

**ADDRESS OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHARITY FROM THE HEART OF CHRIST
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[Note: This is an English version of an address that was given in Spanish.]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am very happy to be among you, and to be able to contribute to this first bi-national school of leaders. As representative of Pope Francis to the United States, I am honored to bring to you his message and teaching as it applies to your vocation in the world as leaders in business, politics, and society.

The Holy Father is showing us how the teachings of the Second Vatican Council apply to our mission today. Through his own experience, especially as a pastor and bishop in Latin America who helped develop a theology of mission which could confront the epochal change that the world has undergone, the Pope has built upon Vatican II and has now presented his vision of evangelization to the whole Church. It is a vision which begins with the recognition that the transmission of the faith in today's societies can no longer be accomplished effectively by depending upon old methods – methods which assumed that knowledge of Christ and his Church could be passed on from one generation to the next through a shared cultural understanding and a common language of faith. Today this is a faulty assumption in many situations. And so, the Pope's program for mission urges all the disciples of Christ to turn the Church "outward" in her approach to the world. To go to the peripheries with a radical commitment to accompaniment, in order to put Christ in those places where his presence and his offer of life have not been fully understood or received. In *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Fratelli Tutti* especially, we hear the Holy Father's call to a courageous and joyful evangelism which makes clear to everyone that the Church has room for all, and that our goal as Christians is no less than universal fraternity.

In this talk I will unfold the teachings of the Church, and especially of Pope Francis's magisterium, in five sections:

- The Christian vocation to social-political involvement
- The pre-eminence of social and political charity
- Unity at the heart of the Church's mission in the world
- Synodality and the path of unity, and
- A return to the heart of Christ.

In order to elucidate these themes, I will draw from the teachings of *Gaudium et Spes* of the Second Vatican Council; *Evangelii Gaudium*; *Fratelli Tutti*; the Final Document of the Synod on Synodality; and *Dilexit Nos*, the Pope's recent encyclical on the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

First, let's take a look at the Christian vocation to social and political involvement. This, after all, is why we are here. This is the purpose of this Academy of Catholic Leaders. You are all people who occupy positions in society, and in the Church, which enable you to effect change. And this is your calling.

I. The Christian vocation to social-political involvement

One of the most noticeable impacts of the Second Vatican Council has been the dramatically increased understanding of the role of Catholic laity in the mission which belongs to the Church. We must admit that the degree and depth of laypeople's leadership in evangelization has varied from place to place. Indeed, in a number of places the lay vocation still needs to be actualized according to the Council's vision.

But the teaching of the Church is clear: all Christians have a specific vocation within the political community. They have a responsibility to contribute to the common good by influencing political, social, and economic life according to the principles of the Gospel.

Gaudium et Spes has much to say on this matter. To say a little about the document itself, it was the first time that the magisterial Church issued something called a "Pastoral Constitution". This indicates something that was at the core of the Church's understanding as it entered into the Second Vatican Council. There was no lack of doctrinal statements issued by the Council, but by producing a specifically

Pastoral Constitution as one of its key documents, the Council fathers were indicating that even the doctrinal pronouncements of this Council had a *pastoral*, and let us say *missionary* purpose.

Significant too is the fact that the subject of this Pastoral Constitution is “the Church in the Modern World”. It is a way of saying: We need, as Church, to define, not only who we are in a purely theological sense – which *Lumen Gentium* did an excellent job of – but we need to articulate our *identity-in-relationship*. In other words: what is the meaning and purpose of the Church of Christ as it interacts with its fellow human beings in the modern world?

And in *Gaudium et Spes*, this is what the Council fathers said to Christians:

“All Christians must be aware of their own specific vocation within the political community. It is for them to give an example by their sense of responsibility and their service of the common good.”¹

Pope Francis took up this call in *Evangelii Gaudium* when he said, specifically with regard to the vocation of politicians:

“I ask God to give us more politicians capable of sincere and effective dialogue aimed at healing the deepest roots – and not simply the appearances – of the evils in our world! Politics, though often denigrated, remains a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good. We need to be convinced that charity ‘is the principle not only of micro-relationships (with friends, with family members or within small groups) but also of macro-relationships (social, economic and political ones)’. I beg the Lord to grant us more politicians who are genuinely disturbed by the state of society, the people, the lives of the poor! It is vital that government leaders and financial leaders take heed and broaden their horizons, working to ensure that all citizens have dignified work, education and healthcare. Why not turn to God and ask him to inspire

