



The Holy See

JUBILEE OF SEMINARIANS

MEDITATION OF POPE LEO XIV

Altar of the Confessio in Saint Peter's Basilica

Tuesday, 24 June 2025

[Multimedia]

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Peace be with you!

Good morning to everyone: Your Eminences, Your Excellencies, dear formators and above all, the seminarians present.

I am very happy to be with you, and I thank all of you, seminarians and formators alike, for your warm reception. Thank you especially for your joy and your enthusiasm. Thank you too, because with your energy you feed the flame of hope in the life of the Church!

Today, you are not only *pilgrims*, but also *witnesses of hope*. You are witnesses to me and to everyone, because you wish to share in the exciting adventure of priesthood in these challenging times. You have accepted the Lord's call to become gentle and strong preachers of his saving word and servants of a Church that is open and pressing ahead with missionary zeal.

[Let me say a word in Spanish. Thank you for having accepted the Lord's invitation with courage, an invitation to follow him, to be a disciple, and to enter the seminary. Be strong and unafraid!]

You are saying "yes" to Christ's call, and doing so with humility and courage. Your "yes" to Christ is maturing within the life of the Church, as you allow yourselves to be guided on the necessary path of discernment and formation.

Jesus, as you know, calls you, before all else, to have an experience of friendship with him and with your other companions on the journey (cf. *Mk* 3:13). An experience that will continue to grow, also after ordination, and affect every part of your life. Indeed, 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. He must increase and we must decrease. In that way, we can be shepherds after his own Heart. [1]

Speaking of the Heart of Jesus Christ, how can we not be reminded of the Encyclical *Dilexit Nos* of our late beloved Pope Francis? [2] Precisely at this time in your lives, in this season of formation and discernment, it is important to attend to your own hearts, the core of your being and the “engine” that drives your journey through life. Seminaries are meant to be training grounds in this regard. Especially nowadays, in societies and cultural contexts marked by conflict and narcissism, we need to learn how to love and how to do so as Jesus did. [3]

Just as Jesus loved with a human heart, [4] so you are called to love with the Heart of Christ! [*in Spanish*: To love with the heart of Jesus!] To learn this art, however, you need to work on your interior life. That is the place where God makes his voice heard, and where the deepest decisions of our lives take shape. It is also the place where you will encounter the tensions and struggles (*Mk* 7:14-23) that summon you to conversion, so that your entire life can breathe the fragrance of the Gospel. Your first job, then, is to work on your interior life. Keep in mind Saint Augustine’s constant invitation to return to the heart, because it is there that we will find God. Sometimes descending to the depths of our heart can be intimidating, since we also have to confront our hurts, our wounds. Yet do not be afraid to face them, also with the help of others, because those wounds will make you sympathetic and compassionate towards others who suffer. Without an interior life, no real spiritual life is possible, because it is in the heart that God speaks to us. God speaks in the heart, and we have to learn how to hear his voice. Part of this process is learning how to read the movements of the heart: not only the instant and fleeting emotions typical of youth, but also and above all the feelings that will help you discover the right direction in life. If you learn to know your heart, you will be more genuine and not feel the need to hide behind masks. The royal road that leads to a rich interior life is prayer. In an age of “hyper-connectivity,” it is harder and harder to experience silence and solitude. Yet unless we encounter God, we will never really be able to know ourselves.

I would ask you to pray often to the Holy Spirit, so that he can mold within you a docile heart, capable of embracing the presence of God, also by listening to the voice of nature, of art, poetry, literature, [5] music, as well the human sciences. [6] In your disciplined study of theology, listen with an open mind and heart to the voices rising up from our culture, as, for example, the recent challenges posed by artificial intelligence and social media. [7] Above all, do as Jesus did. Learn to hear the often silent cry of the little ones, of the poor and the oppressed, and so many others, especially the young, who are searching for meaning in their life.

If you cultivate your heart through daily periods of silence, meditation, and prayer, you will learn the art of discernment. This, too, is important: learning discernment. When we are young, we overflow with desires, dreams and ambitions. Our hearts can often be overwhelmed and bewildered. On the other hand, if we follow the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we will surely learn to keep all those things in our heart and meditate on them. Saint Luke tells us that Mary could *synballein* (*Lk* 2:19, 51), “hold together”, all these things in her heart. [8] [] Avoid superficiality and hold the pieces of your life together through prayer and meditation. Ask yourself, what is my life experience teaching me? What does it tell me about the direction my life is taking? Where is the Lord leading me?

Dear friends, have a meek and humble heart like that of Jesus (cf. *Mt* 11:29). As the apostle Paul urges (*Phil* 2:5ff), put on the mind of Christ and grow in human maturity, especially emotional and interpersonal maturity. It is important, and indeed necessary, that beginning with your time in the seminary, you strive for growth in human maturity, eliminating all forms of dissimulation and hypocrisy. Keep your gaze fixed on Jesus. You need to learn, too, how to acknowledge and express your emotions of sadness, fear, anxiety and indignation, and to bring these to your relationship with the Lord. Crises, limitations and weakness are not something to be concealed; they are in fact occasions of grace, which can lead you to a deeper share in the paschal mystery.

In a world so often marked by ingratitude and the thirst for power, where a throwaway culture seems to abound, you are called to be witnesses of gratitude to Christ for his abundant grace, as well as the joy, the tenderness and the mercy of his Heart. To learn how to approach and accept others, and to be generous and disinterested in your ministry. Allow the Holy Spirit to “anoint” your human qualities even prior to the anointing you will receive at your ordination.

The Heart of Christ is compelled by immense compassion. He is the Good Samaritan of all humanity, who tells us: “Go and do likewise” (*Lk* 10:37). This compassion drove him to break the bread of the word for the crowds and to teach them the meaning of sharing (cf. *Mk* 6:30-44). In this way, he gave us a glimpse of what he was later to do in the Upper Room and on the Cross, as he gave us his very self as food. To us, as to the disciples, he says: “Give them something to eat” (*Mk* 6:37). In a word, make your entire life a gift of love.

Dear seminarians, in her wisdom, Mother Church, with the help of the Holy Spirit, has always sought the most fitting ways to train her ordained ministers, keeping in mind the needs of different places. What is your own responsibility in this? Certainly, not to be content with the minimum, or to settle for being passive recipients of formation. Instead, you are called to be passionate about your preparation for priestly life, living fully in the present and looking to the future with a prophetic heart. I hope that this meeting will help each of you to deepen your personal dialogue with the Lord and to ask him to help you put on ever more fully the mind of Christ and the sentiments of his Heart. That Heart beats with love for you and all humanity. Keep pressing forward! I accompany you on your journey and I now give you my blessing.

[1] Cf. SAINT JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (25 March 1992), 43.

[2] Encyclical Letter *Dilexit Nos* on the Human and Divine Love of the Heart of Jesus (24 October 2024).

[3] Cf. *ibid.*, 17.

[4] SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

[5] Cf. FRANCIS, *Letter on the Role of Literature in Formation*, 17 July 2024.

[6] SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 62.

[7] Cf. Congregation for the Clergy, *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, The Gift of the Priestly Vocation (8 December 2016), 97.

[8] Cf. FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter *Dilexit Nos* on the Human and Divine Love of the Heart of Jesus (24 October 2024), 19.