordinate the work of the Commission for the first year.

The text explains that the Commission is made up of representatives from seven Vatican bodies: the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Dicastery for Culture and Education, the Dicastery for Communica-

tion, the Pontifical Academy for Life, the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences.

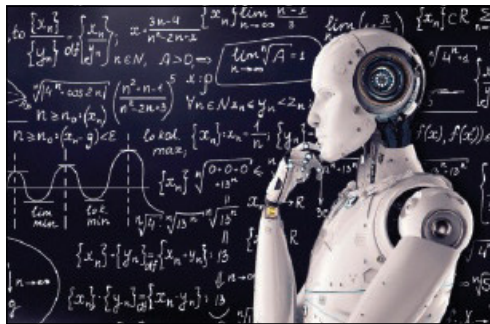
One of these institutions will be in charge of coordinating the Commission for one-year terms, which can be renewed, and the Pope then decides the next body that will lead the works. The text explains that “it is the responsibility of the coordinating institution to facilitate collaboration and the exchange of information among group members regarding activities and projects related to Artificial Intelligence, includ-

ing policies on its use within the Holy See, while promoting dialogue, communion, and participation”.

Cardinal Czerny established the body according to Article 28 of the Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium*, under which the head of a Dicastery may create a

special interdicasterial commission to address matters that touch the responsibilities of several Dicasteries and that require “mutual and frequent consultation”.

This is not the first time Dicasteries have come together to address this issue. In January 2025, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Dicastery for Culture and Education published the note *Antiqua et Nova* on the relationship between artificial intelligence and human intelligence.



For the Values of Sports

“**L**ord of life, we thank you for the gift of sport, for those who glorify God through the exercise of their bodies, for the friendships born on the field and the joy of playing as a team”. This is Pope Leo XIV’s prayer intention for the month of June, presented in a video produced by the Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network as part of the “Pray with the Pope” campaign, through which the Pope encourages the faithful each month to join in praying for his intentions.

The prayer continues:

“You teach us that in life, as in the game, no one is saved alone. We need others to grow, to learn respect, to overcome our limits, and to celebrate together the victories we achieve.

We ask that sport may always be a school of fraternity, not of empty rivalry, a space of encounter, not exclusion, a path of peace, not violence.

May those who play, train or cheer discover in sport a universal language that brings cultures, together, unites peoples, and sows respect, solidarity and personal growth.

Lord Jesus, may every sport become a parable of life lived with you, working with joy and

effort, living with humility in defeat and with gratitude in the victory you offer in your Resurrection.

May your Spirit never be lacking in us, making us one team, united with you to build communion and fraternity in history.

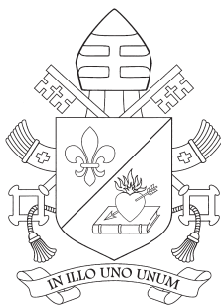
Amen”.

Commenting on this month’s intention, the international director of the Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network, Father Cristóbal Fones, stated, “Sports provide one of the most unique spaces where humanity is in contact with truth. It is a bridge leading to dialogue to overcome borders, languages, and ideologies. On the court, on the field, in the pool, people from different cultures

and countries share the struggle, the sacrifice, and the joy of victory, and the pain of defeat. Sports teaches us perseverance, discipline, the value of work well done, humility when facing one’s own limits. Perhaps what is most beautiful is that they remind us that no one ever wins alone. We need others.

This is why the Pope is inviting us to pray so that these deeply human values – respect, solidarity, overcoming personal limits – do not stay on the playing field, but transform the way we live together in the world”.





ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE LEO XIV TO THE STEWARDS, TRUSTEES AND MEMBERS OF THE PAPAL FOUNDATION

Saturday, 2 May 2026

Caring for the needs of the universal Church

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Peace be with you.

Your Excellencies,
Dear brothers and sisters,

I warmly welcome all of you, especially the Members, Trustees and Stewards of The Papal Foundation, and I offer my prayerful good wishes for your pilgrimage to Rome. While this is our first opportunity to meet since I was called to take on the role of Bishop of Rome and Pope, I have already been aware of your work, especially during my years of service as Bishop of Chiclayo, where I saw first-hand the positive impact of the Foundation's grants, as both the Diocese and a religious community were blessed to receive assistance on various projects, thanks to your generosity. In just this first year of my Pontificate, I have been edified to see the global reach of the Foundation. I am, therefore, deeply grateful for your ongoing commitment to assist the Successor of Peter in his mission to care for the needs of the universal Church. In this regard, I was pleased to learn that membership in the Foundation continues to grow each year and that you have expressed an openness to increase the support provided as well as find new ways of being of service.

Your visit occurs during the Easter season, a time focusing on mission as well as peace. After the Resurrection, Jesus commissioned the Apostles to be his messengers, promising to accompany

them in their work and promising to be with them always (cf. *Mk* 16:20, *Mt* 28:20). The Pope and the bishops, as successors of the Apostles, continue this task through preaching and works of evangelization. Yet all members of the Church, by virtue of our Baptism, share the responsibility to proclaim the Gospel today with words as well as with charitable deeds. As Saint James wrote to the early Christian community, faith without works is dead and has no power to save (cf. *Jas* 2:17), and the Gospels teach us that the Lord expects his disciples to care for the needs of the poorest and the most vulnerable (cf. *Mt* 25:31-46).

By funding projects, humanitarian aid and scholarships for people from around the world, The Papal Foundation participates in the Church's ongoing evangelical mission. Your generosity has allowed countless people to experience in a concrete fashion the goodness and kindness of God in their own communities. Many priests and consecrated men and women have likewise been able to receive an advanced education from the Pontifical Universities in Rome that would otherwise not have been possible, forming them to be future leaders in the Church. You will probably never meet everyone who has benefitted from your kindness, so in their name I express heartfelt appreciation.

One of them is sitting next to me, however, who received a scholarship from you, and I am sure he will gladly say "thank you."

On Easter Sunday, the risen Lord greeted his Apostles by saying, "Peace be with you!" (*Jn* 20:19), and even today, Christ desires that his disciples be instruments of peace. In addition to furthering the Church's evangelical mission, the Foundation's efforts also help to foster peace on the regional and local levels. Saint Paul VI wrote that development is the new name of peace (cf. Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*, 87). By this he meant that true harmony is not simply the ab-

sence of conflict, but comes from actively promoting an authentic integral human development (cf. *ibid.*, 76). Fostering genuine progress through tangible initiatives like those supported by the Foundation is a sure way to encourage concord among communities and individuals.

Dear sisters and brothers, with these sentiments I thank you for your presence here today as well as for all that you do to further the worthy mission of The Papal Foundation. I ask for your continued prayers for my ministry as the Successor of Saint Peter and for the needs of the Church. In entrusting you and your loved ones to the loving intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, I gladly impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of joy in Christ our risen Lord.

Thank you.

REGINA CAELI MESSAGE

Sunday, 3 May 2026

In God everyone is fully themselves

Dear brothers and sisters, happy Sunday!

During the Easter season, like the early Church, we return to the words of Jesus, which reveal their full meaning in the light of his passion, death and resurrection. What once eluded the disciples or caused them distress now comes back to their minds, warms their hearts and fills them with hope.

The Gospel proclaimed this Sunday presents the Master's dialogue with his disciples during the Last Supper. In particular, we hear a promise that involves us from this moment onwards in the mystery of his Resurrection. Jesus says: "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also" (*Jn* 14:3). The Apostles thus discover that God has a place for everyone. Two of them had already experienced this during their first encounter with Jesus by the river Jordan. Jesus noticed them following him and invited them that afternoon to visit where he was staying (cf. *Jn* 1:39). Even now, faced with death, Jesus speaks of a home, but this time a very large one. It is the house of his Father and our Father, where there is room for all. The Son describes himself as the servant who prepares the rooms, so that every brother or sister, upon arriving, may find their own room ready and feel as though they have always been longed for and are at last found.

Dear friends, in the old world in which we are

still journeying, what attracts attention are exclusive places, experiences accessible only to a few and the privilege of entering where others cannot. In the new world into which the risen One leads us, however, what is most valuable is within everyone's reach. Yet this does not make it any less attractive. On the contrary, what is open to all now brings joy. Gratitude takes the place of competition; welcome overcomes exclusion; and abundance no longer entails inequality. Above all, no one is mistaken for someone else, and no one is lost. Death threatens to erase one's name and memory, but in God everyone is fully themselves. Truly, this is what we spend our whole lives searching for, sometimes willing to do anything just to get a little attention and recognition.

"Have faith," Jesus tells us. That is the secret! "Have faith in God; have faith also in me" (*Jn* 14:1). It is precisely this faith that frees our hearts from the anxiety of possessing and acquiring, and from the illusion that we must pursue a position of prestige to have worth. Each person already has infinite worth in the mystery of God, which is the true reality. By loving one another as Jesus has loved us, we impart this awareness to one another. This is the new commandment; in this way, we anticipate heaven on earth and reveal to all that fraternity and peace are our calling. Indeed, through love, amidst a multitude of brothers and sisters, each one discovers that they are uniquely made.

Let us pray, then, to Mary Most Holy, Mother of the Church, that every Christian community may be a home open to all and attentive to each person.

AFTER THE REGINA CAELI

Dear brothers and sisters,

The month of May has begun: throughout the Church, the joy of gathering in the name of Mary, our Mother, is renewed, especially by praying the Rosary together. We relive the experience of those days between Jesus' Ascension and Pentecost, when the disciples gathered in the upper room to invoke the Holy Spirit. Mary Most Holy remained in their midst, her heart keeping watch over the fire that animated the prayer of all. I entrust my intentions to you, particularly for communion within the Church and for peace in the world.

Today marks World Press Freedom Day, promoted by UNESCO. Unfortunately, this right is often violated – sometimes blatantly, sometimes in more subtle ways. Let us remember the many journalists and reporters who have fallen victim to wars and violence.

I warmly greet all of you – the faithful of Rome

and the pilgrims who have come from many countries!

I welcome the teachers – religious and lay – from the schools of the *Hermanas Franciscanas de los Sagrados Corazones*, as well as the faithful from Madrid, Granada, Minneapolis and Malaysia; and the Peruvians who form the *Virgen de Chapi de Arequipa* Association in Rome.

I greet the *Meter* Association, which for thirty years has been committed to defending minors from the scourge of abuse, while engaging both ecclesial and civil communities and promoting education aimed at supporting victims and fostering prevention. Thank you for your service!

I am pleased to welcome the faithful from Padua, the *Gruppo Giovani Valdaso* and the *Punto Giovani* of the Camillian Community of Piosasco, the Catholic Action of the Vicariate of Noale, the young people from Verolanuova and Cadignano, the youth choir of Coredo-Predaia and the students from the *Liceo Fardella – Ximenes* of Trapani.

I wish everyone a happy Sunday!

ADDRESS TO THE MEMBERS OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF
CATHOLIC CHARITIES USA

Monday, 4 May 2026

**Called to seek solutions to
inhumane situations**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Peace be with you.

Dear friends,

I am pleased to greet you, the members of the Board of Directors of Catholic Charities USA, during your visit to Rome and to the Vatican. I pray that your time here, at the heart of the Universal Church, will not only strengthen your bonds with the Successor of Peter, but will also help you to draw nearer to the heart of Christ, in whose love we are all invited to share.

During this Easter season, we read the biblical narratives of the Resurrection and the Lord's subsequent appearances to his Apostles. As they and their fellow disciples began the task of evangelization, Jesus helped them (cf. *Mt* 16:20) while assuring them, "Remember, I am with you always, even to the end of time" (*Mt* 28:20).

As was the case with the Apostles and with the early Church, the proclamation of the Gospel through caring for the poor and for those most in

need will always present certain difficulties on both the personal and the institutional levels (cf. *Acts* 6:1-7). These include finding sufficient resources, demonstrating to others that this type of service is an integral part of authentic Christian living, and not giving way to discouragement, particularly when we meet those whom we cannot help in the way that we would like. I am fully aware that the Catholic Charities agencies in the United States of America are by no means immune from these challenges that continue to manifest themselves in our own day. Yet it is precisely when we are confronted with such obstacles that we must learn to hear Jesus' voice saying to us once again, "I am with you always!" Even today, Christ draws near to accompany his disciples, especially in moments of frustration and doubt, as he did with Saint Thomas the Apostle, with the disciples on the road to Emmaus (cf. *Jn* 20:24-29; *Lk* 24:13-35).