¹ Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 7 December 1965, 75.

their plans? I am firmly convinced that openness to the transcendent can bring about a new political and economic mindset which would help to break down the wall of separation between the economy and the common good of society.”²

What the Pope says about politicians should not make us think that those who do not hold elected offices need not worry about their political vocation. Since “politics” in the traditional sense is about “the people” and their common good, everyone who is part of society has a role in the “political” aspect of the Church’s mission. And indeed, all lay Catholics have the duty and responsibility to carry out the Church’s mission in ways that are proper to their state in life. Saint John Paul II, in *Christifideles Laici*, his 1988 Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful, wrote the following:

“A new state of affairs today both in the Church and in social, economic, political and cultural life, calls with a particular urgency for the action of the lay faithful. If lack of commitment is always unacceptable, the present time renders it even more so. *It is not permissible for anyone to remain idle.*”³ (3)

What was “a new state of affairs” in 1988 is no longer new. It is at least as urgent now as it was then for the lay faithful to invest themselves, according to their particular opportunities and gifts, in the life of society in a way that manifests to that society the meaning of the Gospel. John Paul II continued:

“It is necessary, then, to keep a watchful eye on this our world, with its problems and values, its unrest and hopes, its defeats and triumphs: a world whose economic, social, political and cultural affairs pose problems and grave difficulties in light of the description provided by the Council in ... *Gaudium et Spes*. *This, then, is the vineyard; this is the field in which the faithful are called to fulfill their mission. Jesus*

² Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World, 24 November 2013, 205.

³ Pope St. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World, 30 December 1988, 3.

wants them, as he wants all his disciples, to be the ‘salt of the earth’ and the ‘light of the world’.”⁴

It is clear, then, that for the Church to carry out its mission in the world – the mission of radiating the light of Christ so that “all may be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth”⁵ – the lay faithful must take up with ever increasing vigor and conviction the call to evangelize through all of the ordinary means available to them, based on their states in life and their occupations in the world. This has a particular meaning and significance for those among the laity who occupy positions of greater social, economic, and political influence.

But if this is the task of all the laity, and indeed, all Christian leaders in society, then what is the spirit that must motivate and infuse all such activity? For that, let us turn to the discussion of what the Holy Father calls “social and political charity”.

II. The pre-eminence of social and political charity

Amid the divisive and venomous rhetoric that is always on display these days in our partisan political battles, the common good is hardly spoken of. This is unacceptable, since the achievement of the common good remains the fundamental aim of politics. So, while mentioning this, let me simply say: even inserting into your conversations – in political settings, in business leadership and strategizing – this question, *how are we achieving the common good through what we are proposing?* – this is already a valuable contribution to leadership!

Let us also pause to make sure that we remember what the common good is – since, again, it seems to be nearly lost in political conversations. Following Saint John Paul XXIII’s encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, and subsequently the documents of Vatican II, the *Catechism* defines the common good as: “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily”.⁶

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *1 Timothy* 2:4.

⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1906.

While the common good is too easily forgotten in political debates, even less referred to is charity. And yet, if the common good is the purpose of politics, then charity is the one thing necessary to bring it about. Drawing on the teachings of his predecessors at least as far back as Pope Pius XI, Pope Francis has called politics “one of the highest forms of charity”.⁷

Pope Francis devoted a section of his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, in Chapter 5, to a discussion of social and political charity. He said:

“The development of a global community of fraternity based on the practice of social friendship on the part of peoples and nations calls for a better kind of politics, one truly at the service of the common good. Sadly, politics today often takes forms that hinder progress toward a different world.”⁸

“A different world”: this is what we are called to bring about through our efforts in the social and political realms. It is a matter of inserting the Gospel into the very situations in which we find ourselves.

