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BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

**Apostolic Letter “A fidelity that generates the future” of the  
Holy Father Leo XIV on the 60th anniversary of the Conciliar  
Decrees *Optatam Totius* and *Presbyterorum Ordinis*,  
22.12.2025**

APOSTOLIC LETTER

*A FIDELITY THAT GENERATES THE FUTURE*

OF THE HOLY FATHER

LEO XIV

ON THE SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONCILIAR DECREES

*OPTATAM TOTIUS AND PRESBYTERORUM ORDINIS*

1. A fidelity that generates the future is what priests are called to today. Appreciating the value of perseverance in the apostolic mission gives us the opportunity to reflect on the future of our ministry and to help others experience the joy of the priestly vocation. The sixtieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, which occurs in this Jubilee Year, is an occasion for us to contemplate anew the gift of this fruitful fidelity, and to recall the teachings of the Decrees *Optatam Totius* and *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, promulgated respectively on 28 October and 7 December 1965. These two texts were born of a single inspiration of the Church, which is called to be a sign and instrument of unity for all peoples and is challenged to renew herself, aware that “the desired renewal of the whole Church depends to a great extent on a priestly ministry animated by the spirit of Christ.”<sup>[1]</sup>

2. We are not simply celebrating an anniversary. Both documents, indeed, are firmly based on the understanding of the Church as the People of God journeying through history. The texts also constitute a milestone in theological reflection on the nature and mission of pastoral ministry and preparation for it, and they still retain great newness and relevance. I invite you, then, to keep reading these texts within Christian communities and to study them, particularly in seminaries and in all places of preparation and formation for ordained ministry.

3. The Decrees *Optatam Totius* and *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, firmly rooted in the Church’s doctrinal tradition regarding the sacrament of Holy Orders, demonstrated the Council’s attentive reflection on the topic of the ministerial priesthood and gave clear expression to its concern for priests. The aim was to develop the necessary framework for forming future generations of priests in accordance

with the renewal promoted by the Council, maintaining a firm ministerial identity while also emphasizing new perspectives and integrating previous reflection, in view of sound doctrinal development.<sup>[2]</sup> We must therefore keep this memory alive by embracing the mandate that these Decrees have given to the whole Church. This involves reinvigorating the priestly ministry every day, drawing strength from its root, which is the bond between Christ and the Church, in order to become missionary disciples according to his Heart, united with all the faithful and at their service.

4. At the same time, in the six decades since the Council, humanity has experienced and continues to experience changes. This requires constant evaluation of the path taken and a consistent deepening of the Council's teachings. Together with this, in the last few years the Church has been led by the Holy Spirit to develop the Council's doctrine on her nature as communion according to the synodal and missionary dimension.<sup>[3]</sup> It is with this intention that I address this Apostolic Letter to the entire People of God, in order to examine together the identity and function of the ordained ministry in light of what the Lord is asking of the Church today, continuing the great work of renewal begun by the Second Vatican Council. For responding joyfully to the call of the Lord Jesus, I propose to do so through the lens of *fidelity*, which is both a *grace* of God and a constant journey of *conversion*. I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude for the witness and dedication of all priests throughout the world who offer their lives in celebrating the sacrifice of Our Lord in the Eucharist, proclaiming the Word and absolving sins, as well as devoting themselves generously each day to their brothers and sisters, fostering communion and unity among them and taking special care of those who suffer most and are in need.

#### *Fidelity and service*

5. Every vocation in the Church arises from a personal encounter with Christ, which "gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction."<sup>[4]</sup> Before any commitment, personal aspiration or service, there is the voice of the Master calling: "Follow me" (*Mk* 1:17). The Lord of life knows us and enlightens our hearts with his loving gaze (*Mk* 10:21). This is not just an inner voice, but a spiritual impetus that often comes to us through the example of other disciples of the Lord and takes shape in a courageous choice of life. Fidelity to our vocation, especially in times of trial and temptation, is strengthened when we do not forget that voice, when we passionately remember the sound of the voice of the Lord who loves, chooses and calls us, and when we entrust ourselves to the indispensable accompaniment of those who are knowledgeable in the spiritual life. Throughout time, the echo of the Lord's word is the principle of interior unity with Christ, which is fundamental and necessary in the apostolic life.