That is why I encourage you, and I encourage your worthy efforts and I express gratitude for your willingness to carry on our Lord's ministry of compassion, especially to the least among us. In doing so, you seek to find solutions to inhumane situations, to alleviate the suffering of individuals and families, and to relieve the burden of those who are weighed down by hardship and strife. In all of these circumstances, it must be the charity of Christ that compels you in your daily work (cf. *2 Cor* 5:14). That is, the desire to bring to others material aid with the love of the heart of Jesus, for it is in that love that they will find genuine rest and their dignity will be respected.

In this sense, it is true that "love for our neighbor is tangible proof of the authenticity of our love for God" (Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te*, 26). Yet it is also the case that authentically loving our neighbor entails offering them the possibility of a true encounter with God. Your work with the less fortunate continues to provide a privileged opportunity to share the joy of the Resurrection, and I thank you for this sincere witness of faith. The practical assistance that you and your partner agencies offer the disadvantaged allows them to experience God's love through you, and opens a path for them to enter into a lasting relationship with. At the same time, it enables you to come into contact with the flesh of Christ by seeking to see and serve him in our brothers and sisters (cf. *Mt* 25:31-46). In this way, your works of charity become a mutual encounter with the Lord who is present among us.

Once again, the Lord has promised us: "I am with you always" (*Mt* 28:20). The Risen Lord comes to instill peace in our hearts and open up



paths of hope and new life, assuring us that he truly is “making all things new” (*Rev* 21:5). Let us therefore allow the hope of Easter to break into our lives and to guide our service, motivated by his promise.

With these sentiments, I offer good wishes for your noble mission and assure you and all of your colleagues of a remembrance in my prayers. I entrust all of you to the loving intercession of Mary Immaculate, patroness of the United States, and I willingly impart my Apostolic Blessing, which I extend to all the agencies associated with Catholic Charities USA, as a pledge of peace and joy in the risen Lord. Thank you.

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Wednesday, 6 May 2026

The Church lives in the service of the coming of the Kingdom of God

Brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

As we focus today on a section of Chapter VII of the Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Church, let us reflect on one of its defining characteristics: the *eschatological dimension*. The Church, in fact, journeys through this earthly history always looking towards her final destination, which is the heavenly homeland. This is an essential dimension which, however, we often overlook or downplay, because we are too focused on what is immediately visible and on the more concrete dynamics of the life of the Christian community.

The Church is God’s people journeying through history, which has the Kingdom of God as the end of all her action (cf. *LG*, 9). Jesus initiated the Church precisely by proclaiming this Kingdom of love, justice and peace (cf. *LG*, 5). We are therefore called to consider the community

and cosmic dimension of salvation in Christ and to turn our eyes to this final horizon, to measure and evaluate everything from this perspective.

The Church lives in history in the service of the coming of the Kingdom of God in the world. She proclaims the words of this promise to all and always; she receives a pledge of it in the celebration of the Sacraments, particularly the Eucharist; she puts its logic into practice and experiences it in relationships of love and service. Furthermore, she knows that she is the place and the means where union with Christ is realized “more closely” (*LG*, 49), whilst at the same time recognizing that salvation can be bestowed by God in the Holy Spirit even beyond her visible boundaries.

In this regard, the Constitution *Lumen Gentium* makes an important statement: the Church is the “universal sacrament of salvation” (*LG*, 48), that is, the sign and instrument of that fullness of life and peace promised by God. This means that she does not identify perfectly with the Kingdom of God, but is its seed and beginning, for its fulfilment will be granted to humanity and the cosmos only at the end. Believers in Christ, therefore, walk through this earthly history, marked by the maturation of good but also by injustices and sufferings, without being either deluded or despairing; they live guided by the promise received from the One who is “making all things new” (*Rev* 21:5). Therefore, the Church realizes her mission between the “already” of the beginning of the Kingdom of God in Jesus, and the “not yet” of the promised and anticipated fulfilment. As the guardian of a hope that illuminates the path, she is also invested with the mission of speaking clearly to reject everything that mortifies life and prevents its development, and to take a position in favour of the poor, the exploited, the victims of violence and war, and all those who suffer in body and in spirit (cf. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 159).

As the sign and sacrament of the Kingdom, the Church is the pilgrim people of God on earth who, drawing precisely on the final promise, reads and interprets the dynamics of history through the Gospel, denouncing evil in all its forms and proclaiming, in word and deed, the salvation that Christ wishes to bring about for all humanity and His Kingdom of justice, love and peace. The Church, therefore, does not proclaim herself; on the contrary, everything within her must point to salvation in Christ.

From this perspective, the Church is called to recognize humbly the human fragility and transience of her own institutions which, despite being at the service of the Kingdom of God, bear the

fleeting image of this world (cf. *LG*, 48). No ecclesial institution can be treated as absolute; indeed, since they exist within history and time, they are called to continual conversion, to the renewal of forms and the reform of structures, to the continual regeneration of relationships, so that they may truly fulfill their mission.

Within the horizon of the Kingdom of God, we must also understand the relationship between the Christians who are carrying out their mission today, and those who have already completed their earthly existence and are in a state of purification or beatitude. *Lumen Gentium*, in fact, affirms that all Christians form a single Church, that there is communion and sharing of spiritual goods founded on the union of all believers with Christ, a *fraterna sollicitudo* between the earthly Church and the heavenly Church: that communion of saints that is experienced in particular in the liturgy (cf. *LG*, 49-51). By praying for the departed and following in the footsteps of those who have already lived as disciples of Jesus, we too are sustained on our journey and strengthen our worship of God: marked by the one Spirit and united in the one liturgy, together with those who have gone before us in faith, we praise and give glory to the Most Holy Trinity.

Let us be grateful to the Council Fathers for reminding us of this most important and beautiful aspect of being Christian, and let us strive to cultivate it in our lives.

GREETING TO PILGRIMS FROM THE
“EDITH HABERLAND-WAGNER
FOUNDATION” AND AUGUSTINER BREWERY

Saturday, 9 May 2026

Caring for creation for the sake of the common good

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Peace be with you!

Your Eminence,
Dear brothers and sisters,

I am pleased to greet all of you on your pilgrimage to Rome. In particular, I express my gratitude for your decision to honor the anniversary of my election to the See of the Apostle Peter in this way, and for your prayerful support for my ministry.

You have kindly presented – or you will present – some of the products from the brewery in Munich, which I am happy to say I visited. This

thoughtful gesture of closeness, for which I am grateful, gives me the opportunity to offer two points for reflection. The first is your connection to the Augustinian Order, which naturally has had a very significant impact on my own life. As I have already had occasion to say, Saint Augustine “reminds us that we all have God given gifts and talents, and our purpose, fulfilment and joy comes from offering them back in loving service to God and in service to our neighbour” (*Video-message to the Augustinian Province of Saint Thomas of Villanova*, 29 August 2025). It is my hope, then, that your pilgrimage will not only strengthen you in faith, but inspire you to continue serving your brothers and sisters, especially those most in need.

The second point comes from the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* – on the care for our common home – written, as you know, by Pope Francis, whose first anniversary of death we recently commemorated. In that important document, he spoke eloquently about the God-given grandeur of the whole of creation, which includes both animals as well as the food and drink that sustain us. He emphasized that each element and creature is a reflection of God’s boundless love, and that “everything is, as it were, a caress of God” (No. 84). This insight calls us to the great responsibility not only to care for creation but to ensure that its resources are always used wisely and with an eye to justice, which is a prerequisite for peace. As you return home, I therefore encourage you to continue playing your part in promoting a just and effective approach to caring for creation, both professionally and personally, for the sake of the common good.

With these brief yet heartfelt thoughts, I entrust you and your families to the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, and I gladly impart my blessing.

REGINA CAELI MESSAGE

Sunday, 10 May 2026

Love is not an idea of the human mind, but the reality of divine life

Dear brothers and sisters, happy Sunday!

In today’s Gospel, we hear some of the words Jesus addressed to his disciples during the Last Supper. As he turns the bread and wine into a living expression of his love, Christ says: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (*Jn* 14:15). This statement frees us from the misconception

that we are loved because we keep the commandments, as if our righteousness were a prerequisite for God's love. On the contrary, God's love is the basis for our righteousness. We truly keep the commandments according to God's will when we recognize his love for us, just as Christ revealed it to the world. Jesus' words are therefore an invitation to enter into a relationship, not a blackmail or a suspicious ultimatum.

This is why the Lord commands us to love one another as he has loved us (cf. *Jn* 13:34): it is Jesus' love that begets love within us. Christ himself is the standard, the measure of true love: the love that is faithful forever, pure and unconditional. The love that knows no "buts" or "maybes;" the love that gives of itself without seeking to possess; the love that gives life without taking anything in return. Because God loved us first, we too can love, and when we truly love God, we truly love one another. It is like life itself: just as only those who have received life can live, so too, only those who have been loved can love. The Lord's commandments are therefore a way of life that heal us from false loves. They are a spiritual lifestyle that is a path towards salvation.

It is precisely because he loves us that the Lord does not leave us alone in life's trials; he promises us the Paraclete, that is, the Advocate, the "Spirit of truth" (*Jn* 14:17). This gift is one that "the world cannot receive" (*ibid.*), as long as it persists in evil, oppressing the poor, excluding the weak and killing the innocent. Those who respond to Jesus' love for all, on the other hand, will find in the Holy Spirit an ally who will never fail: "You know him," says Jesus, "for he dwells with you, and will be in you" (*ibid.*). We can therefore bear witness to God, who is love, always and everywhere. Love is not an idea of the human mind, but the reality of divine life, through which all things were created out of nothing and redeemed from death.

By offering us true and eternal love, Jesus shares with us his identity as the beloved Son: "I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you" (v. 20). This all-encompassing communion of life refutes the Accuser – the Paraclete's adversary, the spirit opposed to our defender. In fact, while the Holy Spirit is the power of truth, the Accuser is the "father of lies" (*Jn* 8:44), who seeks to set humanity against God and people against one another: the very opposite of what Jesus does by saving us from evil and uniting us as a people of brothers and sisters in the Church.

Dear friends, filled with gratitude for this gift, let us entrust ourselves to the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Mother of Divine Love.

AFTER THE REGINA CAELI

Dear brothers and sisters,

I have learned with deep concern of the reports regarding the growing violence in the Sahel region, particularly in Chad and Mali, which have recently suffered terrorist attacks. I offer the assurance of my heartfelt prayers for the victims and my spiritual closeness to all those who are suffering as a result of the tragic events. I fervently hope that every form of violence may cease, and I encourage all efforts aimed at fostering peace and development in that beloved land.

Each year, on 10 May, we celebrate the "Day of Coptic-Catholic Friendship". I extend my fraternal greetings to His Holiness Pope Tawadros II and assure the entire beloved Coptic Church of my remembrance in prayer. It is my hope that our journey of friendship will lead us to perfect unity in Christ, who has called us "friends" (cf. *Jn* 15:15).

And now, I cordially welcome all of you, the faithful of Rome and pilgrims from various countries!

In a particular way, I greet the group "Guardie d'Onore al Sacro Cuore di Gesù," from various cities throughout Italy as well as the "Volontari per l'evangelizzazione" connected with the Radio Maria family. I also warmly greet the volunteers of the association "Komen Italia," whom I thank for their commitment to breast cancer prevention.

I would like to thank the people of the Canary Islands who, with the hospitality characteristic of them, welcomed the cruise ship *Hondius* and the passengers infected with the Hantavirus. I look forward to seeing all of you next month during my visit to the Islands.

Today, we especially remember all mothers. Through the intercession of Mary, the Mother of Jesus and our own Mother, let us pray with love and gratitude for every mother, particularly those living in very difficult circumstances. Thank you! May God bless you!

I wish everyone a blessed Sunday.

GREETING TO THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE
8TH COLLOQUIUM BETWEEN THE
DICASTERY FOR INTERRELIGIOUS
DIALOGUE AND THE ROYAL INSTITUTE FOR
INTER-FAITH STUDIES

Monday, 11 May 2026

**Christians and Muslims
called to transform indifference**

into solidarity

Peace be with you.
Welcome.

Your Royal Highness Prince Hasan bin Talal,
Dear brothers and sisters,

I am pleased to greet all of you and I am grateful for your presence here on the occasion of this eighth colloquium, jointly organized by the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue and the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies.

The theme that you have chosen this year, “Human Compassion and Empathy in Modern Times,” is particularly timely for our world today. Indeed, these are not marginal sentiments, but rather are essential attitudes of both of our religious traditions and important aspects of what it means to live a truly human life.

The Muslim tradition associates compassion, *ra’fa*, with mercy as a gift bestowed by God in the hearts of believers, and one of the divine names, *al-Ra’uf*, reminds us that compassion always has its origin in God himself.