To speak of “political love” would probably engender strange looks today. And yet it is essential, as the Holy Father expresses here, also in *Fratelli Tutti*:

“Recognizing that all people are our brothers and sisters, and seeking forms of social friendship that include everyone, is not merely utopian. It demands a decisive commitment to devising effective means to this end. Any effort along these lines becomes a noble exercise of charity. For whereas individuals can help others in need, when they join together in initiating social processes of fraternity and justice for all, they enter the ‘field of charity at its most vast, namely political charity’. This entails working for a social and political order whose soul is social charity. Once more, I appeal for a renewed appreciation

⁷ *Evangelii Gaudium*, 205; Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* on Fraternity and Social Friendship, 3 October 2020, 180.

⁸ *Fratelli Tutti*, 154.

of politics as ‘a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good’.”⁹

What is “politics”, by the way? Again, it is important to re-discover the definition of terms that we use all the time, but whose meaning has perhaps been corrupted by a degraded social discourse. To observe the political battles of today, one would think that politics means simply fighting to see which party’s worldview and attendant policies will prevail over those of the opposing party. In short, fighting for partisan, even ideological, control over society. But in this version of politics, what happens to “the people” (who, after all, are at the root of the very word “politics”)? In particular, what happens to the people whom social and political charity has a duty to serve in a preferential way – namely, the poor and those who tend to be marginalized whenever the market, wealth, and power are dominant concerns?

In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis exposes the shortcomings both of populism and certain forms of liberalism. In contrasting the terms “popular” and “populist”, he remarks:

“Closed populist groups distort the word ‘people’, since they are not talking about a true people. The concept of ‘people’ is in fact open-ended. A living and dynamic people, a people with a future, is one constantly open to a new synthesis through its ability to welcome differences. In this way, it does not deny its proper identity, but is open to being mobilized, challenged, broadened and enriched by others, and thus to further growth and development.”¹⁰

Politics loses its goodness when it forgets that it is at the service of “the people”. This is why, as disciples of Christ, we must always infuse politics with what Jesus himself taught us through his life on earth: it is the people who matter. The Lord spent time with and among a “people”, whom he identified with and treated

⁹ *Fratelli Tutti*, 180.

¹⁰ *Fratelli Tutti*, 160.

as God’s beloved family. Within that family, each person had value, especially the ones who were made to suffer the most by unjust trends in the society.

The Church in Latin America has long understood what it means to be a “people”. Pope Francis comes from this understanding. The authentic expression of “theology of the people” is a way of living the Gospel that originates in the experiences of believers themselves. It allows for pastoral activity “centered on awareness of the culture of the poor, ordinary people and their religion, their needs, their future, their concerns and hopes”¹¹. This theology of the people remains a key for allowing the message of Christ to permeate culture, society, and politics with charity. In other words, it is necessary for evangelization to occur. The Holy Father brought this lived understanding to the papacy, and beginning with *Evangelii Gaudium* has endeavored to teach the world how such a theology is needed to renew the evangelical mission of the Church, precisely in this world which has undergone a “change of era”.

Closely related to charity is unity. And this principle too, for all its simplicity, needs to be recovered and placed more “up front” in the way that Christian leaders carry out the Church’s mission. The impetus toward unity was, of course, another fundamental part of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. We need to take this teaching seriously.

III. Unity at the heart of the Church’s mission in the world

Returning to *Gaudium et Spes*, let us listen to what the Council said about unity:

“The promotion of unity belongs to the innermost nature of the Church, for she is, ‘thanks to her relationship with Christ, a sacramental sign and an instrument of intimate union with God, and of the unity of the whole human race.’ Thus she shows the world that an authentic union, social and external, results from a union of minds and hearts, namely

¹¹ Rafael Luciani, *Pope Francis and the Theology of the People*, translated by Phillip Berryman, p. xv (Introduction).

from that faith and charity by which her own unity is unbreakably rooted in the Holy Spirit.”¹²

This is a powerful statement about the importance of unity! It says that “the promotion of unity belongs to the *innermost nature of the Church*”. And yet, just as the subject of charity is often absent from political discussions and debates today, one could question how serious many political leaders are about sowing real unity among the people. Within their own party, perhaps – for the sake of partisan victory, at least. But unity among the entire populace?