6. The call to ordained ministry is a free and gratuitous gift from God. Indeed, a vocation is not imposed by the Lord but is instead a loving proposal to follow a plan of salvation and freedom for our lives, which we receive when we accept, with God's grace, the Lord Jesus as the center of our lives. Thus, the vocation to ordained ministry grows as a gift of oneself to God and, therefore, to his holy People. The whole Church prays and rejoices for this gift with a heart full of hope and gratitude. This was expressed by Pope Benedict XVI at the conclusion of the Year for Priests: "We wanted to reawaken our joy at how close God is to us, and our gratitude for the fact that he entrusts himself to our infirmities; that he guides and sustains us daily. In this way we also wanted to demonstrate once again to young people that this vocation, this fellowship of service for God and with God, does exist – and that God is indeed waiting for us to say 'yes'."<sup>[5]</sup>

7. Every vocation is a gift from the Father, which needs to be faithfully preserved in a dynamic of ongoing conversion. Obedience to one's calling is cultivated each day through listening to the word of God; celebrating the sacraments, especially the Eucharistic Sacrifice; evangelization; closeness to the least among us; and priestly fraternity, all drawing on prayer as the preeminent place for encountering the Lord. It is as if the priest returns every day to the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" (*Jn* 21:15), in order to reaffirm his "yes."<sup>[6]</sup> In this sense, we can understand the hope expressed in *Optatam Totius* that priestly formation should not stop at the end of seminary (cf. n. 22), but instead open the way to continuous, permanent formation, which will create a dynamic of constant human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral renewal.

8. All priests, therefore, are called continually to nurture their own formation in order to keep alive the gift of God received through the sacrament of Holy Orders (cf. *2 Tim* 1:6). Fidelity to one's calling, then, is not static or closed, but a journey of daily conversion that affirms and matures the vocation received. In this perspective, it is appropriate to promote initiatives such as the Conference for the Ongoing Formation of Priests, which was held in the Vatican from 6 to 10 February 2024, which gathered more than 800 people responsible for ongoing formation from 80 countries. Before being an intellectual effort or pastoral training, ongoing formation is a living memory and constant renewal of one's vocation on a shared journey.

9. From the moment of one's call and during initial formation, the beauty and stability of the journey are safeguarded by the *sequela Christi*. Indeed, even before dedicating himself to guiding the flock, every priest must constantly remember that he himself is a disciple of the Master, just like his brothers and sisters, because "one is always a 'disciple' throughout the whole of life, constantly aspiring to configure oneself to Christ."<sup>[7]</sup> Only this relationship of obedient following and faithful discipleship can keep the mind and heart on the right path, through the upheavals that life may bring.

10. In recent decades, the crisis of trust in the Church caused by abuses committed by members of the clergy has filled us with shame and called us to humility. It has made us even more aware of the urgent need for a comprehensive formation that ensures the personal growth and maturity of candidates for the priesthood, together with a rich and solid spiritual life.

11. The issue of formation is also central to addressing the phenomenon of those who, after a few years or even decades, leave the priestly ministry. This painful reality should not be interpreted solely in legal terms, but requires us to look carefully and compassionately at the history of these brothers and the many reasons that may have led them to such a decision. The appropriate response is, first and foremost, a renewed commitment to formation, whose objective is "a journey of growth in intimacy with the Lord. It engages the entire person, heart, mind and freedom, in order to shape him in the image of the Good Shepherd."<sup>[8]</sup>

12. Consequently, "the seminary is meant to be a training ground to help a seminarian attend to his own heart... we need to learn how to love and how to do so as Jesus did." I therefore ask seminarians to make an interior commitment regarding their motivations. This involves every aspect of life, for "nothing of your personal uniqueness should be put aside; rather, everything should be taken up and transformed, like the grain of wheat in the Gospel. The goal is to become a joyful man and a joyful priest, a 'bridge,' not an obstacle for those who come to you in order to come to Christ."<sup>[9]</sup> Only priests and consecrated persons who are humanly mature and spiritually solid – in other words, those in whom the human and spiritual dimensions are well integrated and who are therefore capable of authentic relationships with everyone – can take on the commitment of celibacy and credibly proclaim the Gospel of the Risen One.

