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Pope Leo XIV presides over Mass for the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican June 29, 2025. (CNS/Pablo Esparza)

Carol Glatz

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Archbishops around the world can provide by their example the fraternity and unity in diversity the entire Catholic Church needs today, Pope Leo XIV said.

"The whole church needs fraternity, which must be present in all of our relationships, whether between lay people and priests, priests and bishops, bishops and the pope," he said during his homily at Mass on the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul June 29.

"Fraternity is also needed in pastoral care, ecumenical dialogue and the friendly relations that the church desires to maintain with the world," the pope said.

"Let us make an effort, then, to turn our differences into a workshop of unity and communion, of fraternity and reconciliation, so that everyone in the church, each with his or her personal history, may learn to walk side by side," he said.

The feast day celebration in St. Peter's Basilica included the traditional blessing of the pallium, the woolen band that the heads of archdioceses wear around their shoulders over their Mass vestments and symbolizes an archbishop's unity with the pope and his authority and responsibility to care for the flock the pope entrusted to him.

Leo revived a tradition begun by St. John Paul II in 1983 by personally placing the pallium around the shoulders of the recently named archbishops.

Pope Francis had changed the ceremony starting in 2015. The late pope had invited new archbishops to concelebrate Mass with him and be present for the blessing of the palliums as a way of underlining their bond of unity and communion with him, but the actual imposition of the pallium was done by the nuncio and took place in the archbishop's archdiocese in the presence of his faithful and bishops from neighboring dioceses.

The Office for the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff issued a formal notification June 11 that on June 29 Leo would preside over the Eucharistic

celebration, bless the palliums and impose them on the new metropolitan archbishops.

According to the Vatican, 54 archbishops from more than two dozen countries who were named over the past 12 months received the palliums. Eight of them were from the United States: Cardinal Robert McElroy of Washington; Archbishop Shawn McKnight of Kansas City, Kansas; Archbishop Michael McGovern of Omaha, Nebraska; Archbishop Robert Casey of Cincinnati; Archbishop Joe Vásquez of Galveston-Houston; Archbishop Jeffrey Grob of Milwaukee; Archbishop Richard Henning of Boston; and Archbishop Edward Weisenburger of Detroit.
The pope blessed the palliums after they were brought up from the crypt above the tomb of St. Peter. Each archbishop then approached Leo by the altar and either knelt or bowed their head as the pope placed the pallium over their shoulders. Each shared an embrace with the pope and a few words.

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In his homily, the pope reflected on Sts. Peter and Paul — two saints who were martyred on different days and yet share the same feast day.

Sts. Peter and Paul were two very different people with different backgrounds, faith journeys and ways of evangelizing, Leo said. They were at odds over "the proper way to deal with gentile converts" and would debate the issue.

And yet, they were brothers in the Holy Spirit, and they both shared "a single fate, that of martyrdom, which united them definitively to Christ," he said.

Their stories have "much to say to us, the community of the Lord's disciples," he said, especially regarding the importance of "ecclesial communion and the vitality of faith."

"The history of Peter and Paul shows us that the communion to which the Lord calls us is a unison of voices and personalities that does not eliminate anyone's freedom," Leo said.

"Our patron saints followed different paths, had different ideas and at times argued with one another with evangelical frankness. Yet this did not prevent them from living the 'concordia apostolorum,' that is, a living communion in the Spirit, a fruitful

harmony in diversity," he said.

"It is important that we learn to experience communion in this way — as unity within diversity — so that the various gifts, united in the one confession of faith, may advance the preaching of the Gospel," Leo said.

Sts. Peter and Paul challenge Catholics to follow their example of fraternity and to think about "the vitality of our faith," he said. "As disciples, we can always risk falling into a rut, a routine, a tendency to follow the same old pastoral plans without experiencing interior renewal and a willingness to respond to new challenges."

The two apostles were open to change, new events, encounters and concrete situations in the life of their communities, the pope said, and they were always ready "to consider new approaches to evangelization in response to the problems and difficulties raised by our brothers and sisters in the faith."

In the day's Gospel reading, Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" which he continues to ask his disciples today, "challenging us to examine whether our faith life retains its energy and vitality, and whether the flame of our relationship with the Lord still burns bright," the pope said.

"If we want to keep our identity as Christians from being reduced to a relic of the past, as Pope Francis often reminded us, it is important to move beyond a tired and stagnant faith," he said, and ask: "Who is Jesus Christ for us today? What place does he occupy in our lives and in the life of the church? How can we bear witness to this hope in our daily lives and proclaim it to those whom we meet?"

"Brothers and sisters, the exercise of a discernment born of these questions can enable our faith and the faith of the church to be constantly renewed and to find new paths and new approaches to preaching the Gospel. This, together with communion, must be our greatest desire," he said.

Keeping with a long tradition, a delegation from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, led by Orthodox Metropolitan Emmanuel Adamakis of Chalcedon, was present at the Mass. Also present were members of the Synod of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church.

The pope and the Orthodox metropolitan also descended the stairs below the main altar to pray at St. Peter's tomb.

"I would like to confirm on this solemn feast that my episcopal ministry is at the service of unity, and that the church of Rome is committed by the blood shed by Sts. Peter and Paul to serving in love the communion of all churches," Leo said before praying the Angelus with those gathered in St. Peter's Square.

"The New Testament does not conceal the errors, conflicts and sins of those whom we venerate as the greatest apostles. Their greatness was shaped by forgiveness," he said. "The risen Lord reached out to them more than once, to put them back on the right path. Jesus never calls just one time. That is why we can always hope. The Jubilee is itself a reminder of this."

In fact, "those who follow Jesus must tread the path of the beatitudes, where poverty of spirit, meekness, mercy, hunger and thirst for justice, and peace-making are often met with opposition and even persecution," he said. "Yet God's glory shines forth in his friends and continues to shape them along the way, passing from conversion to conversion."

This story appears in the **Pope Leo XIV** feature series. View the full series.