It must be noted that, in a country like the United States, when a disaster strikes – such as the recent hurricanes – it is indeed remarkable how a sense of human solidarity seems to “kick in”, and people band together to help one another and to bring aid to those who are desperate. Unfortunately, that movement to unity does not seem to prevail with the same urgency when things return to “business as usual”. And yet, those “ordinary” times are the times when people who are living in habitual poverty and desperation are most in need of actions which unite them to the rest of society. But as the Holy Father often reminds us, such people are too often forgotten by a “culture of indifference”. There are those who have the luxury of vying for political power without really needing to consider the poor and excluded.

This is another reason why we need to inject politics with a Christian ethos. As followers of Christ, we are the ones who know best that unity is an essential aspect of the common good, and we must insist upon the building of unity in social and political activity. This can begin with questions like: *how does this proposal include the poor? What do the excluded members of our community have to say within this discussion?*

Again, *Gaudium et Spes* on the theme of unity: “The union of the human family is greatly fortified and fulfilled by the unity, founded on Christ, of the family of God’s sons.”¹³ In other words, unity needs to begin within the Church if it is to

¹² *Gaudium et Spes*, 42.

¹³ *Ibid.*

evangelize the world. Here, too, there is plenty of reparation and progress to be made!

It is to amplify this call to unity that we stand today at this border between two nations – a border which has too often been, and continues to be, a place of division on multiple levels. It is a place where families have been divided. It is also a place that has been “used” by politicians to score partisan victories and foment divisions within politics itself.

But history teaches us that such disunity is not inevitable, nor must it continue forever. In 2031, we will celebrate the 500th anniversary of that day when the Virgin Mary appeared to an indigenous man and sent him to deliver to the Spanish Bishop of Mexico the miraculous sign of her appearing. She appeared as a *mestiza*: a woman of mixed race and belonging equally to two different cultures. After her appearance, it became possible for “two worlds” who were radically divided from one another to begin to come together as one. This is always what the Virgin Mary does, because it manifests who she is. No matter in what part of the world or among what people the Mother of God is received, she is always the heavenly *mestiza* who unites peoples who, for whatever reasons, are at odds with one another. It is absolutely fitting that Mary should do this, because it is precisely the mission of her Son: “For he is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh, abolishing the law with its commandments and legal claims, that he might create in himself one new person in place of the two, thus establishing peace.”¹⁴ We could say that Christ is the ultimate “*mestizo*”. He united Gentiles and Jews by his blood which was shed for all. But, as if that were not enough, his unifying power is even deeper than that: in his own person, he himself is the union between man and God. In 2033, we will have the great joy of celebrating the 2,000th anniversary of the passion and resurrection of this God-man.

If God has willed such union among his creatures as to pay for it with his Son’s blood, then how can we, as Christians engaged in the politics of this world,

¹⁴ *Ephesians* 2:14-15.

fail to work for fraternal unity among peoples and nations? This is how the Gospel must evangelize the culture.

As the Pope has said: “Those who build walls will end up as prisoners of the walls they have built. Whereas those who build bridges will go forward.”¹⁵

Charity. Unity. Let us now speak a little of how the vocation of Christian leaders can contribute to synodality.

IV. Synodality and the path of unity

All that has been said to this point regarding the Church’s mission of charity and unity in the world of leadership and politics makes sense of the call by Pope Francis that we become more fully a synodal Church. In the Final Document of the recently concluded Second General Assembly of the Synod, there were some helpful definitions given to synodality itself. The delegates to the Synod, with the agreement of Pope Francis, said: “Synodality is the walking together of Christians with Christ and towards God’s Kingdom, in union with all humanity.” It is “a path of spiritual renewal and structural reform that enables the Church to be more participatory and missionary, so that it can walk with every man and woman, radiating the light of Christ.”¹⁶

Notice the words “all humanity”, and “every man and woman”. Synodality is not, therefore, merely a better method of carrying out the Church’s own internal functions. To be renewed as a synodal Church will mean that the Church becomes more effective at her fundamental identity as missionary and evangelizer of the peoples among whom she lives. Importantly, the document states: “Synodality is not an end in itself. Rather, it serves the mission that Christ entrusted to the Church in the Spirit. To evangelize is ‘the essential mission of the Church [...] it is the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity’.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Pope Francis, Press Conference on the Return Flight from Rabat, Morocco to Rome, 31 March 2019.