13. This requires *safeguarding and nurturing a vocation* through a constant journey of conversion and renewed fidelity, which is never a purely individual path but commits us to caring for one another. This dynamic is always a work of grace that embraces our fragile humanity, healing it from narcissism and selfishness. With faith, hope and charity, we are called to follow Christ every day, placing all our trust in the Lord. Communion, synodality and mission cannot be achieved if, in the hearts of priests, the temptation to self-referentiality does not yield to the mindset of listening and service. As Benedict XVI emphasized, "the priest is a servant of Christ, in the sense that his existence, configured to Christ ontologically, acquires an essentially relational character: he is in Christ, for Christ and with Christ, at the service of humankind. Because he belongs to Christ, the priest is radically at the service of all people: he is the minister of their salvation, their happiness and their authentic liberation, developing, in this gradual assumption of Christ's will, in prayer, in 'being heart to heart' with him."<sup>[10]</sup>

*Fidelity and fraternity*

14. The Second Vatican Council placed the specific service of priests within the equal dignity and fraternity of all the baptized, as the Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis* clearly states: "Even though the priests of the new law by reason of the sacrament of Order fulfill the preeminent and essential function of father and teacher among the people of God and on their behalf, still they are disciples of the Lord along with all the faithful and have been made partakers of his Kingdom by God, who has called them by his grace. Priests, in common with all who have been reborn in the font of Baptism, are brothers among their brothers and sisters as members of the same body of Christ, which all are commanded to build."<sup>[11]</sup> This foundational fraternity has its roots in Baptism and unites the entire People of God. At the same time, the Council highlights the special fraternal bond between ordained ministers, founded in the sacrament of Holy Orders itself: "All priests, who are constituted in the order of priesthood by the sacrament of Order, are bound together by an intimate sacramental brotherhood, but in a special way they form one priestly body in the diocese to which they are attached under their own bishop... Each is joined to the rest of the members of this priestly body by special ties of apostolic charity, of ministry, and of fellowship."<sup>[12]</sup> Before being a task to be accomplished, then, priestly fraternity is first a gift intrinsic to the grace of Ordination. We must recognize the fact that this gift precedes us. It is not built solely on good will and collective effort, but is a gift of grace, which makes us participants in the ministry of the bishop and is realized in communion with him and with our fellow priests.

15. Precisely for this reason, however, priests are called to *respond to the grace of fraternity* by manifesting and ratifying with their lives what is expected of them, not only by the grace of Baptism but also that of the sacrament of Holy Orders. First of all, being faithful to communion means overcoming the temptation to individualism because it is incompatible with missionary and evangelizing activity, which always concerns the Church as a whole. It is no coincidence that the Second Vatican Council almost always spoke of priests in the plural – no pastor exists on his own! The Lord himself "appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him" (Mk 3:14). This means that there can be no ministry outside of communion with Jesus Christ and with his Body, which is the Church. In the awareness that the unity of the Church derives from "the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,"<sup>[13]</sup> making this relational and communal dimension of ordained ministry increasingly visible is one of the main challenges for the future, especially in a world marked by wars, divisions and discord.

