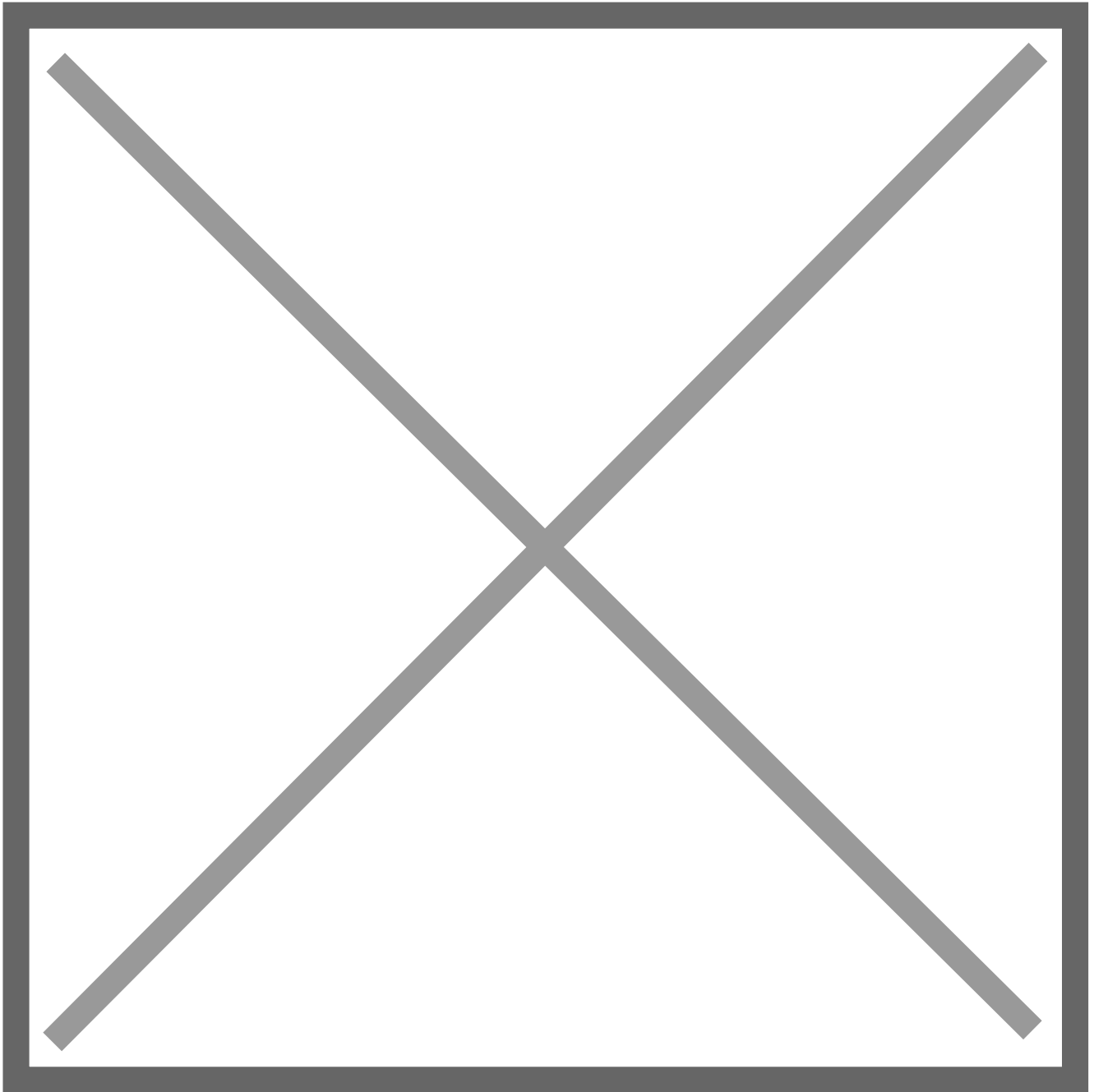




Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization, celebrates a Mass in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Oct. 14, 2026, on the final day of a meeting in which the presidents of bishops' conferences marked the 10th anniversary of "Amoris Laetitia" ("The Joy of Love"). The Mass also included special prayers for the health of Pope Leo XIV following his lung surgery the previous day and diagnosis of cancer. (OSV News/Reuters/Stoyan Nenov)