¹⁶ XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, Second Session (2-27 October 2024), Final Document, 28.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

Even so, the practice of synodality within the Church can train Christians in the unity that we are called to spread to others. Consider this extended quotation from the Final Document:

“As a spiritual being, the human creature is defined through interpersonal relations. The more authentically he or she lives these relations, the more his or her own personal identity matures. It is not by isolation that humans establish their worth, but by placing themselves in relation with others and with God. Hence, these relations take on fundamental importance.’ We recognize a synodal Church by flourishing interpersonal relationships flowing from the mutual love that constitutes the ‘new commandment’ left by Jesus to His disciples. The Church as ‘a people made one by the unity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit’, can witness to the power of relationships founded in the Trinity especially where individualism pervades cultures and societies. Differences that are found in every Christian community with respect to age, vocation, sex, profession and social belonging provide an opportunity for an encounter with otherness that is indispensable to personal growth and maturity.”¹⁸

As Christian leaders, the more that we can make our way of doing things in the Church more synodal – which is to say, more listening, more discerning, more open to the Spirit, and more participatory – the more we can form even those outside the Church, those with whom we share leadership in secular affairs, in a synodal way that will benefit the mission of secular institutions as well.

V. *Dilexit Nos*: A return to the heart of Christ, fount of charity and unity

So, we have looked at the Christian vocation in political and social life, and the importance of charity, unity, and synodality in living that vocation. In conclusion, I consider it very valuable to draw wisdom from a recent document by the Holy Father which may seem like something of a “surprise”: something at first

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 34.

glance incongruous with these other themes, but which in fact I think does a perfect job of tying the other themes together and giving them a deep spiritual root. The document to which I refer is the Pope's latest encyclical, *Dilexit nos*, on the human and divine love of the heart of Jesus Christ. An encyclical, essentially, on the Sacred Heart.

In the midst of all of the weighty discussions in the Church and in the world – how to work for peace, how to heal political polarization, how to seek synodality as a Church – the Pope has given us an encyclical focused on a devotion which has attracted the simplest of faith for centuries. What meaning could such a devotion have when placed alongside such “great” matters?

Tremendous meaning indeed! Here is something which is exactly what we need to be reminded of. There is nothing more important than the human and divine love that flows from the heart of Christ. This is the beginning and end of life and of hope for a hurting world. The heart of Christ is the source of the love that will heal and save the world. And without the sacrifice represented by that heart – which issued blood and water from the Cross, and which is aflame with love for us – without that heart, then our efforts to “make a better world” would be in vain. The fact is that all of our efforts come forth from a victory that the God-man has won for his people through that sacrifice of love on the Cross. As St. Paul said: “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ.”¹⁹

And so, the Pope has called us to “return to the heart”. The first heart that he invites us to return to is our own heart. Listen to what he says in the encyclical about what happens when we, in our culture and society, fail to give the heart its proper place. He writes:

“Many people feel safer constructing their systems of thought in the more readily controllable domain of intelligence and will. The failure to make room for the heart, as distinct from our human powers and passions viewed in isolation from one another, has resulted in a stunting

¹⁹ *Ephesians* 2:13.

of the idea of a personal center, in which love, in the end, is the one reality that can unify all the others.”²⁰

So you see, he is speaking of the human heart – which each of us possesses – as a “centering place” where our thoughts, will, imagination, and desires come together. It is a place within us where our various parts and faculties can find unity and harmony. He goes on:

“If we devalue the heart, we also devalue what it means to speak from the heart, to act with the heart, to cultivate and heal the heart. If we fail to appreciate the specificity of the heart, we miss the messages that the mind alone cannot communicate; we miss out on the richness of our encounters with others; we miss out on poetry. We also lose track of history and our own past, since our real personal history is built with the heart. At the end of our lives, that alone will matter.”²¹

This could be another way of explaining why our society seems so handicapped in its ability to forge bonds of unity through love. We do not tend to engage publicly from the place of the heart. But the sheer intellect and will can go only so far in making meaningful and lasting connections. As Romano Guardini wrote, and as the Pope cites in *Dilexit nos*, without the heart a person “can draw close to no one and no one can ever truly draw close to him. For only the heart creates intimacy, true closeness between two persons. Only the heart is able to welcome and offer hospitality. Intimacy is the proper activity and the domain of the heart.”²²

Intimacy and politics? Have we gone too far? Or, is such a “radical” proposal actually the very thing that our world needs from us who, after all, are disciples of the One who desired an authentic intimacy with each person he encountered?