16. Priestly fraternity, therefore, should be considered a constitutive element of the identity of ministers,<sup>[14]</sup> not as a mere ideal or slogan, but as an aspect to be pursued with renewed vigor. In this sense, much has been done in applying the recommendations of *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (cf. n. 8), but more remains to be done, beginning, for example, with economic equalization between those who serve poor parishes and those who carry out their ministry in wealthy communities. It should also be noted that, in several countries and dioceses, the necessary provision for illness and old age is not yet assured. Mutual care, especially attention to our most lonely and isolated brothers, as well as those who are sick and elderly, cannot be considered less important than the care given to the people entrusted to us. This is one of the fundamental points that I recommended to priests on the occasion of their recent Jubilee. "For how could we, as ministers, be builders of living communities unless we first experience a genuine spirit of fraternity among ourselves?"<sup>[15]</sup>

17. In many contexts, especially in the West, new challenges are arising in the lives of priests related to modern mobility and the fragmentation of society. This means that priests are no longer part of a cohesive and believing community that, in the past, supported their ministry. As a result, they are more exposed to the dangers of loneliness, which dampens their apostolic zeal and can lead to a sad withdrawal into themselves. For this reason too, following the instructions of my Predecessors,<sup>[16]</sup> I hope that in all local Churches a renewed commitment may arise to investing in and promoting *possible forms of community life*, "in order to enable priests to find mutual help in cultivating the intellectual and spiritual life, to promote better cooperation among them in the ministry, to safeguard them from possible dangers arising from loneliness."<sup>[17]</sup>

18. On the other hand, it must be remembered that priestly communion can never be established by the standardization of individuals and the charisms or talents that the Lord has granted to each one. Based on the discernment of the bishop, it is important that there be a balance in the diocesan presbyterate between appreciating these gifts and preserving communion. From this perspective, the school of synodality can help everyone to mature interiorly in welcoming different charisms in a synthesis that consolidates the communion of the presbyterate, while being faithful to the Gospel and the teachings of the Church. At a time of great instability, all ordained ministers are called to live in communion by returning to what is essential and being close to people, in order to preserve the hope that takes shape in humble and concrete service. In this context, the ministry of the permanent deacon, configured to Christ the Servant, is a living sign not of a superficial love but one that bends down, listens and gives generously. The beauty of a Church made up of priests and deacons who cooperate, united by the same passion for the Gospel and attentiveness to those most in need, becomes a shining witness of communion. According to the words of Jesus (cf. *Jn* 13:34-35), it is from this unity, rooted in mutual love, that the Christian proclamation receives credibility and strength. For this reason, the diaconal ministry, especially when lived in communion with one's family, is a gift to be understood, valued and supported. The discreet but essential service of men dedicated to charity reminds us that the mission is not accomplished with grand gestures, but by a united passion for the Kingdom and daily fidelity to the Gospel.

19. A happy and eloquent icon of fidelity to communion is undoubtedly the one presented by Saint Ignatius of Antioch in his Letter to the Ephesians: "It is proper for you to run together in harmony with the mind of the bishop, as you are in fact doing. For your council of presbyters, which is worthy of its name and worthy of God, is attuned to the bishop as strings to a lyre. Therefore, in your unanimity and harmonious love, Jesus Christ is sung... It is advantageous, then, for you to be in perfect unity, in order that you may always have a share in God."<sup>[18]</sup>

#### *Fidelity and synodality*

20. I now come to a point that is particularly close to my heart. In speaking of the identity of priests, the Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis* first highlights the link between the priesthood and the mission of Jesus Christ (cf. n. 2), and then indicates three fundamental dimensions. First is the *relationship with the bishop*, who regards priests as "indispensable helpers and advisers," and maintains with them a fraternal and friendly relationship (cf. n. 7). Second is sacramental communion and *fraternity with other priests*, so that together they contribute to "the same work" and carry out "the one priestly service," all working "to the same purpose" even when engaged in different tasks (n. 8). Lastly, there is the *relationship with the lay faithful*, among whom priests, with their specific responsibility, are brothers who share the same baptismal dignity, uniting "their efforts with those of the lay faithful" and benefiting from "their experience and competence in the different fields of human activity. In this way they will be able to recognize along with them the signs of the times." Instead of seeking to dominate or take on all tasks themselves, priests "must discover with faith the various humble and exalted charisms of the laity, among the other gifts of God which are found abundantly among the faithful" (n. 9).

