

**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY ARCHBISHOP GABRIELE CACCIA
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS PLENARY ASSEMBLY
ORLANDO, FLORIDA – JUNE 10, 2026**

Thank you, Archbishop Coakley. Please accept my prayerful good wishes for your service as President of this Conference, and for this first Plenary Assembly under your leadership—which is also, of course, my first time in this Meeting. So we begin together!

My thanks also to Bishop Flores, Msgr. Fuller, the members of the General Secretariat, and all who work at the USCCB in service of the bishops' ministry.

I also wish to express a word of sincere gratitude for my predecessor, Cardinal Christophe Pierre. For many years, he served the Holy Father and the Church in the United States with generosity and devotion, traveling throughout the country so that he could experience the reality of your local Churches. I am grateful for the path he walked with you. And I ask you to keep praying for him, and also for me as I begin my own service as Nuncio.

Eminences, Excellencies, Dear Brother Bishops:

It is a joy for me to be with you today. I bring you the greetings and the blessing of Pope Leo XIV, whom I am honored to represent among you. The Holy Father is close to you in your ministry and he asks the Lord to strengthen you in your vocation as shepherds of the Church in this country.

When I was named to this new service in the United States on March 7th, I expressed my gratitude with these words:

“Honored and deeply humbled by the decision of the Holy Father to appoint me as Apostolic Nuncio to the Country and the Church where he himself was born and raised, I receive this mission with both joy and a sense of trepidation, conscious of the great trust placed in me and of my own limitations, yet confident in His Holiness’s prayerful support and guidance.

“I am likewise encouraged by the warmth and openness that I have already experienced from the local Church, as well as from the Government and the people of this country, whom I have come to know during my years of service at the United Nations in New York. I trust that their generosity and collaboration will assist me in carrying out this new mission at the service of communion and peace.

“Upon all I invoke the blessings of Almighty God, especially in this year that marks the 250th anniversary of the birth of the United States of America.”

Since my arrival in Washington one month ago, I have been deeply encouraged by the many expressions of warm welcome that I have received: in messages, cards, meetings, and other gestures of kindness. For all of this, I am very grateful and I take this opportunity to thank all of you here present as well as those who are following online.

I have already had the honor of presenting my Letters of Credence to the President of the United States—just as now I was able to present a letter from the Secretary of State of His Holiness to Archbishop Coakley and the members of this Conference. I am grateful for this fraternal welcome.

I come with great esteem for the Church in America, which has given so much to the universal Church—even giving us our Pope! In this regard,

I was struck by a passage from Alexis de Tocqueville, who, during his travels in the United States in the 1830s, spoke with priests in Baltimore about the growth of Catholicism in this country. One of the priests he spoke with even thought that America could become the core of Catholicism. Perhaps he was very optimistic. But I wonder what Tocqueville would think today, seeing that the Successor of Peter has come from this land.

At the same time, esteem does not mean ignoring the wounds that remain in the life of the Church. I see the election of Pope Leo as a gift of the Holy Spirit, encouraging the Church in this country, on one hand to foster what is best in her tradition and on the other to continue facing with determination those wounds in her recent history that have caused much suffering especially through the cases of abuse. *“Ecclesia sancta simul et semper purificanda.”* As the Council reminds us, the Church is at once holy and always in need of being purified. Let us pray and work together for her renewal, so that her witness may be credible, her communities safe and her mission ever more faithful to the Gospel.

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I would like now to expand briefly on the words that I used at the time of my appointment: peace, communion, and mission.

These are themes for the Church’s public witness, but they begin in the way we live our own ministry. You remember the Gospel we recently heard, in which James and John ask for places of honor, and the other disciples become indignant. Jesus tells them that, as they know, the “great ones” of this world lord their authority over others and make people feel the weight of their power. But he tells them, “It shall not be so among you.”

Rather, they are to offer themselves in service and self-gift, as he himself did.

In a world that sees more and more conflict arising at all levels—within the family, the workplace, and even in national and international relations—as followers of Jesus we are called to witness to another way. This way is the peace of the risen Christ. A peace that, as the Pope said, “is unarmed and disarming, humble and persevering. A peace that comes from God, the God who loves us all, unconditionally.”

The consecration of this nation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which we will carry out tomorrow, gives a spiritual center to this Assembly. It says that the Church’s service to this country, and to every country, must begin again from Christ and from his heart, which is the source of peace.