The Pope says, therefore:

²⁰ Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Dilexit Nos* on the Human and Divine Love of the Heart of Jesus Christ, 24 October 2024, 10.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

²² Romano Guardini, *Religiöse Gestalten in Dostojewskijs Werk*, Mainz/Paderborn, 1989, pp. 236ff; cited in *Dilexit Nos*, 12.

“All our actions need to be put under the ‘political rule’ of the heart. In this way, our aggressiveness and obsessive desires will find rest in the greater good that the heart proposes and in the power of the heart to resist evil. The mind and the will are put at the service of the greater good by sensing and savoring truths, rather than seeking to master them as the sciences tend to do. The will desires the greater good that the heart recognizes, while the imagination and emotions are themselves guided by the beating of the heart.”²³

As helpful as this is for one’s own spiritual growth and inner peace, we can imagine how helpful it will also be for engaging in social and political relations. It opens up the real possibility of arriving at a true “heart-to-heart” (*cor ad cor*) encounter with the other.

There is also a beautiful section in the Pope’s encyclical about how the heart “unites the fragments”. He says:

“[T]he heart makes all authentic bonding possible, since a relationship not shaped by the heart is incapable of overcoming the fragmentation caused by individualism. Two monads may approach one another, but they will never truly connect. A society dominated by narcissism and self-centeredness will increasingly become ‘heartless’. This will lead in turn to the ‘loss of desire’, since as other persons disappear from the horizon we find ourselves trapped within walls of our own making, no longer capable of healthy relationships. As a result, we also become incapable of openness to God. As Heidegger puts it, to be open to the divine we need to build a ‘guest house’.”²⁴

No question: the Holy Father is proposing something “radical”, but it is only as radical as the Gospel of Jesus: beginning with person-to-person relationships, rooted in the heart, the world can change. Here is how Pope Francis expresses it:

²³ *Dilexit Nos*, 13.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

“It is only by starting from the heart that our communities will succeed in uniting and reconciling differing minds and wills, so that the Spirit can guide us in unity as brothers and sisters. Reconciliation and peace are also born of the heart. The heart of Christ is ‘ecstasy’, openness, gift and encounter. In that heart, 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.”²⁵

Yes: we are meant to be miracle-workers. This is our vocation! It is what we should expect to happen. Because we are baptized in Christ and confirmed by the Spirit, we, the sons and daughters of God, ought to expect that when we act empowered by the Spirit’s gifts, God’s love will produce effects in society, in politics, beyond what we, by our own human power and capacity, can achieve.

Finally, I will quote once more from *Dilexit nos*:

“Taking the heart seriously, then, has consequences for society as a whole. The Second Vatican Council teaches that, “every one of us needs a change of heart; we must set our gaze on the whole world and look to those tasks we can all perform together in order to bring about the betterment of our race. For ‘the imbalances affecting the world today are in fact a symptom of a deeper imbalance rooted in the human heart’. In pondering the tragedies afflicting our world, the Council urges us to return to the heart. It explains that human beings ‘by their interior life, transcend the entire material universe; they experience this deep interiority when they enter into their own heart, where God, who probes the heart, awaits them, and where they decide their own destiny in the sight of God’.”²⁶

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

Conclusion

Let us make a choice, then, for the destiny that God wills for us. Not a destiny merely to “survive” in this world that has so many problems. Much less to retreat in fear of the challenges we face. But rather, with confidence in the crucified One who lives, to make known in our leadership environment the hope that lives in us and does not disappoint. Embracing this destiny means living our vocation as Christian leaders, infusing charity into all of our actions in the secular world, insisting on a unity that is built through synodal participation and openness, and letting the radical love of the heart of Christ be the engine and foundation of everything we do.

This is what it means to be a Catholic leader. It is exciting. It is promising. And the reward of such a faithful carrying out of the Gospel has already been assured us by Christ.

May God grant us the grace to be such witnesses of him in the world.