21. There is still much to be done in this area. The impetus of the synodal process is a strong invitation from the Holy Spirit to take decisive steps in this direction. I therefore reiterate my desire to "invite the priests... somehow to open their hearts and take part in these processes"<sup>[19]</sup> that we are undertaking. In this regard, the second session of the XVI Synodal Assembly, in its Final Document,<sup>[20]</sup> proposed a conversion of relationships and processes. It appears essential that, in all the particular Churches, appropriate initiatives be undertaken so that priests can familiarize themselves with the guiding principles of this Document and experience the fruitfulness of a synodal style of Church.

22. All this requires formation at every level, particularly in the initial and ongoing formation of priests. In an increasingly synodal and missionary Church, the priestly ministry loses none of its importance and relevance. On the contrary, it can focus more on its own specific and particular tasks. The challenge of synodality, which does not eliminate differences but values them, remains

one of the main opportunities for future priests. As the aforementioned Final Document recalls, "priests are called to live their service in a spirit of proximity to their people, to be welcoming and prepared to listen to all, opening themselves up to a synodal style" (n. 72). In order to implement an ecclesiology of communion ever more effectively, the ministry of the priest must move beyond the model of exclusive leadership, which leads to the centralization of pastoral activities and the burden of all responsibilities entrusted to him alone. Instead, the ministry should move toward an *increasingly collegial leadership*, with cooperation between priests, deacons and the entire People of God resulting in mutual enrichment that is the fruit of the various charisms bestowed by the Holy Spirit. As *Evangelii Gaudium* reminds us, the ministerial priesthood and configuration to Christ the Bridegroom must not lead us to equate sacramental authority with power, since "the configuration of the priest to Christ the head, namely as the principal source of grace, does not imply an exaltation which would set him above others."<sup>[21]</sup>

### *Fidelity and mission*

23. The identity of priests is built around their *being for*, which is inseparably linked to their mission. Indeed, he who "tries to find his priestly identity by soul-searching and introspection may well encounter nothing more than 'exit' signs, signs that say: exit from yourself, exit to seek God in adoration, go out and give your people what was entrusted to you, for your people will make you feel and taste who you are, what your name is, what your identity is, and they will make you rejoice in that hundredfold which the Lord has promised to those who serve him. Unless you 'exit' from yourself, the oil grows rancid and the anointing cannot be fruitful."<sup>[22]</sup> Saint John Paul II taught that, "in the Church and on behalf of the Church, priests are a sacramental representation of Jesus Christ – the head and shepherd – authoritatively proclaiming his word, repeating his acts of forgiveness and his offer of salvation – particularly in baptism, penance and the Eucharist, showing his loving concern to the point of a total gift of self for the flock, which they gather into unity and lead to the Father through Christ and in the Spirit."<sup>[23]</sup> The priestly vocation, therefore, develops amid the joys and struggles of humble service to our brothers and sisters, who are not always appreciated by the world but have a deep thirst for encountering credible witnesses of God's faithful and merciful love. This becomes the primary way of evangelization.

24. Our contemporary world, characterized by its fast pace and the anxious need to be hyper-connected, often makes us feel rushed and inclines us to activism. Consequently, at least two temptations arise that undermine our fidelity to the mission. The first is an efficiency-oriented mentality, whereby the value of each person is measured by performance, that is, by the quantity of activities and projects accomplished. According to this way of thinking, what you do comes before who you are, reversing the true hierarchy of spiritual identity. The second temptation, on the contrary, manifests itself as a kind of quietism. Frightened by the current situation, we withdraw into ourselves, refusing the challenge of evangelization and instead adopting a lazy and defeatist approach. Conversely, a joyful and passionate ministry, despite all human weaknesses, can and must eagerly take up the task of evangelizing every dimension of our society, especially culture, economics and politics, so that everything can be recapitulated in Christ (cf. *Eph* 1:10). To overcome these two temptations and to live a joyful and fruitful ministry, every priest should remain faithful to the mission he has received, that is, to the gift of grace conferred by the bishop in his priestly ordination. Fidelity to the mission means embracing the paradigm handed down to us by Saint John Paul II when he reminded everyone that pastoral charity is the principle that unifies the life of the priest.<sup>[24]</sup> It is precisely by keeping alive the fire of pastoral charity, namely the love of the Good Shepherd, that every priest can find balance in everyday life and know how to discern what is beneficial and what is the *proprium* of the ministry, according to the Church's teachings.

