Vatican
Vatican News



Pope Leo XIV and newly appointed bishops, including about a dozen from the United States, begin a meeting at the Vatican Sept. 11, 2025, by singing "Veni Creator Spiritus," invoking the Holy Spirit. (CNS/Vatican Media)

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Close to 200 clerics who had been named bishops in the past year were not the only ones in the Vatican's New Synod Hall to have been thrust into new ministries and leadership roles.

"Maybe some of you are still saying: Why was I chosen? At least I ask myself that," Pope Leo XIV said Sept. 11 during a meeting with bishops in Rome for the Vatican's annual formation courses for new bishops.

"The gift you have received is not for yourselves, but to serve the cause of the Gospel. You have been chosen and called to be sent out as apostles of the Lord and as servants of the faith," the pope told them.

The courses — sometimes casually referred to as "Baby Bishops' School" or "Bishops' Boot Camp" — are sponsored by the dicasteries for Bishops, for Evangelization and for Eastern Churches. The courses include sessions on topics such as what canon law says about administering a diocese, investigating abuse allegations and communication, but they also introduce the bishops to Vatican officials and offices and give them a chance to pray and meet with their peers from around the world.

Since the courses are a fixture on the Vatican calendar, Leo said he had expected to be there as Cardinal Robert Prevost, prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops.

"I thought I'd be here, but dressed in black like you are," he said. Instead, he was wearing papal white.

Leo spent more than three hours with the bishops; he read a prepared text, which the Vatican published, and then he spent some 90 minutes listening to their concerns and responding to their questions behind closed doors. The pope ended the morning by posing for a photo with each bishop separately.

"The bishop is a servant, the bishop is called to serve the faith of the people," the pope told the group, which included about a dozen bishops named to U.S. dioceses.

Service, he said, "is not an external characteristic or just a way of exercising a role" but is an essential part of the call.

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"Those whom Jesus calls as disciples and proclaimers of the Gospel — especially the Twelve — are called to interior freedom, poverty of spirit and a willingness to serve that is born of love, in order to embody the very choice of Jesus, who became poor to make us rich," he said.

Jesus showed his disciples "the style of God, who does not reveal himself through power, but through the love of a Father who calls us into communion with him," the pope said.

"Always stay vigilant and walk in humility and prayer, so that you may become servants of the people to whom the Lord sends you," Pope Leo asked the bishops.

Knowing one is called to serve is not enough, he told them. The "spirit of service" must be "translated into an apostolic style, into the various forms of care and pastoral governance (and) into a deep longing to proclaim the Gospel, expressed in diverse and creative ways depending on the concrete situations you will face."

The need for creativity and new approaches to ministry is clear, he said.

"The crisis of faith and its transmission, along with the struggles related to belonging and ecclesial practice, call us to rediscover the passion and courage for a new proclamation of the Gospel," he said. "At the same time, many people who seem distant from the faith often return to knock at the doors of the church or open themselves to a new search for spirituality — one that sometimes does not find adequate language or form in our usual pastoral approaches."

Many of the bishops also will be called to respond to other challenges, too, he said, including "the tragedy of war and violence, the suffering of the poor, the longing of many for a more fraternal and united world, the ethical challenges that question us about the value of life and freedom — and the list could certainly go on."

Amid all those challenges, he told the bishops, "the church sends you as caring, attentive shepherds — shepherds who know how to walk with their people, to share in their questions, anxieties and hopes; shepherds who long to be guides, fathers and brothers to priests and to their sisters and brothers in the faith."