



EN - ES - IT - PT

ADDRESS BY HIS HOLINESS POPE LEO XIV TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE FORMATION COURSE FOR NEW BISHOPS

Synod Hall
Thursday, 10 September 2026
[Multimedia]

Dear brothers, welcome!

I am very pleased to meet you at the conclusion of these days of formation intended for new bishops, and I thank the Dicasteries for Bishops, for the Eastern Churches and for Evangelization – Section for First Evangelization and the New Particular Churches for preparing it.

You have had a unique experience of fraternity: together you have listened, prayed, celebrated the Eucharist and shared the hopes and dreams you carry in your heart for the Churches which the Lord has just entrusted to your pastoral care. All this will help you to remember something very simple and precious: *no Bishop walks alone*.

Dearest friends, know that you are in my prayers, and with you your Churches: the priests, deacons, consecrated men and women, seminarians, families, young people, the elderly, the poor, those who suffer and those who are still waiting to encounter the joy of the Gospel. Everyone must find a place in the Bishop's heart, for everyone already has a place in the heart of Christ. For this reason, I would now like to share with you some reflections on the theme: *"Bishops, servants of communion in the Church and in today's world"*.

First of all, *remain with Jesus*. Among the many things you will be called to do as Bishops, this is the most important. We are Bishops, but we are first and foremost disciples. To speak of Him, we need to be with Him; to lead His people, we must allow ourselves to be guided by Him every day. 'He appointed twelve', whom he called apostles "to be with Him, and to be sent out to preach' (Mk 3:14). This is the order of the Gospel: to be with Him and through Him, to be sent out. Let us never forget this. Therefore, always cherish your time with the Lord: the Eucharist, the Word of God, prayer and those moments when you can be in His presence with the simple heart of a disciple who allows himself to be loved by his Lord. Our ministry stems from there. And when the heart remains close to Him, our service too becomes more serene, free and fruitful.

A second aspect: *have the heart of Jesus the Good Shepherd*, a heart completely devoted to the Father and, precisely for this reason, totally given to your brethren. Jesus says: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (Jn 10:11). This is our model. The Bishop is a man who learns to love his people more and more each day: to know their joys and sorrows, to share in their dreams, to rejoice in seeing their communities grow. You will ordain priests and deacons; you will meet young people brimming with enthusiasm; you will witness the quiet generosity of so many men and women religious, missionaries, catechists and families; and you will discover ever more how beautiful the People of God are. Love the people whom the Lord has entrusted to you. Learn their names, listen to their stories, visit their homes whenever you can, and pray with them. Especially in the young Churches, very often the very presence of the Bishop speaks volumes, even before his words. A visit, a blessing, the time spent with a priest, listening to a family, a conversation with a young person: these are small gestures, but they can remain in a person's heart for a lifetime.

Another characteristic of the Bishop is what tradition calls *sollicitudo pastoralis*, pastoral care. It does not simply mean having many responsibilities. It is something deeper: it is carrying your people in your heart. Saint Paul called his concern for all the Churches his "daily anxiety" (cf. 2 Cor 11:28). Thus, the Church to which you have been sent increasingly becomes a part of your life, almost a part of yourselves. This is the very essence of episcopal fatherhood: to have a generous heart, large enough to make room for everyone, carrying one's children within oneself and presenting them to the Lord in prayer every day. [Pope Francis](#) recalled that "closeness is one of the features of God with His people" ([Homily on the centenary of the birth of Saint John Paul II](#), 18 May 2020). And it is precisely when speaking to the Bishops participating in the formation course on 12 September 2019 that he said: "We exist to make this closeness palpable". What precious words for us! May people be able to feel, through our presence, something of God's tenderness and paternity! And this applies in a special way to priests.

In this regard, dear brothers, I urge you to love your priests. May they find in each of you a father and a brother. Listen to them, encourage them, pray for them, rejoice in the good they do, and accompany them with confidence in their ministry. Pay particular attention to those who are elderly and unwell. Make them aware that they are precious, that the Church is grateful to them and that the Bishop has not forgotten them. Sometimes a phone call, a visit or a kind word from you is enough.

Another feature of our ministry that I would like to remind you of is, according to Saint Augustine's beautiful expression, that of being an "*amoris officium*" (*In Iohannis Evangelium*, 123, 5): a service of love. Our preaching is an act of love, as are listening, prayer, discernment, the time we devote to people, and our very presence. It is pastoral charity, which enables Christ the Shepherd to reach the people He loves through our humble person.

We live in an age of rapid change. The developments in communication technologies and artificial intelligence have opened up possibilities that, until a few years ago, we would never even have imagined. But they certainly cannot free humanity from sin and its consequences: this is tragically demonstrated by the crises it is currently experiencing. In a complex and, in some respects, unsettling scenario such as the present one, the Church celebrated the [Jubilee of Hope](#) last year. Is it perhaps because she lives apart from the world? On the contrary, it is because she is sent by Christ, who died and rose again, to proclaim the Gospel of salvation to all. And we Bishops are the first recipients of this mandate. With the Encyclical [Magnifica humanitas](#), I believe I have offered, *in primis* to the Pastors of the Churches, a vision and a method for tackling the great challenge of safeguarding humanity in the age of artificial intelligence. I encourage you to promote processes of reflection and dialogue within your dioceses, to form and support those who wish to commit themselves to the service of the civilization of love.

Many of you come from young Churches. You know the beauty and also the toil of mission, of a Church that perhaps possesses little, but is rich in a great faith. For this reason, I invite you to preserve a missionary heart. It is a precious gift that the Lord has placed in your hands and which can become even greater in your episcopal ministry. The missionary Bishop has a heart open to all: not only those who attend your parish churches but also to Christians of other denominations, believers of other religions, people who do not profess any faith, all men and women of good will. He listens to and respects all of them, he approaches all of them, and knows how to recognize the good in the heart of every person.

Saint Augustine, speaking about his people, said: "*Vobis enim sum episcopus, vobiscum sum christianus*", "for you... I am a bishop, with you I am a Christian" (*Sermon 340, 1*). Let us walk with our people: let us pray with them, listen to the Word with them, celebrate the Eucharist with them. Let us seek the face of the Lord with them every day.

Dearest brothers, as you return to your Churches, take this certainty with you: the Lord, who has called you, is faithful. He will go before you on the road, accompany you on your journey and, through the gift of his Holy Spirit, enlighten you every day. And may Mary, Mother of the Church, always watch over you and the people entrusted to your care.

Copyright © Dicastery for Communication - Libreria Editrice Vaticana



The HOLY SEE

