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**MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER TO PRIESTS
ON THE OCCASION OF THE WORLD DAY OF PRAYER
FOR THE SANCTIFICATION OF PRIESTS**

[27 June 2025 - Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus]

Dear brothers in the priesthood!

On this *Day for the Sanctification of Priests*, celebrated on the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, I address each of you with gratitude and great confidence.

The Heart of Christ, pierced for love, is the living and life-giving flesh that embraces each of us and conforms us to the image of the Good Shepherd. There we discover the true nature of our ministry. Consumed by God's mercy, we become joyful witnesses of his love that heals, accompanies and redeems.

Today's Solemnity thus renews in our own hearts the call to be completely committed to the service of God's holy people. This mission starts with prayer and is carried out in union with the Lord, who constantly revives in us the sacred gift of our vocation to the priesthood.

To be mindful of this grace means, as Saint Augustine tells us, to enter into “a vast and deep inner chamber” (cf. *Confessions*, X, 8.15), which does not simply preserve a memory of the past, but makes its riches ever new and present. Only by such remembrance, can we experience and renew that gift which the Lord entrusted to us and charged us to pass on in his name. Remembrance joins our hearts together in the Heart of Christ and our lives in his life, and thus enables us to bring the word and the sacraments of salvation to God’s holy people, in order to bring about a world reconciled in love. Only in the Heart of Jesus do we discover our authentic humanity as children of God, brothers and sisters of one another. For all these reasons, I would make this heartfelt appeal to you today: Be builders of unity and peace!

In a world marked by growing tensions, even within families and ecclesial communities, priests are called to promote reconciliation and foster communion. Building unity and peace demands that we be pastors capable of wise discernment, skilled in the art of piecing together the fragments of the lives entrusted to our care, so that we can enable people to see the light of the Gospel in the midst of life’s trials. It calls for the ability to understand and interpret complex situations, and to rise above immediate emotions, fears and the pressure of passing fashions. It means providing pastoral solutions that generate and regenerate faith by building good relationships, bonds of solidarity and communities in which the style of communion shines forth. Being builders of unity and peace means serving and not domineering. Priestly fraternity becomes a credible sign of the presence of the Risen Lord in our midst precisely when it is the hallmark of our shared journey as priests.

Today, then, I invite you to renew before the Heart of Christ the “yes” that you said to God and to his holy People on the day of your Ordination. Let yourselves be shaped by grace and guard the fire of the Spirit received on that day, so that, in union with him, you may be a sacrament of Jesus’ love in the world. Do not be daunted by your personal frailty: the Lord does not look for perfect priests, but for humble hearts that are open to conversion and prepared to love others as he himself loved us.

Dear brother priests, [Pope Francis](#) called us to renewed devotion to the Sacred Heart as the locus of our personal encounter with the Lord (cf. [Dilexit Nos](#), 103), the place where we can bring and resolve not only our inner conflicts but also those that are tearing apart the world in which we live. For in him, “we learn to relate to one another in wholesome and happy ways, and to build up in this world God’s kingdom of love and justice. Our hearts, united with the heart of Christ, are capable of working this social miracle” ([ibid.](#), 28).

Throughout this [Holy Year](#), in which all of us are called to be pilgrims of hope, our ministry will be all the more fruitful the more it is rooted in prayer and forgiveness, and in closeness to the poor, to families and to young people who are searching for truth. Never forget that a holy priest makes holiness flourish around him.

Entrusting all of you to Mary, Queen of Apostles and Mother of Priests, I bless each of you from my heart.

From the Vatican, 27 June 2025

LEO PP. XIV

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