Similarly, in the Christian tradition, Sacred Scripture reveals a God who does not remain indifferent to suffering, but says to Moses, “I have seen the misery of my people... I have heard their cry” (*Ex* 3:7). In Jesus Christ, this divine compassion becomes visible and tangible. God goes beyond seeing and hearing by taking on our human nature in order to become the living embodiment of compassion. Following the example of Jesus, Christian compassion becomes a sharing in or “suffering with” others, particularly the most disadvantaged. For this reason, “love for the poor – whatever form their poverty may take – is the evangelical hallmark of a Church faithful to the heart of God” (*Dilexi Te*, 103).

For our traditions, human compassion and empathy are not something additional or optional, but are a call from God to reflect his goodness in our daily lives.

This belief, therefore, has social implications. Pope Leo XIII taught that the poor and marginalized are worthy of special attention and help from society and the State (cf. *Rerum Novarum*, 37). In this regard, I wish to express appreciation for the generous efforts of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in welcoming refugees and assisting those in need in difficult circumstances.

Dear friends, compassion and empathy are sadly in danger of disappearing today. Technological advances have made us more connected than ever before, but they can also lead to indifference. The constant flow of images and videos of the hard-

ships of others can dull our hearts rather than stir them. Pope Francis warned us that “we have become used to the suffering of others [thinking]: it does not affect me, it does not interest me, it is none of my business” (*Homily*, Lampedusa, 8 July 2013). This type of apathy is becoming one of the most serious spiritual challenges of our time.

In such a context, Christians and Muslims, drawing from the richness of our respective traditions, are called to a common mission: to revive humanity where it has grown cold, to give voice to those who suffer and to transform indifference into solidarity. Compassion and empathy can be our instruments as they have the power to restore the dignity of the other.

It is my hope that Jordan will continue to be a living witness to this kind of compassion, as well as a sign of dialogue, solidarity and hope, in a region that is marked by trials.

May our collaboration bear fruit in concrete gestures of peace, empathy and fraternity.

Thank you!

And, as in our traditions we seek peace as one of the most important blessings of God, I ask the blessing of God upon all of you.

The Lord be with you. May the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit come down upon you and remain with you always. Amen.

Thank you very much.

ADDRESS TO THE MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF THE VATICAN OBSERVATORY FOUNDATION

Monday, 11 May 2026

A treasury of beauty open to all

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Peace be with you.

Your Eminence,
President of Governatorato,
Dear friends,
Dear brothers and sisters,

I am deeply grateful to be meeting with you, the members of the Vatican Observatory Foundation, and I thank you for your faithful and generous support of the work of the Vatican Observatory – a cherished institution of the Vatican City State at the service of the Holy See and of the Universal Church.

One hundred and thirty-five years ago, my predecessor Pope Leo XIII re-founded the Vatican

Observatory so that “everyone might see clearly that the Church and her Pastors are not opposed to true and solid science, whether human or divine, but that they embrace it, encourage it, and promote it with the fullest possible devotion” (*Ut Mysticam*, 14 March 1891). In that era, science was increasingly being presented as a rival source of truth to religion so that the Church felt an urgent need to counter the growing perception that faith and science were enemies.

Yet today, both science and religion face a different and perhaps more insidious threat: those who deny the very existence of objective truth. Too many in our world refuse to acknowledge what both science and the Church plainly teach – that we bear a solemn responsibility for the stewardship of our planet and for the welfare of those who dwell upon it, especially the most vulnerable, whose lives are imperilled by the reckless exploitation of both people and the natural world. This is precisely why the Church’s embrace of rigorous, honest science remains not merely valuable, but essential.

Astronomy holds a particular place in this mission. The capacity to gaze with wonder at the sun, the moon, and stars is a gift given to every human being, regardless of station or circumstance. It awakens in us both awe and a saving sense of proportion. Contemplating the heavens invites us to see our fears and our failings in the light of God’s immensity. The night sky is a treasury of beauty open to all – rich and poor alike – and in a world so painfully divided, it remains one of the last truly universal sources of joy.

Tragically, even this gift is now under threat. To paraphrase Pope Benedict, we have filled our skies with man-made light that blinds us to the lights God has placed there – a fitting image, he suggested, of sin itself (cf. *Homily*, 7 April 2012).

It is in this context that I express my profound gratitude for the work of the Foundation. Your commitment enables the Vatican’s scientists to engage meaningfully with the wider public and with the global scientific community. Your generosity makes it possible for the Vatican Observatory to share the wonder of astronomy with students from across the world, and to offer workshops and summer schools to those serving in Catholic schools and parishes. And it is ultimately your dedication that keeps the Observatory’s telescopes and laboratories what they were always meant to be: places where the glory of God’s creation is encountered with reverence, with depth, and joy.

We must never lose sight of the theological vision that animates all of this. Ours is a religion of the Incarnation. Scripture teaches us that from the

very beginning, God has made himself known through the things he has created (cf. *Rom* 1:20), and that God so loved this creation that he sent his own Son to enter into it and redeem it (cf. *Jn* 3:16). It is therefore no surprise that people of deep faith feel drawn to explore the origins and workings of the Universe. The hunger to understand creation more fully is nothing less than a reflection of that restless longing for God which lies at the heart of every soul.

In expressing once again my gratitude for your support, I willingly invoke upon you and your families the abundant blessings of Almighty God. Thank you!

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Wednesday, 13 May 2026

Virgin Mary our perfect model

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

The Second Vatican Council chose to dedicate the last chapter of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church to the Virgin Mary (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 52-69). She “is hailed as a pre-eminent and singular member of the Church, and as its type and excellent example in faith and charity” (*LG*, 53). These words invite us to understand how in Mary, who under the action of the Holy Spirit welcomed and brought forth the Son of God made flesh, we can recognize both the *model* and the pre-eminent *member* and *mother* of the entire ecclesial community.

By allowing Herself to be shaped by the work of Grace, which came to fulfilment in Her, and by welcoming the gift of the Most High with Her faith and Her virginal love, Mary is the perfect *model* of what the whole Church is called to be: a creature of the Word of the Lord and mother of the children of God, begotten in docility to the action of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, as She is the believer *par excellence*, in whom we are offered the perfect form of unconditional openness to the divine mystery within the communion of God’s holy people, Mary is an *excellent* member of the ecclesial community. Finally, inasmuch as She brings forth children in the Son, loved in the eternal Beloved who came among us, Mary is the *mother* of the whole Church, which can turn to her with filial confidence, in the certainty of being heard, protected and loved.

One might express the sum of these characteristics of the Virgin Mary by referring to Her as a *woman who is the icon of the Mystery*. The word *woman*

highlights the historical reality of this young daughter of Israel, to whom it was granted to live the extraordinary experience of becoming the mother of the Messiah. The expression *icon* emphasizes that, in Her, the twofold movement of descent and ascent is fulfilled: in Her, both God's gratuitous election and Her free consent of faith in Him shine forth. Mary is therefore the woman who is the icon of the *Mystery*, that is, of the divine plan of salvation, once hidden and now revealed in its fullness in Jesus Christ.

The Council has left us a clear teaching on the unique place reserved to the Virgin Mary in the work of Redemption (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 60-62). It recalls that the sole Mediator of salvation is Jesus Christ (cf. *1 Tim* 2:5-6), and that his Mother Most Holy "in no way impedes, but rather fosters the immediate union of the faithful with Christ (cf. *LG*, 60). At the same time, "predestined from eternity by that decree of divine providence which determined the incarnation of the Word to be the Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin ... in this singular way ... cooperated by Her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Saviour in giving back supernatural life to souls. Wherefore She is our mother in the order of grace" (*ibid.*, 61).

The mystery of the Church is also reflected in the Virgin Mary: in Her, the people of God find the representation of their origin, their model and their homeland. In the Mother of the Lord, the Church contemplates her own mystery, not only because she finds in Her the model of virginal faith, maternal charity and the spousal covenant to which she is called, but also and above all because in Her she recognizes her own archetype, the ideal figure of what she is called to be.

As we can see, the reflections on the Virgin Mother collected in *Lumen Gentium* teach us to love the Church and to serve within her the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God, which is coming and which will be fully realized in glory.

Let us be challenged, therefore, by the sublime model who is Mary, Virgin and Mother, and let us ask Her to help us, through Her intercession, to respond to what is asked of us through Her example: do I live my participation of the Church with humble and active faith? Do I recognize in her the community of the covenant that God has given me to respond to His infinite love? Do I feel that I am a living part of the Church, in obedience to the pastors given by God? Do I look to Mary as a model, an outstanding member and Mother of the Church, and ask Her to help me be a faithful disciple of her Son?

Sisters and brothers, may the Holy Spirit, who

descended upon Mary and is invoked by us humbly and trustfully, grant us the grace to live these wonderful realities to the full. And, having reflected deeply on the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, let us ask the Virgin to obtain this gift for us: that love for the Holy Mother Church may grow in all of us. So be it!

VIDEO MESSAGE OF
HIS HOLINESS POPE LEO XIV FOR
"THY KINGDOM COME 2026"

Thursday, 14 May 2026

Longing for God to heal what is broken in us and our world

Dear brothers and sisters,

I am pleased to greet all of you taking part in this year's "Thy Kingdom Come" ecumenical prayer event, and to assure you of my spiritual closeness.

Each year, during the Advent season, Christians address God with the words, "Come, Emmanuel." With great urgency we cry out for the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy: the birth of Emmanuel, whose name means God is with us. Throughout that season, in our songs and our carols, we repeat this call with ever greater urgency, "Come, God-with-us," as we long for his presence. We long for him to save us from our sins, our foolishness and all that might harm us. We long for him to heal what is broken in us and what is broken in our world. Even though we know that God is almighty and transcendent, we are still bold enough to ask him to be truly with us – not distant, but close. We are bold enough to cry out with the prophet, "O that you would tear open the heavens and come down" (*Is* 64:1).

While it is true that sometimes we stumble and forget about God and our need for him, at the core of our being we know that only he can satisfy our deepest longings and our inner restlessness. Perhaps the most beautiful expression of this can be found in the writings of Saint Augustine: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you" (*Confessions*, I, i, 1). In Jesus, God has indeed come close. He revealed himself in flesh to us, and through his Holy Spirit he is with us now.

Now, in these weeks of Eastertide, "Alleluia" is our song in a particular way, as we offer praise and thanksgiving for the resurrection of the Lord from the dead. He is still God-with-us! At the same time, we learn from the Gospels that even those



closest to Jesus did not always recognize him in the days following his resurrection. Even Mary Magdalene at first thought that the risen Lord was a gardener. Yet, even though he was not immediately recognized, he was truly present. And Jesus is still present, for when he returned to the Father's side, he did not leave us orphans (cf. *Jn* 14:18). He remains with us through the gift of the Holy Spirit, and we encounter him in a variety of ways, for he is always truly present in the Church.

Dear friends, Christ is everything for us! In him, we find the fullness of life and its meaning. This is not something about which we can keep silent. It is something to proclaim boldly (cf. *Mt* 10:27), for it is indeed Good News and needs to be shared. God is with us, and we who have encountered him are called to tell others about him. These days of the "Thy Kingdom Come Novena" are an especially fitting time to do so, and to pray that others will also come to encounter the saving and liberating love of God revealed in Jesus.

Dear brothers and sisters, I would like to conclude by sharing with you some words from my homily in Saint Peter's Basilica on Easter night: "The encounter to which we want to bear witness – through the words of faith and the works of charity – we do so by "singing" with our lives the "Alleluia" that we proclaim with our lips (cf. Saint Augustine, *Sermon* 256, 1). Just as the women rushed to tell the disciples, we too should be desiring to set out... to bring to all the good news that Jesus has risen and that having risen with him, through his power, we too can give life to a new world of peace and unity as 'a multitude of people and yet [...] a single person, for although there are many Christians, Christ is one'" (Saint Augustine, *Commentaries on the Psalms*, 127:3).

With these thoughts, I willingly invoke upon you all God's abundant blessings. And may the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit come upon you and be with

you always. Amen.

ADDRESS TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON THE FIGHT AGAINST DRUGS AND ORGANIZED CRIME IN THE OSCE REGION

Friday, 15 May 2026

No one may ever claim right to violate dignity and rights of others

Distinguished Parliamentarians,
Representatives of the participating States of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Mr. Ambassador,
Ladies and gentlemen,

With profound hope and pastoral concern, I greet you as you gather for the Second International Conference on the Fight against Drugs and Organized Crime in the OSCE Region, dedicated to the grave and urgent struggle against the scourge of illicit drugs. Your presence, drawn from many of the OSCE participating States stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok, stands as a testimony of collective resolve to confront a phenomenon that sustains criminal networks and imperils the very future of our societies.

