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Pope Leo XIV speaks during a meeting with members of the Chaldean Catholic Church during their synod to elect a new patriarch at the Vatican April 10, 2026. (OSV News/Vatican Media)

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Iraqi Archbishop Amel Shamon Nona, who until now led the Chaldean Eparchy of St. Thomas the Apostle of Australia and New Zealand, was elected patriarch of the Chaldean Catholic Church, succeeding Cardinal Louis Sako.

Nona was elected April 12 during a Synod of Bishops convened in Rome, and he chose the name Paul III, the Chaldean patriarchate announced.

"His Beatitude announced his acceptance of the election in accordance with the requirements of the Church laws, expressing his reliance on God's grace, and his commitment to exercising his patriarchal service in a spirit of fidelity and responsibility, in full communion with the Synod Fathers, and in service to the unity of the Chaldean Church and its mission in the homeland and the countries of the diaspora," the patriarchate said.

Born in Alqosh in Iraq's Nineveh Plains on Nov. 1, 1967, the new Chaldean patriarch served as a priest in the Diocese of Alqosh. He received episcopal ordination in 2010, which, at 42 years of age, made him the youngest Chaldean archbishop in the world.

After his ordination, he served as archbishop of Mosul, where he was displaced in 2014 due to the invasion by the Islamic State, the patriarchate said.

"His Beatitude was also known for the depth of his theological thought, his human closeness to his people, and his courage in bearing witness to the faith amidst challenges, carrying a message of hope in the heart of pain, and embodying the

image of the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep," the patriarchate said.

Pope Leo XIV met with Chaldean bishops April 10, prior to their electoral process, and said that "the new Patriarch should be, above all, a father in faith and a sign of communion with all and among all."

While living in accordance with Gospel values can be seen as "countercultural and sometimes even counterproductive," the pope said, it is the right path "because love is the only force that conquers evil and defeats death."

The daily holiness to which the future patriarch is called, the pope said, is "made of honesty, mercy, and purity of heart," reminding the bishops that "authority in the Church is always service and never hegemony."

Sako welcomed the election of the new patriarch and expressed his "great joy" at the news of the new patriarch's election.

"On this occasion, I offer Your Beatitude my sincerest congratulations and best wishes for a reign filled with achievements, progress and joy," the Iraqi cardinal said. "To be a patriarch is not a title or position, but a message of faith and loving service with courage and hope."

Patriarchs in the region also sent well-wishes to Patriarch Mar Paul, including Maronite Catholic Cardinal Bechara Rai, patriarch of Antioch and all the East.

In a telephone call with the Chaldean patriarch, Rai wished him "continued success in his pastoral and paternal work and expressed his hope for cooperation among sister Eastern Churches in the wounded Middle East."

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The Chaldean patriarchate said Patriarch Paul thanked the Lebanese cardinal, "wishing him health and success as well, and praying for peace to prevail in the Middle East and the world at large, in accordance with the appeals and calls for world peace made by Pope Leo XIV."

Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, also expressed his joy at the Chaldean patriarch's election and congratulated him on behalf "of all the

patriarchal vicars, priests and faithful of the Holy Land" and assured prayers for his new ministry.

Congratulations and well-wishes also came from government authorities, including Iraqi President Nizar Amidi, who wished the patriarch "success and good fortune in carrying out his spiritual and humanitarian mission."

"While we highly value the historical and national role of our Christian people, and their remarkable contributions to building Iraq and establishing a culture of diversity and fraternity, we affirm our commitment to preserving their rights and ensuring their active participation in the nation's progress," Amidi wrote.

Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani echoed the president's sentiments and expressed his hope the new patriarch would continue on "the path of the leaders of the ancient Iraqi churches in serving society and strengthening cohesion among the sons of the one nation."

The prime minister also stressed the important role the clergy played in society as "a fundamental pillar in consolidating stability and national harmony, and in presenting the national discourse to confront various challenges."

Leo, during the April 10 meeting, asked Chaldean bishops to remain messengers of peace "in a world marked by absurd and inhumane violence, which, in these times, is driven by greed and hatred."

The pope said the election of a patriarch is a "time of precious ecclesial discernment," and said the Chaldean Church carries apostolic traditions "intimately linked to the places of salvation's origin."