25. Harmony between contemplation and action is to be sought not through the frantic adoption of operational plans or through a simple balancing of activities, but by putting the *Paschal dimension* at the center of ministry. Giving oneself unreservedly, however, cannot and must not mean giving up prayer, study or priestly fraternity. On the contrary, prayer becomes the horizon in which everything is included to the extent that it is oriented toward the Lord Jesus, who died and rose again for the salvation of the world. In this way, the promises made at Ordination are also fulfilled; together with

detachment from material goods, they foster in the heart of the priest a persevering search for and adherence to God's will, thus allowing Christ to shine through in all his actions. For example, this happens when one flees from all forms of egotism and celebration of self, despite the sharing of oneself that the role sometimes requires. Formed by the mystery he celebrates in the sacred liturgy, every priest must "move aside so that Christ may remain, to make oneself small so that he may be known and glorified (cf. *Jn* 3:30), to spend oneself to the utmost so that all may have the opportunity to know and love him."<sup>[25]</sup> For this reason, media exposure, the use of social networks and all the tools available today must always be evaluated wisely, making service to evangelization the basis for discernment. "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are beneficial" (*1 Cor* 6:12).

26. In all situations, priests are called to respond effectively to the great hunger for authentic and sincere relationships that is found in contemporary society through the witness of a modest and chaste life. They are likewise to bear witness to a Church that is "an effective leaven in bonds, relationships, and the kinship of the human family," "greater capacity to nurture relationships: with the Lord, between men and women, in the family, in the local community, among social groups and religions."<sup>[26]</sup> To this end, priests and lay people must work together to undertake a genuine missionary conversion that will guide Christian communities, under the guidance of their bishops, in service to "the mission that the faithful carry out within society, in family and working life." As the Synod observed, "it will become more evident that the parish is not centered on itself but oriented towards mission. The parish is then called to sustain the commitment of the many people who in so many ways live and bear witness to their faith in through their profession, in social, cultural and political activities."<sup>[27]</sup>

### *Fidelity and the future*

27. I hope that the celebration of the anniversary of the two conciliar Decrees, and the journey we are called to share in order to implement and actualize them, will result in a renewed vocational Pentecost in the Church, and inspire many holy and steadfast vocations to the ministerial priesthood. Thus, there will never be a shortage of workers in the Lord's harvest. And may the desire to commit ourselves fully to the promotion of vocations and to constant prayer to the Lord of the harvest (cf. *Mt* 9:37-38) be reawakened in all of us.

28. Together with prayer, however, the shortage of vocations to the priesthood, especially in certain regions of the world, calls on everyone to examine the fruitfulness of the Church's pastoral practices. It is true that the reasons for this crisis can often be varied and manifold, and depend specifically on the socio-cultural context. At the same time, we must have the courage to make strong and liberating proposals to young people and to ensure that in the particular Churches there are "settings and forms of youth ministry centered on the Gospel, for this is where the call to total gift of self can emerge and mature."<sup>[28]</sup> In the certainty that the Lord never ceases to call (cf. *Jn* 11:28), it is necessary always to keep a vocational perspective in every pastoral setting, particularly in those involving young people and families. Let us remember: there is no future without nurturing all vocations!