The Holy See is firmly convinced that the rule of law, crime prevention and criminal justice must advance together in unity. Indeed, the authentic implementation of the rule of law remains indispensable for integral human development. No truly just society can endure unless the law – and not the arbitrary will of individuals – remains sovereign (cf. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 408), while no person or group, regardless of power or status, may ever claim the right to violate the dignity and rights of others or of their communities. Therefore, preventing and responding to criminal activities is closely interrelated with the respect for and protection of universal human rights. This requires not only the efforts of law enforcement authorities but also the engagement of society at large, at both the national and the international levels.

In this regard, the Holy See wholeheartedly supports every initiative that seeks to establish an effective, just, humane and credible criminal justice system capable of preventing and countering the production and the trafficking of illicit drugs. Recognizing that true justice cannot be satisfied with punishment alone, such efforts must likewise embrace approaches marked by perseverance and

mercy, aimed at the re-education and full reintegration of offenders into the fabric of society. The same respect for the inherent dignity of every person, including those who have committed crimes, precludes the use of the death penalty, torture, and every form of cruel or degrading punishment.

Comprehensive programs are needed to reach out to those enslaved by addiction, offering them medical treatment, psychological support and sustained rehabilitation. Such a multidisciplinary approach must regard the human person in his or her entirety, rising above purely repressive measures and permissive solutions, both of which fail to liberate individuals from the chains of dependence. In this way, they may rediscover and live anew the fullness of their God-given dignity.

Moreover, I wish to emphasize that education is key to prevention. It forms the foundation of integral human development and equips children and youth to recognize the profound devastation brought by drugs. In our time, when social media so often disseminates dangerous misinformation that trivializes these risks, education must begin within the family and be strengthened in the school, imparting accurate scientific knowledge of the ruinous effects of narcotics upon the brain, the body, personal conduct and the common good of the community.

Preventing and countering organized crime is essential to building safe, just and stable societies. From this perspective, I would like to acknowledge all law-enforcement officers and members of the judiciary who have sacrificed their lives or suffered injury in the courageous performance of their duties. Their witness should provoke in us sentiments of gratitude, responsibility and renewed determination.

The Catholic Church, through its many institutions around the world and drawing upon her long experience in accompanying those afflicted by addiction, stands ready to deepen still further her bond of fruitful cooperation with civil society. Together, in a spirit of mutual respect and shared responsibility, we can promote policies that truly serve the common good and the inalienable dignity of every human being.

May this Conference bear abundant and lasting fruit in strategies of transnational cooperation, effective prevention and genuine hope. Upon all of you, upon your deliberations and upon the peoples you represent, I invoke God's abundant blessings of wisdom, courage and enduring peace. Thank you.

LETTER TO HIS HOLINESS TAWADROS II
POPE OF ALEXANDRIA
PATRIARCH OF THE SEE OF SAINT MARK

Friday, 15 May 2026

A common pilgrimage in truth and charity towards full communion

Your Holiness, dear brother in Christ,
Christ is risen! *Al-Messih gam!*

In the joyful light of Easter, I am pleased to greet you on the auspicious occasion of the Day of Friendship between Copts and Catholics, thus continuing the noble tradition of my beloved predecessor Pope Francis.

This Day of Friendship, whose idea originated with Your Holiness, celebrates the relations between the See of Peter and the See of Mark, and is indeed a significant initiative. For us Christians, friendship is not a vague sentiment; it is at the very heart of our life and faith. For our Lord himself calls us his friends (cf. *Jn 15:15*), and he teaches us that "no one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (*Jn 15:13*). Thus it is by drawing upon Christ's friendship with us that we will be able to strengthen the friendship between ourselves, and between our Churches, as we continue to bear witness together to the divine *philanthropia* for all humanity!

This pilgrimage of friendship has enabled our Churches, separated by centuries of misunderstanding, to engage in a highly fruitful theological dialogue initiated over fifty years ago by Saint Paul VI and His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, of blessed memory. This dialogue, which was initially bilateral, has been taking place since 2003 within the framework of the *Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches*, whose three landmark documents demonstrate an increasing theological understanding. It is my hope that this Commission, whose Coordinating committee is currently meeting in Rome, may resume its work as soon as possible with all Churches of the Oriental Orthodox family, in order to respond to Christ's prayer, "that they all may be one" (*Jn 17:21*).

I also take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to Your Holiness and to the Coptic Orthodox Church for the truly fraternal hospitality offered to the participants in the Sixth World Conference of the Faith and Order Commission, including a large Catholic Delegation, held at the Monastery of Saint Bishoy, in Wadi El Natrun, in October 2025. I am confident that the reflections

undertaken on the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council will rekindle our desire to achieve the visible unity of the Church – a unity rooted in the one baptism that we profess in the Nicene Creed, and which, I sincerely pray, we shall attain.

At a time when our world is afflicted by so many conflicts, particularly in the Middle East, Christians must, more than ever, strive for full unity so that we may bear witness together to the Prince of Peace. In doing so, we can be confident in the powerful intercession and example of the countless martyrs who have suffered for the name of Christ.

Your Holiness, as our Churches prepare for the feast of Pentecost, I pray that the Holy Spirit, source and bearer of all gifts, will guide Copts and Catholics on our common pilgrimage in truth and charity towards full communion. Looking forward to having the joy of encountering Your Holiness personally, I assure you of my prayers as I convey to you a fraternal embrace of peace in Christ, our risen Lord.

From the Vatican, 4 May 2026

LEO PP. XIV

REGINA CAELI MESSAGE

*Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord
Sunday, 17 May 2026*

The Ascension elevates and expands our horizon in this life

Dear brothers and sisters, happy Sunday!

In many countries throughout the world, the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord is celebrated today.

The image of Jesus – lifted up from the earth and ascending toward heaven, as the Bible states (cf. *Acts* 1:1-11) – may cause us to think about this Mystery as a distant event from long ago. Yet this is not so, for we are united to Jesus as the members of one body united to the head. By ascending into heaven, then, he draws us with him toward full communion with the Father. In this regard, Saint Augustine said, “the head’s advance is the hope of the members” (*Sermon* 265, 1.2).

Indeed, Christ’s entire life is a movement of ascent. Through his humanity, he embraces and involves the whole world, elevating and redeeming human beings from their sinful condition. He thus brings light, forgiveness and hope where previous-

ly there was darkness, injustice and desperation, in order that men and women may attain the definitive Easter victory, in which the Son of God, by dying “has destroyed our death, and by rising, restored our life” (*Preface I of Easter*).

The Ascension, therefore, does not speak to us of a distant promise, but of a living bond, which draws us also toward heavenly glory, already elevating and expanding our horizon in this life and directing our way of thinking, feeling and acting more closely to the measure of God’s heart.

Moreover, in this path of ascent, we recognize the way (cf. *Jn* 14:1-6). Indeed, we find it in Jesus – in the gift of his life, his example and his teachings. We also see it marked out for us by the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints: those whom the Church offers as universal role models. Pope Francis also liked to speak of the saints “next door” (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 7), with whom we live in our daily lives: fathers, mothers, grandparents, people of every age and condition, who, with joy and commitment, make the effort to live sincerely according to the Gospel.

With them, with their support and thanks to their prayer, we too can learn to ascend day by day toward heaven. As Saint Paul says, we must focus on whatever is true, just and loveable (cf. *Phil* 4:8), and put into practice, with God’s help, all that we have “heard and seen” (v. 9). In this way, the divine life, which we received in Baptism and which constantly draws us to the heights, toward the Father, can grow in and around us and spread the precious fruits of communion and peace in the world.

May Mary, the Queen of Heaven, who illuminates and guides us in every moment, support us on our path.

AFTER THE REGINA CAELI

Dear brothers and sisters,

In many countries, World Communications Day is being marked today, whose theme this year I have chosen as “Preserving Human Voices and Faces.” In this era of artificial intelligence, I encourage everyone to commit themselves to promoting forms of communication that always respect the truth of the human person, on which every technological innovation should be focused.

From today until next Sunday, *Laudato Si’* Week is taking place, dedicated to the care of creation and inspired by Pope Francis’ Encyclical. In this jubilee year of Saint Francis of Assisi, we recall his message of peace with God, with our brothers and sisters, and with all creatures. Sadly, in recent

years, due to wars, progress in this direction has been greatly impeded. Therefore, I encourage the members of the *Laudato Si'* Movement and all who promote an integral ecology to renew their commitment. Indeed, caring for peace is caring for life!

I greet all of you, dear faithful of Rome and pilgrims from various countries. In particular, I welcome several marching bands from Germany, the "Sant'Antoniu di u Monti" Confraternity from Ajaccio, and the group of students from the University of Montana in the United States of America.

I greet the young people from Oppido Mamertina, the youth leaders from Lorenzaga in the Diocese of Concordia-Pordenone, and the Confirmation candidates from the Archdiocese of Genoa.

I wish all of you a happy Sunday.

ADDRESS TO THE MEMBERS OF THE
BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE CATHOLIC
EXTENSION SOCIETY

Monday, 18 May 2026

A beautiful expression of the universality of the Church

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Peace be with you.

When someone from Dolton, Illinois, comes, we have to open all the doors! There aren't many of us around anymore.

Your Eminence, Your Excellency,
Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, dear friends,

I am pleased to welcome you, the Members of the Board of Catholic Extension, together with your families, on your pilgrimage to Rome and to the Vatican. I pray that your time here allows you the opportunity to pray at the tombs of the Apostles and to strengthen your bonds with the Successor of Peter and the Universal Church. Such an occasion is particularly significant for you as a Pontifical Society.

Your visit to Rome takes place as we approach the Solemnity of Pentecost, a pivotal moment in the life of the Church that has particular relevance for us today. Indeed, it was only after receiving the promise of the Holy Spirit that the Apostles began to proclaim Jesus of Nazareth to men and women of "every nation under heaven" (*Acts* 2:5), an-

nouncing the Good News of salvation and new life in Christ. What follows in the book of Acts is the story of the early Church and the spread of the Gospel, first in Jerusalem and then to the surrounding areas. As the Lord added to their numbers, they began to form communities grounded in fraternal unity and in the teaching of the Apostles, nourished and strengthened by the Eucharist and a life of prayer (cf. v. 42-47).

The same zeal that moved the Christians of the early Church to share the news of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Spirit inspired your founder, Father Francis Clement Kelley over 120 years ago. He sought to reach out to remote faith communities across the United States in order to bring to them the very life of Christ through the sacraments and the support of a larger Catholic community. This missionary enthusiasm is still needed today, and so I would like to thank you for your continued efforts to minister to the needs of the poorer Catholic communities both in the United States and abroad.

In a particular way, I would like to commend your work in Cuba and in Puerto Rico. The support you provide to these communities is a beautiful expression of the universality of the Church and a living reminder that "love for our neighbor is tangible proof of the authenticity of our love for God" (*Dilexi Te* 26). I likewise encourage the pastoral care you are offering to the disadvantaged, as well as to the many immigrant families in the United States. It is imperative that our brothers and sisters experience the warmth of a community which is marked by the presence of Christ.

The early Church bears witness to the fact that wherever there is a true faith community, Christian charity inspires its members to alleviate the suffering of others and tend to those in need, especially the poor (cf. *Acts* 2:45; 6:1-6). Love for the poor can therefore be understood as "the evangelical hallmark of a Church faithful to the heart of God" (*Dilexi Te* 103), and also open the door for those we serve to come to know the Lord more deeply as we bear witness to his love.

As you continue your mission, the dedication of Catholic Extension to not only alleviate the temporal needs of those less fortunate, but also invest in building up vibrant Catholic communities is particularly necessary today. Faith-filled communities provide an opportunity for individuals to experience the joy of new life in Christ lived out in a daily, ordinary fashion. They provide support, as we have seen, for the poor, but also the strength that we all need in order to face the challenges of life with faith. In a particular way, these communities are also the "good soil" in which new voca-

tions to the priesthood and to religious life can take root and begin to grow (cf. *Mt* 13:8), providing new laborers for the harvest for years to come (cf. *Lk* 10:2).

Dear brothers and sisters, let us continue to serve the Lord with gladness and generosity, motivated by love of God and neighbor and the certainty that the Father “who sees in secret will reward you” (*Mt* 6:4). Entrusting all of you to the loving intercession of Mary Immaculate, I willingly impart my Apostolic Blessing, which I extend to everyone associated with The Catholic Extension Society, as a pledge of peace and joy in the risen Lord. Thank you.

ADDRESS TO HIS HOLINESS ARAM I,
CATHOLICOS OF CILICIA

Monday, 18 May 2026

There can be no restoration of communion between our Churches without unity in faith

Your Holiness, dear Brother,

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!” (*Eph* 1:2). With the greeting of the Apostle Paul, I welcome Your Holiness and the distinguished members of your delegation at the start of your visit to the Church of Rome.

