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Pope Leo XIV speaks during his first consistory with cardinals from around the world at the Vatican Jan. 7, 2026. "May the Holy Spirit, whom we have invoked, guide us during these two days of reflection and dialogue," he said in his opening address. (OSV News/Vatican Media/Simone Risoluti)

Pope Leo XIV

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I am very pleased to welcome all of you. Thank you for your presence! May the Holy Spirit, whom we have invoked, guide us during these two days of reflection and dialogue.

I consider it highly significant that we have gathered in Consistory on the day after the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord, and I would like to introduce our work by proposing something drawn precisely from this mystery.

The liturgy echoed the ever-moving appeal of the prophet Isaiah: "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you,

and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn" (Isaiah 60:1-3).

These words call to mind the beginning of the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Church. I will read the first paragraph in its entirety:

Christ is the light of the nations and consequently this holy Synod, gathered together in the Holy Spirit, ardently desires to bring all humanity that light of Christ which is resplendent on the face of the Church, by proclaiming his Gospel to every creature (cf. Mark 16:15). Since the Church, in Christ, is a sacrament — a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race — it here proposes, for the benefit of the faithful and of the entire world, to describe more clearly, and in the tradition laid down by earlier councils, its own nature and universal mission. The present situation lends greater urgency to this duty of the Church, so that all people, who nowadays are drawn ever more closely together by social, technical and cultural bonds, may achieve full unity in Christ (Lumen Gentium, 1).

> We must not arrive at a text, but continue a conversation that will help me in serving the mission of the entire Church.
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While centuries apart, we can say that the Holy Spirit inspired the same vision in the prophet and in the Council Fathers, namely the vision of the light of the Lord illuminating the holy city — first Jerusalem, then the Church. The guidance of this light enables all peoples to walk in the midst of the darkness of the world. What Isaiah announced figuratively, the Council recognizes in the fully revealed reality of Christ, the light of the nations.

We can understand the overall pontificates of St. Paul VI and St. John Paul II within this conciliar perspective, which sees the mystery of the Church as entirely held within the mystery of Christ, and thus understands the evangelizing mission as a radiation of the inexhaustible energy released by the central event of salvation history.

Popes Benedict XVI and Francis, in turn, summarized this vision in one word: "attraction." Pope Benedict referred to this in his homily for the opening of the Aparecida Conference in 2007, when he said:

"The Church does not engage in proselytism. Instead, she grows by 'attraction': just as Christ 'draws all to himself' by the power of his love, culminating in the sacrifice of the Cross, so the Church fulfils her mission to the extent that, in union with Christ, she accomplishes every one of her works in spiritual and practical imitation of the love of her Lord."

Pope Francis was in perfect agreement with this, and repeated it several times in different contexts.

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Today, I joyfully revisit this theme and share it with you. I invite us to pay close attention to what Pope Benedict signalled as the "power" that drives this movement of attraction. Indeed, this power is Charis, it is Agape, it is the love of God that became incarnate in Jesus Christ and that, in the Holy Spirit, is given to the Church, sanctifying all her actions. Furthermore, it is not the Church that attracts, but Christ; and if a Christian or an ecclesial community attracts, it is because through that "channel" flows the lifeblood of Charity that cascades from the Heart of the Savior. Moreover, it is significant that Pope Francis began with *Evangelii Gaudium* "on the proclamation of the Gospel in today's world," and concluded with *Dilexit Nos* "on the human and divine love of the Heart of Jesus Christ."

St. Paul writes, "the love of Christ urges us on" (2 Corinthians 5:14). The verb sunechei signifies that the love of Christ urges us on because it possesses us, envelops us and captivates us. This is the power that attracts everyone to Christ, as he himself foretold: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (John 12:32). To the extent that we love one another as Christ has loved us, we belong to him, we are his community, and he can continue to draw others to himself through us. In fact, only love is credible; only love is trustworthy.

While unity attracts, division scatters. It seems to me that physics also confirms this, both on the microscopic and macroscopic levels. Therefore, in order to be a truly missionary Church, one that is capable of witnessing to the attractive power of Christ's love, we must first of all put into practice his commandment, the only one he

gave us after washing his disciples' feet: "Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." He then adds: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35). St. Augustine observes: "This is why he loved us, so that we too might love one another. By loving us, he gave us the help we need to bind ourselves together in mutual love, and, bound together by such a pleasing bond, we are the body of such a mighty Head" (Homily 65 on the Gospel of John, 2).

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Pope Leo XIV holds a consistory with cardinals from around the world at the Vatican Jan. 7, 2026. (OSV News photo/Simone Risoluti, Vatican Media)

Dear Brothers, I would like to begin here, with these words of the Lord, for our first Consistory and especially for the collegial journey that, with God's grace, we are called to undertake. We are a very diverse group, enriched by a wide range of backgrounds, cultures, ecclesial and social traditions, formative and academic paths, pastoral experiences, not to mention personal characteristics and traits. We are called first to get to know one another and to dialogue, so that we may work together in serving the Church. I hope that we can grow in communion and thus offer a model of collegiality.

Today, in a certain sense, we will continue that memorable meeting, which I was able to share with many of you immediately after the Conclave, in "a moment of communion and fraternity, of reflection and sharing, aimed at supporting and advising the Pope in the demanding responsibility of governing the universal Church" (Letter Convoking the Extraordinary Consistory, 12 December 2025).

In the coming days, we will have the opportunity to engage in a communal reflection on four themes: *Evangelii Gaudium*, that is, the mission of the Church in today’s world; P*raedicate Evangelium*, namely the service of the Holy See, especially to the particular Churches; the Synod and synodality as both an instrument and a style of cooperation; and the liturgy, the source and summit of the Christian life. Due to time constraints, and in order to encourage a genuinely in-depth analysis, only two of them will be discussed specifically.

While each of the 21 groups will contribute to the choice that we will make, the groups that will be reporting will be those nine coming from the local Churches,

since it is naturally easier for me to seek counsel from those who work in the Curia and live in Rome.

I am here to listen. As we learned during the two Assemblies of the Synod of Bishops of 2023 and 2024, the synodal dynamic implies a listening *par excellance*. Every moment of this kind is an opportunity to deepen our shared appreciation for synodality. "The world in which we live, and which we are called to love and serve, even with its contradictions, demands that the Church strengthen cooperation in all areas of her mission. It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium" (Francis, Address on the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops, 17 October 2015).

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This day and a half together will point the way for our path ahead. We must not arrive at a text, but continue a conversation that will help me in serving the mission of the entire Church.

Tomorrow, we will discuss the two chosen themes, with the following question as a guide:

Looking at the path of the next one or two years, what considerations and priorities could guide the action of the Holy Father and of the Curia regarding each theme?

This will be our way of proceeding: being attentive to the heart, mind and spirit of each; listening to one other; expressing only the main point and in a succinct manner, so that all can speak. The ancient Romans in their wisdom used to say: *Non multa sed multum* (not many, but much)! In future, this way of listening to each other, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit and walking together, will continue to be a great help for the Petrine ministry entrusted to me. Even the way in which we learn to work together, with fraternity and sincere friendship, can give rise to something new, something that brings both the present and the future into focus.

May the Holy Spirit always guide us, and may the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, assist us.