Vatican

Vatican News



Pope Leo XIV greets Buddhist monks who present him with gifts during a meeting with religious leaders at the Vatican May 19, 2025. The leaders were in Rome for the pope’s inauguration Mass. (CNS/Vatican Media)

Cindy Wooden

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During a special audience with religious leaders who came to Rome for the inauguration of his papal ministry, Pope Leo XIV vowed to continue working toward Christian unity and promoting dialogue among all religions.

"Now is the time for dialogue and building bridges," the pope said May 19 as he met with the leaders in the Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace.

His guests included Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, Orthodox Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem and Catholicos Awa III, patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, as well as Anglican, Methodist and Lutheran leaders. Representatives of the Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh and Jain communities also attended.

"As bishop of Rome," Leo told them, "I consider one of my priorities to be that of seeking the reestablishment of full and visible communion among all those who profess the same faith in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."

Full Christian unity must be based on unity in faith, he said, noting how his election took place in the year that Christians are celebrating the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, which "represents a milestone in the formulation of the Creed shared by all churches and ecclesial communities."

The late Pope Francis had been planning to travel to Iznik, Turkey, site of the ancient city of Nicaea, to commemorate the anniversary with Patriarch Bartholomew. A Vatican official said planning is underway for Leo to make the trip.

"Unity has always been a constant concern of mine," the new pope told his guests, pointing to the motto he chose when he became a bishop in 2014: "'In Illo uno unum,' an expression of St. Augustine of Hippo that reminds us how we, too, although we are many, 'in the One — that is Christ — we are one.'"

Leo told the Christian leaders that "the more faithful and obedient we are" to Jesus, "the more united we are among ourselves. We Christians, then, are all called to pray and work together to reach this goal, step by step, which is and remains the work of the Holy Spirit."

"Aware, moreover, that synodality and ecumenism are closely linked, I would like to assure you of my intention to continue Pope Francis' commitment to promoting the synodal nature of the Catholic Church and developing new and concrete forms for an ever stronger synodality in ecumenical relations," he said.

Francis and many ecumenical leaders focused on how synodality — literally "walking together," listening to one another and valuing the gifts and talents of all — could help Christians see how much they have in common and how they must work together to bring the Gospel to the world.

Leo also praised Francis' emphasis on how, since everyone is a child of God, they are brothers and sisters to each other.

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"The witness of our fraternity, which I hope we will be able to show with effective gestures, will certainly contribute to building a more peaceful world, something that all men and women of goodwill desire in their hearts," the pope told the religious leaders.

"In a world wounded by violence and conflict," he said, "each of the communities represented here brings its own contribution of wisdom, compassion and commitment to the good of humanity and the preservation of our common home."

Working together "and free from ideological and political conditioning," he said, "we can be effective in saying 'no' to war and 'yes' to peace, 'no' to the arms race and 'yes' to disarmament, 'no' to an economy that impoverishes peoples and the Earth and 'yes' to integral development."

Leo had special words of gratitude for the Jewish and Muslim representatives and pledged to continue the dialogue that began with their communities 60 years ago with the publication of the Second Vatican Council's document, "Nostra Aetate," on relations with other religions.

The document, the pope said, "emphasizes the greatness of the spiritual heritage shared by Christians and Jews, encouraging mutual knowledge and esteem."

"The theological dialogue between Christians and Jews remains ever important and close to my heart," he said. "Even in these difficult times, marked by conflicts and misunderstandings, it is necessary to continue the momentum of this precious dialogue of ours."

The "growing commitment to dialogue and fraternity" between Christians and Muslims also is important, he said. The dialogue, "based on mutual respect and freedom of conscience, is a solid foundation for building bridges between our communities."