Could there be a greater spiritual bond between our Churches than the Apostle Paul of Tarsus, born in Cilicia, the place of your See, and who received the crown of martyrdom here in Rome? To Saint Paul, the Apostle par excellence of communion between the Churches, I entrust your pilgrimage to Rome. But how can I fail to mention also the great saints of the Church who worked for Christian unity? My thoughts turn to Saint Nerses the Gracious, Catholicos of Cilicia, who may be regarded as a pioneer of ecumenism – and whose recent inclusion in the *Roman Martyrology* is a further example of that “ecumenism of the saints” which already unites our Churches.

Located at the crossroads of different peoples

and cultures, the Catholicosate of the Holy See of Cilicia has long been characterized by its ecumenical vocation, particularly with regard to the Church of Rome. This special relationship between our Churches, which was particularly intense in the Middle Ages, saw new developments in the 20th century and especially after the Second Vatican Council.

I am mindful that your venerable predecessor, Catholicos Khoren I, was the first primate of an Oriental Orthodox Church to visit Rome after the Council, as early as May 1967. Yourself, Holiness, stand out for your tireless ecumenical zeal, both locally, as one of the founders of the Middle East Council of Churches, and internationally within the World Council of Churches, where you have held prominent positions.

I am deeply grateful for your efforts to foster relations with the Catholic Church and for your closeness to the Church of Rome, which you visited for the first time as Catholicos during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January 1997, and which you have honoured with your presence on numerous occasions since then.

I thank you in particular for your personal commitment to promoting theological dialogue between our Churches, which has been taking place since 2003 within the framework of the *Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches*. This dialogue, which benefits from the valuable contribution of Armenian delegates, has already published three significant documents on the nature and mission of the Church, on communion in the early Church and on the sacraments. I sincerely hope that, despite recent difficulties, this dialogue will continue with renewed vigour, for there can be no restoration of communion between our Churches without unity in faith.

Your presence among us brings to mind the beloved country from which you come and which I had the joy of visiting last December. This land of Lebanon,

so dear to my heart, which for so long has shown the whole world that it is possible for people of diverse cultures and religions to live together as one nation, continues to face severe trials. At a time when the unity and integrity of your country are once again under threat, our Churches are called



to strengthen the fraternal bonds that unite not only Christians amongst themselves, but also with their brothers and sisters from other communities in their shared homeland. Your Holiness, I assure you of my daily prayers and of the deep concern I feel for the people of Lebanon and for the Churches of the Middle East, to which you will devote a conference during your stay in Rome.

In these days leading up to the Solemnity of Pentecost, as we prepare to relive the mystery of the miracle of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the nascent Church, I am grateful to be able to pray after this meeting, together with Your Holiness, to the Spirit, Lord and Giver of life, that He may grant us the gift of unity, bestow upon us enduring peace, and renew the face of the earth.

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Wednesday, 20 May 2026

The mystery of Christ, the living bond which constitutes and unites the Church

Prior to the start of the General Audience, Pope Leo expressed his joy at welcoming Catholicos Aram I and his delegation.

[*In Italian*] Dear Brothers and Sisters, I am very happy to welcome His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of Cilicia of the Armenian Apostolic Church, together with the distinguished delegation accompanying him. This fraternal visit represents an important opportunity to strengthen the bonds of unity that already exist between us, as we move towards full communion between our Churches.

[*In English*] Your Holiness, in these days when we prepare for Pentecost, I invoke the grace of the Holy Spirit upon your pilgrimage to the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul, and I invite all those present to pray fervently to the Lord that your visit and meetings may constitute a further step on the path towards full unity. Let us also pray for peace in Lebanon and the Middle East, once again torn apart by violence and war.

Your Holiness, I wish to express my particular gratitude for your constant personal commitment to ecumenism, especially to the international theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

Welcome, Your Holiness, dear bishops and dear friends! Together, let us invoke the interces-

sion of Saint Gregory the Illuminator, Saint Gregory of Nareg, Saint Nerses the Gracious and, above all, the Virgin Mother of God, that they may enlighten our path towards the fullness of that unity we all desire.

The General Audience Catechesis:

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

Today we are beginning a new series of catecheses on the first Document issued by the Second Vatican Council: the Constitution on the sacred liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC).

In drafting this Constitution, the Council Fathers sought not only to undertake a reform of the rites, but to lead the Church to contemplate and deepen that living bond which constitutes and unites her: the mystery of Christ. Indeed, the liturgy touches the very heart of this mystery: it is at once the space, the time and the context in which the Church receives her very life from Christ. For in the liturgy, “the work of our redemption is accomplished” (SC, 2), which makes us a chosen lineage, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people whom God has acquired for Himself (cf. *1 Pet* 2:9).

As manifested by the threefold renewal – biblical, patristic and liturgical – that the Church underwent through the course of the 20th century, the Mystery in question does not designate an obscure reality, but God’s salvific plan, hidden from all eternity and revealed in Christ, according to Saint Paul’s affirmation (cf. *Eph* 3:3-6). Here, then, is the Christian Mystery: the Paschal event, that is to say, the passion, death, resurrection and glorification of Christ, which is made sacramentally present to us precisely in the liturgy, so that every time we take part in the assembly gathered “in his name” (cf. *Mt* 18:20) we are immersed in this Mystery.

Christ Himself is the inner source of the mystery of the Church, the holy people of God, born from His side pierced on the cross. In the holy liturgy, through the power of His Spirit, He continues to act. He sanctifies and unites the Church, His bride, to His offering to the Father. He exercises His utterly unique priesthood, He who is present in the proclaimed Word, in the sacraments, in the ministers who celebrate, in the gathered community and, in the highest degree, in the Eucharist (cf. SC, 7). Thus, according to Saint Augustine (cf. *Sermon*, 272), in celebrating the Eucharist the Church receives the Body of the Lord and becomes what she receives: she becomes the Body of Christ, “a dwelling place of God in the

Spirit” (cf. *Eph* 2:22). This is “the work of our redemption”, which conforms us to Christ and builds us up in communion.

In the holy liturgy, this communion is achieved through “rites and prayers” (*SC*, 48). The rituality of the Church expresses her faith – in accordance with the familiar saying *lex orandi, lex credendi* – and at the same time shapes ecclesial identity: the proclaimed Word, the celebration of the Sacrament, the gestures, the silences, the space – all this represents and gives form to the people gathered by the Father, the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Every celebration thus becomes a true epiphany of the Church in prayer, as Saint John Paul II recalled (Apostolic Letter *Vicesimus Quintus Annus*, 9).

If the liturgy is at the service of the mystery of Christ, one understands why it has been defined as “the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed” and “at the same time... the font from which all her power flows” (*SC*, 10). It is true that the action of the Church is not limited to the liturgy alone; however, all her activity (preaching, service to the poor, the accompaniment of human realities) converges towards this “summit”. Conversely, the liturgy sustains the faithful by immersing them ever and anew in the Pasch of the Lord and, thus, through the proclamation of the Word, the celebration of the sacraments and communal prayer, they are refreshed, encouraged and renewed in their commitment to faith and in their mission. In other words, the participation of the faithful in liturgical action is at once “internal” and “external”.

This also means that it is called to unfold in a tangible way throughout daily life, in an ethical and spiritual dynamic, so that the liturgy celebrated is translated into life and demands a faithful existence, capable of making concrete what has been experienced in the celebration: it is in this way that our life becomes a “living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God”, fulfilling our “spiritual worship” (*Rom* 12:1).

In this way, “the liturgy daily builds up those who are within into a holy temple of the Lord” (*SC*, 2), and forms an open community, welcoming to all. Indeed, it is inhabited by the Holy Spirit, it introduces us into the life of Christ, it makes us His Body and, in all its dimensions, it represents a sign of the unity of the entire human race in Christ. As Pope Francis said, “the world still does not know it, but everyone is invited to the supper of the wedding of the Lamb (*Rev* 19:9)” (Apostolic Letter *Desiderio Desideravi*, 5).

Dear friends, let us allow ourselves to be shaped inwardly by the rites, symbols, gestures and above

all the living presence of Christ in the liturgy, which we will have the opportunity to explore in the coming Catecheses.

ADDRESS TO THE NEW NON-RESIDENT
AMBASSADORS ACCREDITED TO THE HOLY
SEE ON THE OCCASION OF THE
PRESENTATION OF THE LETTERS OF
CREDENCE

Thursday, 21 May 2026

**Called to contribute to greatly
needed peace**

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome all of you cordially on the occasion of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassadors Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Holy See on behalf of your respective countries: Sierra Leone, Bangladesh, Yemen, Rwanda, Namibia, Mauritius, Chad and Sri Lanka. I ask you kindly to convey my respectful greetings to your Heads of State, together with the assurance of my prayers for them and for your fellow citizens.

I am particularly pleased to receive you as the Church approaches the Solemnity of Pentecost, recalling how the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples, transforming fear into courage and division into unity by enabling them to speak in the languages of all peoples. It is my hope that a similar vision of unity may inspire the world of diplomacy, where constructive relations among nations flourish through genuine openness, the fostering of mutual respect and a shared sense of responsibility.

In this regard, I wish to renew the appeal I made in my *Address to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps* this past January. In a time when “peace is sought through weapons as a condition for asserting one’s own dominion,” there is an urgent need for a return to “a diplomacy that promotes dialogue and seeks consensus” on all levels – bilateral, regional, and multilateral. Such dialogue, “motivated by a sincere search for ways leading to peace,” demands that words once again express clear realities without distortion or hostility. Only then can misunderstandings be overcome and trust be rebuilt in the context of international relations.

Yet courteous and clear dialogue, essential though it is, must be accompanied by a deeper conversion of heart: the willingness to set aside

particular interests for the sake of the common good. No nation, no society and no international order can call itself just and humane if it measures its success solely by power or prosperity while neglecting those who live at the margins. Indeed, Christ's love for the least and the forgotten compels us to reject every form of selfishness that leaves the poor and the vulnerable invisible (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te*, 4 October 2025, 9).

It is precisely this spirit of self-giving solidarity that must animate the service of diplomats and strengthen the international organizations, in order to create spaces for encounter and mediation. These institutions remain indispensable instruments for resolving disputes and fostering cooperation. At a moment when geopolitical tensions continue to fragment our world further, it is necessary to make them more representative, effective and oriented toward the unity of the human family.

Your service as Ambassadors constitutes a valuable bridge of trust and cooperation between your countries and the Holy See. I pray that our shared efforts will contribute to a revitalized commitment to bilateral and multilateral engagement and help draw attention to those often forgotten at the margins of our societies. In this way, we can work together to lay firmer foundations for a more just, fraternal and peaceful world.

As you undertake your new responsibilities, I assure you of the Secretariat of State's readiness to assist, together with the Dicastries of the Roman Curia. May your mission strengthen dialogue, deepen mutual understanding and contribute to the peace so greatly needed in our world. Upon you, your loved ones and the Nations you represent, I invoke God's abundant blessings, trusting that he will guide and sustain you in your noble service. Thank you!

ADDRESS TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
"PRESERVING HUMAN VOICES AND FACES"

Friday, 22 May 2026

**Preserving the human person
in harmony with God's
creative design**

The Conference "Preserving Human Voices and Faces" was organized by the Dicastery for Communication in collaboration with the Dicastery for Culture and Education.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Peace be with you.

Good morning to you all and welcome!

I am pleased to welcome you following the International Congress held yesterday to mark the 60th World Communications Day. As scholars and experts well versed in digital communication, your concern for the future of humanity has brought you to Rome in order to reflect upon media and digital literacy. By participating in this initiative, you have each brought your own gifts and talents to contribute to the future direction of humanity in this time marked by the exponential growth of technology, a question particularly significant for the mission of the Church.

It is precisely within the context of the Church's universal mission that her advocacy of social communications can best be understood. In fact, the Second Vatican Council's Decree on the Mass Media – which gave rise to World Communications Day – begins by reminding us that the Church "was founded by Christ our Lord to bring salvation to everybody and consequently she is duty bound to preach the gospel" (*Inter Mirifica* 3). The primary concern of the Church has been, and continues to be, the eternal salvation of every human person. As we read in John's Gospel: "That they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (*Jn* 17:3).

