



Pope Leo XIV greets clergy members ministering in the Diocese of Rome during a meeting in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican June 12, 2025. (CNS/Vatican Media)



Justin McLellan

Vatican Correspondent

[View Author Profile](#)

[jmclellan@ncronline.org](mailto:jmclellan@ncronline.org)

Follow on Twitter at [@m/McLellan Js](https://twitter.com/m/McLellan Js)



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The cultural and pastoral diversity among clergy is not a burden but a gift that should enrich communion within the church rather than fragment it, Pope Leo XIV told the priests and deacons of the Diocese of Rome.

"Ours is truly a particular diocese," the pope said during a June 12 audience with clergy ministering in the Diocese of Rome. "Many priests come from different parts of the world, especially for reasons of study; this implies that pastoral life — I think especially of the parishes — is marked by this universality and the mutual hospitality it entails."

The gathering marked the pope's first official meeting with the clergy of the diocese he serves as bishop.

"I have desired to meet you to get to know you more closely and to begin walking together with you," he told them. "Thank you for your life given in service to the kingdom, for your daily labors, for your generosity in ministry, for all that you live in silence, and which at times is accompanied by suffering or misunderstanding."

Greeting the pope at the start of the meeting, Cardinal Baldassare Reina, papal vicar for Rome, offered a snapshot of the vast and varied clergy in the Italian capital, where more than 8,000 priests and deacons are present, he said, many of whom, however, are pursuing their studies and are not in active ministry.

"The Roman clergy is generous, with a strong sense of belonging and a very marked pastoral passion," the cardinal said. "In the face of difficulties, it reacts positively —

candid in acknowledging problems or critical issues, with a pronounced sense of humor and always ready to begin again for the good of the church and each community."

In his address, Leo emphasized the need for unity among the clergy in today's age.

"The priest is called to be a man of communion so that he himself may live it and continuously nurture it," he said. "We know that this communion today is hindered by a cultural climate that favors isolation or self-referentiality. None of us is exempt from these snares which threaten the solidity of our spiritual life and the strength of our ministry."

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While shared housing in seminaries and rectories helps foster fraternity in Rome, the pope said deeper unity requires more than physical proximity. "I ask you for a push in priestly fraternity, which draws its roots from a solid spiritual life, from the encounter with the Lord and listening to his word."

"Let us strive to live relationships of friendship," he said, "outdoing one another in showing esteem."

Turning to personal witness, Leo asked that all the clergy "commit ourselves to being credible and exemplary priests!"

He acknowledged human weakness but stressed the high demands of the priestly calling. "We are aware of the limits of our nature, and the Lord knows us deeply; but we have received an extraordinary grace, we have been entrusted with a precious treasure of which we are the ministers, servants. And a servant is asked to be faithful."

"The city, with its countless offerings, could also distance us from the desire for a holy life," he warned. "Let yourselves once again be drawn by the call of the master, to feel and live the love of the first hour, the one that moved you to make strong choices and courageous sacrifices."

Leo also reminded clergy that the world's many problems are not distant realities to be ignored, but that they are present in the heart of Rome and challenge the

church's ministers to live charitably.

"We are worried and pained by all that happens every day in the world: we are wounded by the violence that generates death; we are challenged by inequalities, by poverty, by so many forms of social exclusion, by a widespread suffering that now spares no one," he said. "And these realities do not only happen elsewhere, far from us, but also concern our city of Rome, marked by multiple forms of poverty and by serious emergencies such as that of housing."

"The Lord wanted us precisely in this time full of challenges that can seem bigger than our strength," the pope said. "We are called to embrace these challenges, to interpret them evangelically, to live them as opportunities for witness. Let us not run away in the face of them!"

Leo then invoked the words of St. Augustine speaking on the Good Shepherd to urge the clergy to "love this church, remain in this church, be this church."

This story appears in the **Pope Leo XIV** feature series. [View the full series.](#)