



# The Holy See

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***MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER LEO XIV  
TO THE BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF FRANCE  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 100th ANNIVERSARY OF THE CANONIZATION  
OF SAINT JOHN EUDES, SAINT JOHN MARY VIANNEY,  
AND SAINT THÉRÈSE OF THE CHILD JESUS AND THE HOLY FACE***

I am happy to be able to address you for the first time, pastors of the Church of France, and through you, all your faithful, as this month of May 2025 marks the one hundredth anniversary of the canonization of three Saints whom, by the grace of God, your country has given to the universal Church: Saint John Eudes (1601-1680), Saint John Mary Vianney (1786-1859) and Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face (1873-1897). In raising them to the glory of the altars, my predecessor Pius XI wanted to present them to the People of God as teachers to listen to, models to imitate, and powerful supporters to pray to and invoke. The scale of the challenges facing the Church in France a century later, and the continuing relevance of these three holy figures in meeting them, lead me to invite you to give special prominence to this anniversary.

In this brief Message, I will mention just one spiritual trait that John Eudes, John Mary Vianney and Thérèse have in common and present in a very meaningful and attractive way to the men and women of today: they loved Jesus unreservedly in a simple, strong and authentic way; they experienced his goodness and tenderness in a special daily closeness, and they bore witness to it in an admirable missionary drive.

The late Pope Francis left us, rather like a testament, a beautiful Encyclical on the Sacred Heart in which he states: "That stream which is never exhausted, never passes away ... offers itself time and time again to all those who wish to love as he did. For his love alone can bring about a new humanity" (*Dilexit nos*, 219). There could be no more beautiful and simple programme of evangelization and mission for your country: to help everyone discover the tender and devoted love that Jesus has for them, to the point of transforming their lives.

And in this respect, our three Saints are undoubtedly masters whose life and doctrine I invite you to constantly make known and appreciated by the People of God. Was Saint John Eudes not the first to celebrate the liturgical worship of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary? Was Saint John Mary

Vianney not the priest who gave himself passionately to his ministry and who said: “The priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus”? and finally, was Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face not the great Doctor of *scientia amoris* that our world needs, she who “breathed” the Name of Jesus at every moment of her life, with spontaneity and freshness, and who taught the little ones an “easy” way to access it?

Celebrating the centenary of the canonization of these three saints is first and foremost an invitation to give thanks to the Lord for the marvels he has accomplished in this land of France over long centuries of evangelization and Christian life. Saints do not appear spontaneously but, by grace, emerge from living Christian communities that have been able to transmit the faith to them, to kindle in their hearts the love of Jesus and the desire to follow him. This Christian heritage still belongs to you, it still deeply permeates your culture and remains alive in many hearts.

This is why I express the hope that these celebrations will not merely evoke nostalgia for a past that might seem bygone, but that they will awaken hope and give rise to a new missionary impetus. With the help of the saints he has given you and whom you celebrate, God can renew the marvels he has accomplished in the past. Will Saint Thérèse not be the Patroness of the missions in the very lands where she was born? Will Saint John Mary Vianney and Saint John Eudes not be able to speak to the conscience of many young people about the beauty, greatness and fruitfulness of the priesthood, to inspire their enthusiastic desire for it, and to give them the courage to respond generously to the call, at a time when the lack of vocations is harshly felt in your dioceses and priests are under increasing strain? I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the priests of France from the bottom of my heart for their courageous and persevering commitment, and to express my paternal affection for them.

Dear brother Bishops, I invoke the intercession of Saint John Eudes, Saint John Mary Vianney and Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, for your country and the People of God who are courageous pilgrims there, despite the contrary and sometimes hostile winds of indifference, materialism and individualism. May they give courage to these People, in the certainty that Christ, the Saviour of the world, is truly risen.

Imploring upon France the maternal protection of her powerful Patroness, Our Lady of the Assumption, I impart to each of you, and to all those entrusted to your pastoral care, the Apostolic Blessing.

*From the Vatican, 28 May 2025*

Leo XIV

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