This desire for everyone "to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (*1 Tim* 2:4) must therefore inform not only our decisions and actions, but also the use and the direction given to media, digital technology and artificial intelligence in order to ensure that these tools be placed at the authentic service of humanity. As sadly evidenced by the unbridled promotion and implementation of technology at the expense of human dignity and the damage caused when chatbots and other technologies exploit our need for human relationships, we are truly experiencing an eclipse of the sense of what it means to be human (cf. *Message for the 60th World Day of Social Communications*). It is therefore all the more imperative to recover an understanding of the true meaning and grandeur of humanity as intended by God. It is in this sense that the challenge we currently face is "not technological, but anthropological" (*ibid.*), and it is my hope that the Encyclical Letter to be published within a few days will contribute to answering this challenge.

In this light, I am confident that it is only through contemplating Christ, the Incarnate Word, that we can recover not only a proper vision

of God, but also come to understand the truth of humanity. Since “by his incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every human person” (*Gaudium et Spes* 22), the human heart will never fully fathom the depths of its own recesses nor understand its worth apart from the heart of Christ. For this reason, the true preservation of the face and voice of every individual must necessarily entail an encounter with him who is “the image of the invisible God,” while at the same time being himself the perfect man (*Col* 1:15).

Naturally, all of this must be born in mind while discussing the implications of digital technology and the role of the Church in social communications. Such a task is not always easy, but we have been called to bring the light of Christ to the world, illuminating every dimension of human activity (cf. *Jn* 8:12; *Mt* 5:14-16). How can we fail to do so in our own time, especially with an issue so prevalent in society? As a result, the Church finds herself compelled to contribute to the effort of planning and implementing media, information and AI literacy within education systems. In this way, she can help to ensure that people acquire critical thinking skills and that technologies contribute to the salvation of those who use them (cf. *Message for the 60th World Day of Social Communications; Inter Mirifica* 3).

All of us, I am sure, are particularly concerned about the possible consequences of the use of digital technology and AI not only on the physical and intellectual development of children and young people, but also on their spiritual wellbeing. In this regard, all people, but especially the young “should learn moderation and discipline in their use” of such technology (*Inter Mirifica* 10), supported by the guidance of parents and educators. Moreover, in light of the Church’s mission and the current misconceptions concerning God and the human person, digital literacy must also include an education in the truth about God and about humanity. Young people in particular are open to this truth and desirous of discovering life’s meaning. We must therefore help them to encounter the living Christ and teach them to integrate the use of technology within a holistic Christian lifestyle.

Dear brothers and sisters, this is an issue that is particularly close to my heart and close to that of the Church. Indeed, as a Mother, the Church takes interest in the lives of her children, desiring to guide them to full maturity (cf. *Eph* 4:13). It is my hope that these reflections lead to a restored trust in technology as a fruit of the genius of the human person in harmony with God’s creative design. In thanking you for your efforts now and in

the future, I cordially invoke upon you and upon your families the divine blessings of wisdom, joy and peace. Thank you.

HOMILY – PENTECOST

Sunday, 24 May 2026

The Spirit of peace, mission and truth

Dear brothers and sisters,

The Easter season reaches its fulfillment today on the Solemnity of Pentecost. To highlight the continuity of this salvific event, the Gospel takes us back to the “first day of the week” (*Jn* 20:19), that is, to that new day on which the risen Jesus appeared to the disciples, showing them “his hands and his side” (v. 20). The Lord reveals his glorious body, specifically his wounds, the marks of the crucifixion. These signs of the Passion, more eloquent than words, are now transfigured; he who was dead lives forever.

Upon seeing the Lord, the disciples too are restored back to life. They had shut themselves in the Upper Room, overcome by fear, but Jesus comes and stands among them, even though the doors were closed, and fills them with joy. He passes through our “death,” opening the tomb and throwing it wide open when there was no way out for us. Christ accompanies his actions with the words: “Peace be with you” (v. 19); and immediately afterward, he breathes the Holy Spirit upon the disciples. The risen One is full of life. After having proven that he was restored to life as true man, he bestows the life of God as the beloved Son of the Father who has become, for our sake, our brother and Redeemer. In the same Upper Room where he instituted the new and eternal covenant, Jesus pours out the Spirit. The place of the Last Supper and the betrayal is transformed; the tomb of the Apostles becomes, for the entire Church, the womb of the Resurrection. Pentecost is therefore a Paschal feast and a feast of the body of Christ, which by grace is all of us.

In celebrating this mystery, I would like to focus on three aspects.

First of all, *the Spirit of the risen One is the Spirit of peace*. Indeed, through his Paschal Mystery, Christ restores peace between God and humanity, and the Holy Spirit pours this peace into our hearts and spreads it throughout the world. This peace stems from forgiveness and leads us to forgiveness. It begins with the forgiveness given by Jesus himself, whom we betrayed, condemned and crucified.

Surprising us with his love, the risen One himself says, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven" (*Jn* 20:23). With these words, Jesus involves us in a divine work, for only God can forgive sins (cf. *Mk* 2:7). This authority is bestowed as a sign of universal reconciliation: the Lord pours out his Spirit of peace from one end of history to the other, for he who has redeemed everyone from death excludes no one. Indeed, the Holy Spirit is Lord and giver of life since the beginning of creation, when he hovered over the waters (cf. *Gen* 1:2); and now, in renewing creation, he transforms the history of the world. Pentecost truly appears as the feast of the New Covenant, the Covenant between God and all the peoples of the world. While the roaring sound from above, the wind and the tongues of fire in the Upper Room are reminiscent of the ancient signs at Sinai (cf. *Acts* 2:2-3; *Ex* 19:16-19), God's holy law is inscribed in our hearts, engraved by the Spirit with letters of love in the flesh of Christ and in his body the Church.

This law is the rule of peace: It is the twofold commandment of love that the Spirit reminds us of with every heartbeat. With our heart, we can therefore pray "*Veni Sancte Spiritus*," for he has already been given to us. We can long for him, for he has already been promised to us. We can welcome him, for he himself is the sweet guest of the soul.

A second point is that *the Spirit of the risen One is the Spirit of mission*: "As the Father has sent me," says the Lord, "so I send you" (*Jn* 20:21). We are consequently drawn into Jesus' mission, the mission of the one who proceeds from God and returns to God through the power of the Spirit – who in turn proceeds from the Father and the Son, and is worshiped and glorified with them as one God. The Holy Spirit is the living charity of Christ that fills us, spurs us on and sustains us in our mission (cf. *2 Cor* 5:14). While bestowing on the Apostles the power to preach (cf. *Acts* 2:4), the same Spirit teaches humanity the word of salvation. Now that the Apostles have received the breath of the risen One within themselves, this proclamation pours from their lips, borne by the voice of Peter and of those who are with him. On the very day of Pentecost, the Apostles began to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen. In other words, the "mighty works of God" (*Acts* 2:11) are summed up in redemption, which begins with faith. Indeed, the first work of the Holy Spirit in us is the faith with which we profess: "Jesus is Lord!" (*1 Cor* 12:3). This faith lives and is expressed in every good deed, in every act of mercy and virtue. The work of God, therefore, is each one of us, who came here today from all parts of the world, invited to

the Lord's table, gathered to listen to his word and called to bear witness to it everywhere.

Dear friends, we are truly co-workers of the Gospel: the whole Church is its protagonist, not merely its guardian. Through the power of the Spirit, our proclamation is filled with joy and hope, for we – yes, we ourselves – are the newness of the world, the light and the salt of the earth (cf. *Mt* 5:13-14). Certainly not because of our own merit or privilege, but because of the word of the Lord, who sanctifies the sinner, heals the leper and transforms the one who denied him into an apostle. As we can clearly see, there are changes that do not bring new life to the world, but make it grow old through error and violence. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit enlightens minds and instils new vitality in our hearts. This is how he transfigures history, opening it to salvation, which is the gift that the Lord offers to everyone. The Church's mission bears witness to this offer, thereby transforming the world's confusion into communion with God and among ourselves.

This mission begins by proclaiming the truth about God and man, for the *Spirit of the risen One is the "Spirit of truth"* (*Jn* 14:17), whom the Lord himself promised us, asking for the unity of his Church – a unity founded on the love of God, the source of our love. The Spirit, who has spoken through the prophets, always promotes unity in truth, for he imbues in us understanding, harmony and coherency of life. As Saint Augustine teaches, "the Holy Spirit willed that this should be the sign of his presence" (*Discourse* 269, 1): The gift of tongues that are understood within the one faith. The Paraclete protects us from everything that hinders this understanding, including partisanship, hypocrisy and fads that obscure the light of the Gospel. The truth that God gives us thus stands as a liberating word for all peoples, a message that transforms every culture from within.

Indeed, the Spirit of the risen One is not poured out once and for all, but constantly. Just as the Eucharist is the living presence of Christ, who nourishes us unceasingly, so too does the Holy Spirit imprint his character upon us in Baptism, which makes us Christians; in Confirmation, which establishes us as witnesses; and in Holy Orders, which constitutes ministers and shepherds for God's people. In every sacrament, he is the *dator munerum*, the source of holiness who multiplies gifts and charisms through prayer, works of mercy and the study of the word of God. As the Apostle teaches: "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (*1 Cor* 12:7). It is precisely for this reason that we are the Church, the one body that lives in God and serves the world.

Thanks to the Spirit, we can bring true peace to all, the truth that saves – the same Christ our Lord.

Dear friends, with fervent hearts, let us pray today that the Spirit of the risen One may save us from the evil of war, which is overcome not by a superpower, but by the omnipotence of love. Let us pray that he free humanity from misery, which is redeemed not by immeasurable wealth, but by an inexhaustible gift. Let us pray that he heal us from the scourge of sin through the salvation proclaimed to all peoples in the name of Jesus. This is the grace that instills courage in the Apostles; may he similarly instill it in us, today and always, through the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church.

REGINA CAELI MESSAGE

Sunday, 24 May 2026

Without the fire of the Spirit, the Church remains a prisoner of fear

Dear brothers and sisters, happy Sunday!

On this Solemnity of Pentecost, we are called to contemplate the gift of the Holy Spirit, which was poured out in abundance upon the early Church and is bestowed anew upon its members today, granting us light and strength throughout our everyday circumstances.

Let us reflect on an image of the Spirit that today's liturgy sets before us: the Spirit opens doors. The Gospel, in fact, tells us that "the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews" (*Jn* 20:19). At the same time, the book of the Acts of the Apostles tells us that the Spirit came like a mighty wind (cf. *Acts* 2:2), which opened those doors, impelling the disciples to go out and proclaim the Good News of the risen Christ.

We can ask ourselves: what doors does the Holy Spirit open today?

The first door is that of God himself, for the Spirit gives us access to the mystery of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ. Through the gift of his Spirit, God grants us true faith, helps us understand the meaning of Scripture, reveals himself as our neighbor and allows us to share in his very life. The Holy Spirit helps us to have a personal experience of God, to encounter him in Jesus and not merely in the observance of a law, to recognize him within us, and to discover the signs of his presence in daily life.

The second door is that of the Upper Room, that is, of the Church. Without the fire of the Spirit, the Church remains a prisoner of fear, timid in the face of the world's challenges, closed in on itself, and thus also incapable of entering into dialogue with changing times. The Spirit opens the doors of the Church so that it can be welcoming and hospitable to all, even to those who have closed their doors on God and neighbour, on hope and the joy of living. As Pope Francis recalled, we are called to be "a Church that blesses and encourages... The doors of the Church are open to everyone" (*Homily at the Opening of the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, 4 October 2023).

Finally, the Holy Spirit opens the door of our heart, helping us to overcome resistance, selfishness, mistrust and prejudice, while enabling us to live as children of God and brothers and sisters to one another. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, fraternity is born among individuals, groups and peoples of the Earth, and all speak the same language of love, which unites and brings harmony despite our differences.

Brothers and sisters, even in our own day, especially on this day of Pentecost, we must invoke the Holy Spirit and ask him to open all the doors that are still closed. We need to rediscover God as the Father who loves us, so that we can form a Church where everyone feels at home, and build a fraternal world where peace reigns among all peoples.

Like the first disciples, we entrust ourselves to the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Dwelling of the Holy Spirit and Mother of the Church.

AFTER THE REGINA CAELI

Dear brothers and sisters,

Today marks the Day of Prayer for the Church in China, which occurs on the feast day of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Help of Christians. She is venerated with great devotion at the Sheshan Shrine in Shanghai. Let us join our prayers with those of Chinese Catholics as a sign of our closeness to them and their communion with the universal Church and with the Successor of Peter. May the intercession of the Queen of Heaven obtain for the community of believers in China the grace of unity and grant them the strength to bear witness to the Gospel in their daily struggles, so that they may be seeds of hope and peace. In particular, I pray for the eternal rest of the victims of the accident that occurred recently in a mine in northern China.