29. In conclusion, I give thanks to the Lord who is always close to his people and walks with us, filling our hearts with the hope and peace that are to be taken to everyone. "Brothers and sisters, I would like that our first great desire be for a united Church, a sign of unity and communion, which becomes a leaven for a reconciled world."<sup>[29]</sup> Furthermore, I thank all of you, priests and lay faithful, who open your minds and hearts to the prophetic message of the conciliar Decrees *Presbyterorum Ordinis* and *Optatam Totius* and who are prepared, collectively, to draw nourishment and inspiration from them for the journey of the Church. I entrust all seminarians, deacons and priests to the intercession of the Immaculate Virgin, Mother of Good Counsel, and to Saint John Mary Vianney, Patron Saint of parish priests and model for all priests. As the Curé d'Ars said, "The priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus,"<sup>[30]</sup> a love so strong that it dispels the clouds of complacency, discouragement and loneliness. It is a total love, given to us in its fullness in the Eucharist: a Eucharistic love, a priestly love.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on 8 December, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the Jubilee Year 2025, the first of my Pontificate.

LEO PP. XIV

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[1] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Training of Priests *Optatam Totius*, Introduction.

[2] Cf. Saint J.H. Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Notre Dame 2024. In this sense, I recall the appeal from *Optatam Totius*, 16, for the renewal and promotion of ecclesiastical studies, which are still ongoing.

[3] Cf. Synod of Bishops, *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission*, Preparatory Document (2021), 1; Francis, *Address for the Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops* (17 October 2015).

[4] Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (25 December 2005), 1.

[5] Benedict XVI, *Homily at Mass for the Conclusion for the Year for Priests* (11 June 2010).

[6] "He asked Peter whether he loved him, not from any need to learn the affection of the disciple, but from a desire to show the exceeding depth of his own love" (Saint John Chrysostom, *De Sacerdotio* II: 1: *SCh* 272, Paris 1980, 104, 48-51).

[7] Congregation for the Clergy, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation. Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (8 December 2016), 57.

[8] *Address to the Participants in the International Meeting of Priests Promoted by the Dicastery for the Clergy on the occasion of the Jubilee of Priests and Seminarians* (26 June 2025).

[9] *Meditation on the occasion of the Jubilee of Seminarians* (24 June 2025).

[10] Benedict XVI, *Catechesis* (24 June 2009).

[11] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 9.

[12] *Ibid.*, 8.

[13] Saint Cyprian, *De Oracione Domini*, 23: CCL3A, Turnhout 1976, 105.

[14] Cf. Congregation for the Clergy, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation. Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (8 December 2016), 87-88.

[15] *Address to the Participants in the International Meeting of Priests Promoted by the Dicastery for the Clergy on the occasion of the Jubilee of Priests and Seminarians* (26 June 2025).

[16] Cf. Saint John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (25 March 1992), 61; Benedict XVI, *Motu Proprio Ministrorum Institutio* (16 January 2013).

[17] Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (7 December 1965), 8.

[18] Saint Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Ephesians*, 4, 1-2: *SCh* 10, Paris 1969<sup>4</sup>, 72.

[19] *Address to the Participants in the Jubilee of the Synodal Teams and Participatory Bodies* (24 October 2025).



[20] Synod of Bishops, *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission*, Final Document of the Second Session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly (26 October 2024).

[21] Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), 104.

[22] Francis, *Homily at Mass for the Chrism Mass* (17 April 2014).

[23] Saint John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (25 March 1992), 15.

[24] Cf. *ibid.*, 23.

[25] *Homily at Mass pro Ecclesia* (9 May 2025).

[26] Synod of Bishops, *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission*, Final Document of the Second Session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly (26 October 2024), 20; 50.

[27] *Ibid.*, 59; 117.

[28] *Address to the Participants in the International Meeting of Priests Promoted by the Dicastery for the Clergy* on the occasion of the Jubilee of Priests and Seminarians (26 June 2025).

[29] *Homily for the Beginning of the Pontificate* (18 May 2025).

[30] “*Le Sacerdoce, c’est l’amour du cœur de Jésus*” in Bernard Nodet, *Le curé d’Ars. Sa pensée, son cœur*, Paris 1995, 98.

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