In his encyclical *Dilexit Nos*, Pope Francis brought us back to the heart of Christ by first reminding us of the meaning of our own human heart. He said that in an age of superficiality, consumption, and distraction, we need to rediscover the heart as the deep center of the person. It is there that life finds unity, and there that we become capable of communion with God and with others. When the heart is lost, the person becomes fragmented. When the heart is healed, life can find unity again.

Our consecration of this nation, and of ourselves, to the Sacred Heart can help anchor our episcopal ministry in a relationship with Christ. Rooted in our own communion with Jesus, we can become builders of peace and communion among ourselves and with others.

This also relates to the way I hope to live my own mission among you. I know that the ministry of a bishop carries many responsibilities, some of which can feel isolating. For this reason, I wish to be present among you as a brother bishop who journeys with you, listening together to the voice of the Holy Spirit and to the Successor of St. Peter. In that sense, I hope you will feel free to speak with me in open conversation and dialogue, being assured that my service here is one of listening, trust, and shared discernment within the Church that we are all serving together.

From this communion, we are sent on mission. Here too, the Sacred Heart is not something separate from the Church's missionary task. From the heart of Christ, the Church learns the truth of the human heart: its dignity, its wounds, its desire for God, and its need for communion. This is why the Church can go out to every person, not first with a program, but with the love of Christ. As Pope Paul VI said at the United Nations, she comes as an "expert on humanity," helping our brothers and sisters find the path that leads to God.

The Church in this country understands mission well, because it began as territory entrusted to *Propaganda Fide*. Missionaries came here from many places. Over time, one of the signs that the Gospel has matured in a people is that a Church once evangelized becomes, in turn, evangelizing. The Church that received missionaries becomes a Church that sends missionaries and awakens missionary disciples.

At the same time, the missionary vocation of the Church is lived not only by going out to foreign lands, but also by welcoming those who come to us. In every age, people arrive here in this country for many reasons, with

their own hopes, burdens, and needs. To meet them with the charity of Christ, to recognize their dignity, and to help them find a place in the life of the community is also part of a missionary Church.

Mission also concerns the way the Church meets every new reality. The “new things” of our age are not the same as those of the past, but the mission remains the same: to proclaim Christ and to accompany our brothers and sisters on their journey to God.

This is why Pope Leo’s recent Encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, on safeguarding the human person in the age of artificial intelligence, is so important. AI is not only a technical matter. Because it touches the human person and the way decisions are made in society, it also touches the mission of the Church.

Here we can see the continuity between Pope Francis and Pope Leo. In *Dilexit Nos*, Pope Francis reminded us that no algorithm can capture the depth of the human heart. Pope Leo now asks how the Church can help safeguard the human person on this new frontier. The answer cannot come only from techniques or policies, necessary as these are. It must come from a renewed Christian humanism, rooted in Christ who reveals the human person to himself and teaches us the path of love.

Such a humanism allows the Church to meet new realities without naïve enthusiasm or anxious fear. It also reminds us that the Church’s response is built in communion, not in isolation. In *Magnifica Humanitas*, the Holy Father recalls the image of Nehemiah, who did not rebuild the city alone, but gathered the people for a shared work, brick by brick. I believe

this image can speak to us as bishops. We are called to build together from the communion that already unites us in Jesus Christ.

As a little gift and as a sign of communion with the Holy Father, I thought it would be appropriate to give to each of you a small booklet, pocket-sized, that I have recently used for another occasion in New York. It contains the two Dogmatic Constitutions of the Second Vatican Council: *Lumen Gentium* and *Dei Verbum*. Pope Leo, as you know, began this year a series of catecheses on the documents of Vatican II, in order “to rediscover the beauty and the importance of this ecclesial event.” He reminded us that the Council is still “the guiding star of the Church’s journey today.” *Lumen Gentium* and *Dei Verbum* remind us who the Church is, and how the Church listens to the Word of God. They bring us back to the sources of our communion and mission.

This continuity is important. We are not beginning again from zero. We receive a living tradition; and above all, we receive the love of Christ, poured out from his heart for the life of the world.

In conclusion, I would like simply to say: I am happy to be here among you; I’m eager to walk with you; and I’m ready to serve, as a brother bishop, the mission of the Church in this country. May our renewal in the Sacred Heart of Jesus give us the grace to do this together, for the life of the Church and the good of the world.

Thank you.