To Mary Most Holy, Help of Christians, we also entrust the Christian communities of the Holy

Land, Lebanon and the entire Middle East, who are suffering due to the ongoing conflicts.

And now I extend my greetings to all of you, the faithful of Rome and pilgrims from various countries! In particular, I greet the group of people with disabilities from Poland, as well as the pilgrims who came by bicycle from Kelmis, Belgium – well done!

ADDRESS TO MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S DEMOGRAPHY INTERGROUP

Monday, 25 May 2026

Children are the future

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Peace be with you.

Good morning everyone and welcome!

I am pleased to welcome the Members of the European Parliament's Demography Intergroup, together with the European Commissioner for the Mediterranean, the Italian Minister for Family, Natality and Equal Opportunities, and the OSCE Special Representative on Demographic Change and Security, on the occasion of your Conference on the family and demographics.

As representatives of your respective peoples, reflecting a plurality of political opinion within the Member States of the European Union, your focus on the Continent's demographic question is certainly timely, for this issue signifies an urgent challenge with practical implications for millions of people and their families across "what is becoming the 'old continent' – no longer because of its glorious history, but because of its advancing age," as Pope Francis often emphasized (*Address to the General States of Birth Assembly*, 14 May 2021). The problems resulting from zero-growth demographics are many and complex, and include, not least, the pandemic of loneliness. Moreover, demographic data are not merely statistics, but speak of fatherhood, motherhood and children. And children are the future! Yet, speaking of the future points to an integral and sustainable development, which is seriously impeded



without solidarity between generations (cf. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 195). Sadly, such solidarity requires an intergenerational balance that is currently lacking in Europe.

Furthermore, over recent decades, we can see that a rejection of the Christian inspiration of the founding fathers of the EU institutions has led to a time of drastic sterility, not only because too many have been deprived of the right to be born, but also because there has been a failure to pass on the material and cultural tools that young people need to face the future (cf. Pope Francis, *Address to Participants in the Dialogue "(Re)Thinking Europe: A Christian contribution to the future of the European Project"*, 28 October 2017). As a result, we are not infrequently faced with the contradictory claims of purportedly family-friendly policies, which simultaneously promote discrimination against motherhood, exalt abortion as a right, and undermine the very foundation of the desire to start a family. Happily, there are wonderful exceptions with us today!

All of these issues, therefore, urgently need to be studied and addressed in a coordinated way by a wide range of academic, political and societal agencies. The demographic challenge stands as a crucial juncture for the anthropological, social and economic future of Europe. Indeed, your involvement, with its cross-party membership, can play a vital role, and is an ideal forum for exploring ways to generate innovative ideas, which Europe and the world so desperately need. Such dialogue must include not only the various European institutions and Governments, but also the full cross-section of civil society, of which Christians are an integral part.

At the heart of these pressing challenges, and the key to providing solutions, lie the fundamental dignity of all persons and the role of the family in society. As Saint John Paul II reminded us, the family is "the first and irreplaceable school of social life" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 43) and is founded on marriage between a man and a woman, a reality that unites the personal and public dimensions. In light of this, your discussions are also tasked with fostering the shared responsibility and active role of families in social, political, and cultural life (cf. *Address to Participants*

in the meeting promoted by CELAM, the Pontifical Academy for Life and the John Paul II Institute, 19 September 2025). For only by respecting and promoting this central place of the family, and applying the principle of subsidiarity, is it possible to avoid the two extremes of excessive State intervention and individualism.

Finally, this approach is not a matter of returning to social models of the past, but of providing the men and women of our time with the unchanging principles that can surely guide them in answering the fundamental questions asked in every age: What is the meaning and value of human life; what is an authentic human society; and what kind of world do we want to hand on to future generations. In this regard, national and EU policies need to be developed and formulated in partnership with civil society. Here, I would note that the Intergroup's cooperation with the Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe (FAFCE) and with the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE) offers an excellent example of how different entities – each with its own area of competence – can work together to secure effective change that will enhance the quality of life for all. This is the impetus Christians are bringing to the European project, so that policies look to human persons in their entirety and always promote the dignity of human beings. In this way, a genuinely human path can be opened for resolving the demographic crisis, oriented toward the common good, and the wellbeing of future generations. Indeed, only a fresh springtide for the family can transform the winter chill of our ageing populations!

So with these reflections, I pray that you will continue your vital efforts to promote families and the dignity of all people. Offering each of you my heartfelt good wishes, I invoke upon you and your loved ones an abundance of Almighty God's blessings. Thank you.

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Wednesday, 27 May 2026

Progress rooted in Tradition

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

In the Encyclical *Mediator Dei*, the Venerable Pius XII writes that “the Church is without question a living organism, and as an organism, in respect of the sacred liturgy also, she grows, matures, develops, adapts and accommodates herself

to temporal needs and circumstances, provided only that the integrity of her doctrine be safeguarded” (no. 59).

In full accordance with this principle, the Second Vatican Council, in the Introduction to the Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC), recognizes “particularly cogent reasons for undertaking the reform and promotion of the liturgy” (no. 1). The Council assembly was gathered, in fact, with the desire to “impart an ever increasing vigour to the Christian life of the faithful; to adapt more suitably to the needs of our own times those institutions which are subject to change; to foster whatever can promote union among all who believe in Christ; to strengthen whatever can help to call the whole of mankind into the household of the Church” (ibid.).

At that moment in history, there was a strong sense of the need for a renewal of the ritual forms through which, for centuries, the Church had glorified God and sanctified the Christian people. Thanks to the Liturgical Movement, the conviction had matured – later expressed by Saint John Paul II – that “a very close and organic bond exists between the renewal of the liturgy and the renewal of the whole life of the Church. The Church not only acts but also expresses herself in the liturgy, lives by the liturgy and draws from the liturgy the strength for her life” (Letter *Dominicae Cenae*, 13).

To encourage the access of the faithful to the richness of the gifts of grace dispensed by the sacred liturgy, the Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* thus indicates, with a very effective phrase, the direction to take: “That sound tradition may be retained, and yet the way remain open to legitimate progress” (SC, 23).

Pope Benedict XVI grasped in this declaration of intent the “reform programme” of the Council Fathers, “a balance between the great liturgical tradition of the past and that of the future”, noting that “tradition and progress are often clumsily opposed”, whereas “actually, the two concepts merge: tradition is a living reality, which therefore includes in itself the principle of development, of progress. It is as if to say that the river of tradition also carries its source in itself and flows towards the outlet” (*Address to participants in the Congress promoted by the Pontifical Athenaeum of Saint Anselm on the 50th anniversary of foundation*, 6 May 2011).

The Council affirms the legitimacy of this progress, rooted in authentic Tradition, distinguishing within the liturgy “immutable elements, divinely instituted” from “elements subject to change [which] not only may but ought to be changed with the passage of time if they have suf-

ferred from the intrusion of anything out of harmony with the inner nature of the liturgy or have become unsuited to it” (SC, 21). Changes of this type have taken place constantly over the centuries in order to enable the faithful to participate fruitfully, through ritual actions, in the Paschal Mystery of Christ, the foundation of the Christian faith. The Church’s worship has thus been “embodied” in the cultural forms of each age and has been able to influence them and even transform them. The liturgy has thus been, for centuries, a driving force for evangelization. Today, this energy must be renewed in continuity with the authentic and living Catholic tradition, that is, in accordance with a dynamic aimed at introducing believers to the fullness of the truth.

It is therefore understandable why the Council Fathers recommended that the revision of the rites, when “the good of the Church genuinely and certainly requires them”, must be carried out taking care that “any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing” (SC, 23). For the good of the entire Church, every reform must always be preceded by careful “theological, historical and pastoral” investigation (ibid.). The Council Magisterium, in this way, thus calls for the avoidance of confusion amongst the faithful, discouraging anyone from adding, removing or altering anything in liturgical matters on their own initiative (cf. SC, 22). The progress evoked in the Conciliar Constitution in no way compromises ecclesial communion: rather, it seeks to confirm and foster it.

I therefore urge all those called to prepare the celebration of the divine mysteries, in particular priests who exercise the ministry of liturgical presidency, to always uphold that respect for the texts and regulations of the liturgy which springs from an inner attitude of openness and trust in God, manifesting humility before His greatness and sincere fidelity to ecclesial communion.

Following the catechesis, the Holy Father made the following appeal.

I am following with concern the war in Ukraine, which has intensified significantly in recent days. I wish to express my solidarity with all those suffering as a result of the recent attacks, which have also targeted civilians.

War does not solve problems; it exacerbates them. It does not build security; it multiplies suffering and hatred. Where missiles and drones fall, hopes are crushed, homes and places of worship are destroyed, and innocent lives are cut short.

I entrust all peoples stricken by war to the pro-

tection of the Virgin Mary, Queen of Peace.

ADDRESS TO MEMBERS OF THE “CENTESIMUS ANNUS PRO PONTIFICE” FOUNDATION

Saturday, 30 May 2026

A fragmented world in search of spirituality

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Peace be with you!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I am pleased to welcome you this morning, the President and members of the *Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice* Foundation, as well as those of you who took part in the 2026 General Assembly and International Conference. Your presence here is motivated by your continued dedication to the study and implementation of the Social Doctrine of the Church in today’s society. It is no secret that this is a topic that is particularly close to my own heart, not to mention that it is an essential part of the Church’s mission in this world. Your annual meeting has coincided with the recent publication of *Magnifica Humanitas*, and I believe that this Encyclical can provide guidelines to develop and assess the many topics that you have been exploring during the Conference and the preparation that preceded it.

In this regard, the theme chosen for this year – A Fragmented World in Search of Spirituality: Freedom and Pluralism from Within the Social Doctrine of the Church – offers much to consider. Firstly, it acknowledges the unfortunate situation in which humanity currently finds itself as we navigate an era marked by wars and growing polarization, as well as cultural and social divisions. Yet, in the midst of fragility, a new hope arises. Even as division seems to grow, a common denominator that indisputably unites us all appears: our shared humanity. Indeed, it is precisely when faced with adverse circumstances that the human person is called to reconsider the fundamental questions that have gently prodded the heart of countless generations to more serious reflection: “Where are we going? Toward what goal do we wish to orient ourselves? What direction should we choose as a people and as a human community?” (*Magnifica Humanitas* 6).

Such questions are a clear manifestation of humanity’s search for truth, and give rise to a desire

for something more, a thirst for God and lasting meaning. They also bear witness to the essential aspects of our humanity: the God-given gifts of reason and freedom by which we may come to know the truth and adhere to what is good. Though freedom is often understood as the capacity to do what one wants, it is imperative to recover an authentic meaning of freedom that allows us to discover its relational dimension, for it is precisely here that we can speak of the person's fulfillment both as individuals and as a society. Saint John Paul II reminded us that this fulfillment is found when freedom is lived as a "gift of self and openness to others" (*Evangelium Vitae* 19), that is, when freedom is used to love. On the contrary, "when freedom is made absolute in an individualistic way, it is emptied of its original content, and its very meaning and dignity are contradicted" (*ibid.*).

What we discover here are the two "cities" described by Saint Augustine that continue to characterize not only the human heart, but also the civilizations that we create. The City of Man, built on pride and love of oneself, is marked by selfish individualism. The City of God, built on love of God unto selflessness, and the cultivation of relationships, is what makes it truly possible to build a civilization of love. In this light, we can discover that what lies behind the crisis of contemporary democracies and the weakening of multilateralism is, in fact, an anthropological crisis that stems from having largely forgotten about the Creator. Far from despairing however, we are called to do our part, remembering that "the civilization of love will not arise from a single or spectacular gesture, but from the sum total of small and steadfast acts of fidelity that serve as a bulwark against dehumanization" (*Magnifica Humanitas* 213).

Another aspect of fostering and working toward an authentic civilization of love is dialogue. A dialogue grounded in truth that recognizes and values the shared humanity of every person. Indeed, bearing in mind the innate dignity of every individual allows selfishness and particular interests to be overcome in favor of the common good. This same dignity also provides the context in which we can speak of a healthy pluralism that recognizes the wealth of contributions that come from people of diverse backgrounds and which leads to peaceful coexistence.

With these brief reflections, I thank you for your presence here today and your efforts to further promote the Church's Social Doctrine. In assuring you of my continued prayers, I cordially impart my blessing, which I willingly extend to your families and all your loved ones. Thank you.

ADDRESS TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CATHOLIC CHARISMATIC RENEWAL

Saturday, 30 May 2026

Communion and charity

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Peace be with you!

Your Eminence, Your Excellencies,
Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome! Buenos Dias!

