



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER LEO XIV. TO NEW BISHOPS AND TO BISHOPS OF MISSION COUNTRIES

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 11 September 2025*

[[Multimedia](#)]

Buongiorno, good morning. We're going to begin singing the *Veni Creator*. I think you all have a copy. I hope someone has a better voice than mine this morning... *Cominciamo a cappella*.
[Singing of the "*Veni Creator*"]

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

[Greeting address of Cardinal Tagle]

"In the service of. the Church"! Good morning to all of you. I will begin with some prepared remarks in Italian, and then perhaps switch to English to let the translators rest. Then we will have time for dialogue. I would be very happy to listen to as many of you as possible, perhaps to have the chance for you to ask some questions, and in that way to be able to come to know one another a little bit.

We have two hundred bishops, only one Pope, and not a whole lot of time, so we'll take the best advantage of it. We'll have a break around eleven o'clock or work towards finishing around eleven, and then the second part of the morning will be for an individual chance to say hello, have a nice picture taken – which you can hang up somewhere in your bishop's house – and at least have a chance to greet one another. So that will be the course of the morning. You're free to begin

thinking about questions that you may have or things that you might want to share.

First, a few prepared remarks *in italiano*.

Dear brothers in the episcopate, peace be with you!

I welcome you and greet you with great joy, almost at the conclusion of these days of formation and prayer you have experienced together, here in Rome. I thank the [Dicastery for Bishops](#) – I thought about coming to this course dressed in black too, however... the [Dicastery for the Eastern Churches](#), and the [Dicastery for Evangelization](#), in the persons of the Prefect, the Secretaries, and their collaborators, who took care of the preparation and organization of this course.

I wish to remind you, first and foremost, something as simple as it is taken for granted: the gift you have received not for yourselves, but to serve the cause of the Gospel. You have been chosen and called to be sent, as apostles of the Lord and as servants of the faith. And it is precisely this I would like to focus on briefly, before having a fraternal dialogue with you: the bishop is a *servant*, the bishop is called to *serve the faith of the people*.

It has to do with our identity. Afterwards I will speak a bit about some elements and characteristics of this identity. Perhaps some of you are still saying: how come I was chosen? At least, I ask myself this. Service is neither an external characteristic, nor a way of exercising a role. On the contrary, those whom Jesus calls as disciples and proclaimers of the Gospel, in particular the Twelve, are required to have inner freedom, poverty of spirit and readiness to serve, which are born of love, to embody the same choice made by Jesus, who made himself poor in order to enrich us (cf. *2Cor* 8:9). He manifested the style of God, who does not reveal himself to us in power, but in the love of a Father who calls us to communion with him.

With regard to the ordination of the bishop, Saint Augustine affirms: “The man ... who presides over the people ought first of all to understand that he is the servant of many masters” (*Sermon* 340/A). At the same time, he recalls that in the Apostles “a certain appetite for superiority” (*ibid.*) had crept in among the Apostles, in the presence of which Jesus had to intervene like a physician to heal them. Indeed, let us remember the Lord’s admonition when he sees the group of the Twelve arguing about who was the greatest: “Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all” (*Mk* 10:43-44). [Pope Francis](#) said several times: the only authority we have is service, and it is a humble service! It is truly important that we think about and try to live according to these words.

I ask you, therefore, always to keep watch and to walk in humility and prayer, to make yourselves servants of the people to whom the Lord sends you. This service, [Pope Francis](#) reminded us on an

occasion like this one, is expressed in being a sign of God's proximity. "Closeness to the people entrusted to us", he said, "is not an opportunistic strategy, but our essential condition. Jesus loves to draw near to his brothers and sisters through us, through our open hands that caress and comfort; our words uttered to anoint the world with the Gospel and not with ourselves; our heart when it bears the distress and joys of our brothers and sisters" (*Address to Bishops participating in the course promoted by the Congregation for Bishops and by the Congregation for the Eastern Churches*, 12 September 2019).

At the same time, today we must ask ourselves what it means to be servants to the faith of the people. However important and necessary it may be, it is not enough to be aware that our ministry is rooted in the spirit of service, in the image of Christ. Indeed, it must also be translated into the style of the apostolate, into the various forms of pastoral care and governance, into the yearning to proclaim the Gospel in ways that are as diverse and creative as the real situations you will encounter.

The crisis of faith and its transmission, together with the hardships related to ecclesial belonging and practice, invite us to rediscover the passion and courage for a new proclamation of the Gospel. At the same time, various people who seem to be distant from the faith often return to knock on the doors of the Church, or open themselves to a new search for spirituality, which at time does not find adequate language and forms in the usual pastoral offerings. And, furthermore, we must not forget the other challenges, of a more cultural and social nature, which concern all of us and which affect some territories in a special way: the drama of war and violence, the sufferings of the poor, the aspiration of many to a more fraternal and solidarity-based world, the ethical challenges that question us on the value of life and freedom, and the list would certainly be longer.

In this context, the Church sends you as caring, attentive pastors, who know how to share the journey, the questions, the anxieties and the hopes of the people; pastors who wish to be guides, fathers and brothers for the priest and for sisters and brothers in faith.

Dear friends, I pray for you, that the breath of the Spirit may never be lacking, and that the joy of your Ordination, like a gentle fragrance, may spread to those you will serve. Thank you.

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