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Vatican City — October 14, 2026

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Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, the newly elected dean of the College of Cardinals, presided over the closing Mass for the Vatican meeting of bishops on marriage and family on Oct. 14, reading aloud a homily that had been prepared by Pope Leo XIV prior to his lung cancer surgery, saying, "The world has no future without strong families."

Leo had been scheduled to preside over the closing Mass in St. Peter's Square himself before he shocked the world on Sunday with the announcement that he would be having surgery. As a result, the morning Mass took place without the presence of the pope, just hours after the Vatican announced that late Oct. 13 that the surgery had confirmed a diagnosis of lung cancer for the 71-year-old pope.

Participants in the Oct. 7-14 gathering of the world's bishops' conference presidents and the heads of Eastern Catholic churches marking the 10th anniversary of Pope Francis' document on the family, *Amoris Laetitia*, prayed for Leo's recovery in the Prayer of the Faithful during the Mass and listened to the words that the pope had prepared for them.

"The world has no future without strong families open to the gift of children and attentive to their education and growth," Leo wrote in his homily, which emphasized

the important role of families in educating and forming the young in the virtues.

The pope highlighted, quoting *Amoris* in part, that "the importance of the virtues, among which a special place is given to chastity, which is 'invaluable for the genuine growth of love between persons,'" in preparing young people for true love in marriage.

"Marriage preparation programs conscientiously developed for this purpose in parishes and pastoral areas are commendable. Yet such courses alone are insufficient, for they must be preceded and supported by an education in love that accompanies a person's growth from childhood," he wrote.

Leo highlighted Francis' post-synodal apostolic exhortation that followed the Synod on the Family, saying that "marriage preparation begins at birth."

"In this way, love lived within the family — with its moments of struggle, mistakes and failures, yet also with the marvel of its unpredictable, everyday life — becomes the first school of human affection, the first precious and irreplaceable apprenticeship in the 'joy of love,'" Leo said.

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Leo said that "the values of openness to life and respect for life, from conception to natural death, are also rooted in this charity, which is fundamental to our existence and to our life together as human beings."

"The family is the foremost guardian of these values, a beacon for the good of humanity," he added.

As Tagle read aloud the pope's prepared homily, the cardinal noted the presence of Patriarch Paul III Nona, the patriarch of Baghdad of the Chaldeans, whom Leo granted ecclesiastical communion in April.

"I myself have the honor of presiding over this celebration by special mandate of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, in order to manifest publicly the ecclesiastical communion he has granted to His Beatitude Paul III Nona, Patriarch of Baghdad of the Chaldeans, who is participating in this Eucharist," the cardinal said.

"Your Beatitude, your presence helps us better understand our identity as the Church, which is a communion in Christ the Lord of the Churches of various rites and traditions, in a unity that is expressed tangibly with the Successor of Peter," he added.

The Vatican did not provide an update on Leo's clinical condition in the morning following the announcement of his cancer diagnosis, other than that the pope's first night in the hospital passed calmly.

Following the closing Mass, the bishops, families and experts taking part in the *Amoris Laetitia* meeting are scheduled to meet again in the late afternoon for the presentation of the meeting's synthesis report at the closing session of the weeklong event.

Due to the personal request of Leo prior to his surgery, the meeting's final synthesis report will no longer be made public on Oct. 14. Jesuit Fr. Giacomo Costa, a consultant to the General Secretariat of the Synod, said that the pope requested to postpone the meeting's final report, noting that Leo "wanted to listen to it and be able to offer his own word on it himself."