I am pleased to have my first meeting with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, and to greet all of you present, as well as the communities, groups and schools of prayer and of evangelization that you represent. God has indeed blessed your communities with so many gifts, including spiritual vitality. I also greet the leaders of the national and international Services of Communion of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal International Service (CHARIS), who have organized this gathering.

For the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, the years following the Second Vatican Council were a time of great expansion and growth, and of integration into the life of the Church, as well as for consolidating your structures of service.

My venerable Predecessors recognized this development as a great gift to the Church. Indeed, Saint Paul VI affirmed that nothing is more necessary for such an increasingly secularized world than the witness of this spiritual renewal, which the Holy Spirit is inspiring in the most diverse regions and communities (cf. *Address to the Third International Congress of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Pentecost, 16 May 1975*).

In emphasizing your characteristic focus on evangelization, Saint John Paul II said: "It is the Spirit himself who impels you to bear witness." He likewise remarked: "How can anyone who has tasted the goodness of Christ remain silent and inactive?... Christ is our Savior... How can we fail to evangelize? Continue to communicate this zeal for the Gospel to those around you!" (*Address to the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Communities, 7 December 1991*).

For his part, Benedict XVI referred to the specific contribution you make to the Church. He said: "One of the positive elements and aspects of the Community of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is precisely their emphasis on the charisms or gifts of the Holy Spirit and their merit lies in having recalled their topicality in the Church" (*Address to the 13th International Conference of the Catholic*

Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowship, 31 October 2008).

Like Cardinal Suenens in the early days of the movement, Pope Francis frequently spoke of you as a “flood of grace,” which is “for the whole Church, not just for some” (*Prayer Vigil on the Occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal*, 3 June 2017). In summary, he outlined your path as “evangelization, spiritual ecumenism, caring for the poor and needy, and welcoming the marginalized,” and added, “all of it is based on worship! The foundation of the renewal is worshipping God!” (*Address at the 37th National Convocation of the Renewal in the Holy Spirit*, 1 June 2014).

I, too, wish to foster the relationship of mutual respect, closeness and support between the See of Peter and the great family of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. In this regard, I would like to reflect on the following key aspects of your spiritual experience: baptism in the Spirit; prayer of praise; the word of God; communion; and charity.

First *baptism in the Spirit*. Your shared journey of faith has its source in the personal experience of the Holy Spirit, which has enabled the grace of Baptism to become effective within each of you, leading you to a clear awareness of God’s love. This is the first powerful experience of grace that Saint Augustine himself had after his conversion and which he described in these heartfelt words: “O Christ Jesus, ‘my helper and redeemer’; suddenly it had become sweet to me to be without the sweets of folly. What I once feared to lose was now a delight to dismiss. You turned them out and entered to take their place, pleasanter than any pleasure” (*Confessions*, IX, 1, 1).

The Holy Spirit has likewise allowed you to taste the sweetness of Christ. For you, too, life has changed since that moment. God ceased to be a mere idea and became the real and ultimate expression of fatherhood. His Spirit has brought inner reconciliation, peace and freedom from worldly attachments and the oppression of sin. He has also made possible a new outlook characterized by openness and hope towards others and the future, in the certainty that nothing can ever separate us from the love of Christ (cf. *Rom* 8:38-39). From this experience of the Holy Spirit comes the inner desire to be witnesses and heralds of his love, bringing his consolation to people oppressed by a sense of emptiness and loneliness.

Prayer of praise. It was precisely from this captivating experience of the Holy Spirit that a new life of prayer began, taking the form of a new capacity for spontaneous and sincere dialogue with God, and a new openness to praise, worship and offering thanksgiving to him. Worship and praise,

which are so characteristic of your gatherings, are essential aspects of Christian prayer, and you have helped them to be rediscovered and brought them back to the forefront in recent years.

The word of God. The renewed outpouring of the Spirit has also led you to a living encounter with Sacred Scripture. The Holy Spirit inspired the revealed word of God and is also the One who keeps it ever alive and active in the Church, causing it to resonate in the hearts of believers, especially in the Liturgy. Scripture has therefore become for you a wonderful source of spiritual nourishment that enlightens and comforts. It is similarly a source of discernment for guiding your daily choices, and gives substance to communal prayer, enabling you to address the Lord with words inspired by God himself.

Communion. The Holy Spirit is the wellspring of communion. In various documents, Pope Leo XII encouraged Catholics to pray a novena to the Holy Spirit each year between the feasts of Ascension and Pentecost, especially for the intention of Christian unity. You clearly appreciate the significance of this invitation, for you have seen that unity in the Church is the fruit of the Spirit, because, as Saint Augustine affirms, the Holy Spirit “is a certain unutterable communion of the Father and the Son” (*De Trinitate*, V, 11, 12). It is the Spirit who creates harmony among the various charisms and components of the Charismatic Renewal, as well as with our brothers and sisters of other Christian denominations.

And finally, *charity*. Saint Augustine wrote that the Holy Spirit “who is himself love, has been given to man and inflames him to the love of God and neighbor. For man can have no love for God unless he be given it from God” (*De Trinitate*, XV, 17, 31). This is what you, too, have experienced. The renewed presence of the Spirit has awakened in you a new capacity to love, inspired by divine charity itself. This love is directed toward God and toward your brothers and sisters, and inspires closeness and compassion, especially for those who are suffering. Many works of charity for those in need, both in spirit and in body, have sprung from the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. I invite you, then, to keep alive this love for the poor, which reveals the true face of God.

Dear friends, I thank you for your commitment and encourage you to continue your mission. Put yourselves at the service of the dioceses and parishes, offering your experience and methods of evangelization. Faithfully follow the guidance of your priests; and, in your communal discernment, listen to the voices of wise people, even if they do not belong to your groups. Cultivate harmony and

cooperation among the communities to which you belong, taking care never to give way to the desire for self-promotion, or the pursuit of power or personal prestige. May the Holy Spirit always be a light and a source of strength on your personal and communal journey, and may the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, protect you. And now, with these heartfelt sentiments, I willingly impart my Apostolic Blessing.

Thank you.

ADDRESS AT
THE CONCLUSION OF THE ROSARY IN THE
VATICAN GARDENS

Saturday, 30 May 2026

**Even in times of difficulty, peace
is possible**

“Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts” (*Ps* 85:8). The words of this Psalm fittingly accompany our recitation of the Rosary this evening, because they express the hope of which we stand in need, especially in the face of current difficulties and violence.

Let us dispose our hearts to listen to the word of God, so that in prayer we may come to understand the meaning of the events of history, recognizing the providence of God who always guides it and sustains us. The Virgin Mary is the model of the believer who inclines the ear of the heart to listen to “what God says.” She is an example for us in her obedience, which welcomed the Son of God into her womb in the Incarnation.

Contemplating the mysteries of the Rosary with Mary leads us to recognize in Jesus Christ the one final Word spoken by the Father, a Word of peace for all who return to him with contrite hearts. The Lord never abandons us, even when we forget him, even when we lose our way. He comes in search of us and draws near with his everlasting love. As the prophet Isaiah reminds us: “Peace, peace, to the far and the near, says the Lord” (*Is* 57:19). Whoever trusts in God understands this proclamation of peace and becomes an instrument of peace, building it with his own hands (cf. *Mt* 5:9).

Peace, in fact, is not a theory to be tested in a laboratory, nor a naïve illusion, nor a matter to be pursued out of self-interest. When sought with a sincere heart, it is rather a daily commitment: it

springs from justice and love, as harmony that unites persons, families, communities and peoples. Even in this time marked by tension and conflict, peace becomes possible when we choose to listen to the cry of those deprived of it: innocent children, anguished mothers and fathers, abused prisoners, refugees and people of every age who suffer. All of them have but one word upon their lips: peace!

We know well that peace is always possible because it is a gift from God. This peace, his peace, has a face: that of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who through his life, given for us, reconciled heaven and earth. As the Apostle Paul writes: “He is our peace” (*Eph* 2:14). He is the one who breaks down the walls of hostility, conquers arrogance through humility and redeems all creation from sin.

It is when the Lord Jesus is with us and we behave as true disciples of his love that the Holy Spirit can accomplish what appears humanly impossible. On the contrary, when we move away from God we also distance ourselves from humanity, from our neighbor, and are indifferent to their suffering. Every time we return to the Lord, his peace becomes our responsibility, according to the duties and tasks of each person.

Thus, our prayer becomes mission and prophecy. The cry of the innocent must no longer be heard in our cities. No one should have to flee from his own home because of the threat of bombs. The desire for power and the violence of words must give way to the thirst for justice and truth. Yet everyone can and must do his or her part, beginning with small but important things, abstaining from every form of verbal or physical violence in daily life and also on social media.

Dear brothers and sisters, true peace begins in a heart that loves. It is witnessed to by lips that speak words of reconciliation. It is reflected in eyes that look upon the world with gentleness and wisdom. This is true strength, the strength of truth and love.

God seeks peacemakers! May our Blessed Mother help us to answer him each day with our own “Here I am,” not only in words but in deeds.

ANGELUS MESSAGE

*Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity:
Sunday, 31 May 2026*

We find our home in the Trinity

Dear brothers and sisters, happy Sunday!

The Easter season concluded last week with the Solemnity of Pentecost. Today, we celebrate the Mystery of the Triune God, which offers us the opportunity to reflect on the journey we have made. We begin with God's life which was given to us in Christ Jesus. This life is a dynamic, inexhaustible and faith communion that draw us in. Indeed, the Spirit who unites the Father and the Son has been poured into our hearts. In this way, the Church becomes a sacrament of communion, a place of encounter, love and life where heaven and earth already touch.

Today's Gospel (*Jn* 3:16-18) introduces us to Nicodemus, an important person in Israel who felt a profound attraction to Jesus. Indeed, eager to better understand this mysterious Teacher and to ask him questions, Nicodemus went to find him at night, so as not to be seen. The Lord welcomed him and took his search for answers seriously. Jesus surprised Nicodemus by suggesting that it was even possible for an adult to be reborn and led him to realize that the life of God could transform his own life. When Jesus spoke about the Holy Spirit, Nicodemus' interior darkness was illuminated with the truth – the same truth that resounds throughout the Church in our celebration of today's feast: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (vs. 16). And again: "God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (vs. 17).

Dear brothers and sisters, in the Mystery of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – we are at home, just as Nicodemus felt at ease when he was in Jesus' presence. The life of God is marvelous and captivating; it gives peace to our heart, which is often very restless, and it allows us to encounter our brothers and sisters in the joy of the Spirit. The Trinity helps us to love everyone and everything: we discover that every creature is made for communion, relationship and encounter. On the other hand, we understand why division, polarization and contempt for diversity bring destruction, sadness and barrenness to the world.

Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin, the council of the high priests of Israel. When he heard contemptuous words directed at Jesus in the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus urged everyone to listen first before condemning him. He had received the Spirit of communion from God through Christ himself, which opens the heart to

new truths and to true renewal. Whoever does not welcome this Spirit grows old quickly, in sorrow, feeling all alone and without joy in their hearts. Instead, today, dear brothers and sisters, is a day of celebration. God's feast is also ours. For this reason, Saint Paul wrote to the Corinthians, saying: Rejoice, strive for perfection, encourage one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you (cf. *2 Cor* 13:11).

And now, with the prayer of the *Angelus*, we turn to the Virgin Mary: like her "yes" to the Divine will, may our "yes" to the love of the Most Holy Trinity also bear fruit.

AFTER THE ANGELUS

Dear brothers and sisters,

In this month of May, a united chorus of prayers for peace has resounded throughout the Church. Above all, through the prayer of the Holy Rosary – like an unbroken chain – the peoples ravaged by war have been entrusted to the intercession of the Virgin Mary. May Divine Wisdom enlighten the consciences of those in authority and guide their decisions toward a sincere search for a just and lasting peace.

Today, Italy celebrates the 25th "National Day of Relief." I offer my spiritual closeness to the sick and those who care for them; and I thank and encourage all who promote a culture of solidarity and care.

I warmly greet all of you who have gathered today in Saint Peter's Square, both Romans and pilgrims!

In particular, I welcome the Bishop and the pilgrims from the Diocese of Kumba, Cameroon; as well as the parish choir from Dunajska Luzna, Slovakia. I greet the Poles present and the participants in the great pilgrimage to the Shrine of Piekary, where Mary is venerated as the Mother of Social Justice.

I extend my greetings to the Rivoli Alpine Group, the young people from San Zeno Naviglio, and the participants in the "Relay for Inclusion," whose banners were created by Italian high school students.

I wish everyone a happy Sunday.

For more discourses of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, including those from his Pastoral Visits to Pompeii, Naples and Acerra, please visit: www.vatican.va



Pope Leo XIV visits Pompeii on 8 May, the first anniversary of his election.