

**MESSAGE TO PRIESTS, DEACONS AND SEMINARIANS  
FOR HOLY THURSDAY 2026**

Vatican City, 2 April 2026

Dear Brothers,

On this holy day, when the Church commemorates the institution of the Eucharist and of the ministerial Priesthood, we wish to reach all of you, in every part of the world, with a thought of profound gratitude, fraternal affection and sincere encouragement.

Today we contemplate the Lord Jesus who, “having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end” (Jn 13:1). In His love “to the end” the mystery of our salvation is fulfilled: He bends down to wash the feet of the disciples and gives Himself as the Bread broken, entrusting to the Church the infinite gift of the Priesthood and of the Eucharist. From this love our vocation is born, and to this love we are continually called to conform our entire life.

First of all, we wish to say to you: thank you! Thank you for your daily fidelity, often silent and hidden. Thank you for your “yes,” renewed each day, even amid hardships, loneliness and misunderstandings. Thank you because, through your ministry, Christ continues to draw near to His people, to heal, to forgive and to nourish them.

The Holy Father Leo XIV, during the Holy Year of Hope, reminded us that “*The priest is a friend of the Lord, called to a personal and trusting relationship with him, nourished by the Word, the celebration of the Sacraments, and daily prayer. Friendship with Christ is the spiritual foundation of the ordained ministry, the ultimate reason for our celibacy and the source of our daily commitment to the service of the ecclesial community. It sustains us in times of trial and enables us to renew each day the “yes” we said to the Lord at the beginning of our vocation.*” (Address to Participants in the Meeting *Joyful Priests – ‘I have called you friends’* (Jn 15:15), promoted by the Dicastery for the Clergy, on the occasion of the Jubilee of Priests, 26 June 2025).

The Priesthood—as we know—is not a role to be performed, but a gift to be safeguarded with a grateful heart and filled with wonder, for every priest is a man of the Word and of the Eucharist, shaped each day by what he celebrates. The words of the Holy Father invite us to return always to the Upper Room, the source of our identity: there we discover that we are not defined primarily by what we do, but by the infinite love with which Christ loves us.

In this light, we wish to entrust to you two words that flow directly from the mystery we celebrate: sacrifice and service. Sacrifice, in its deepest truth, is not first of all renunciation, but gift: it is offering one’s life so that it may be wholly oriented to the love of God and of our brothers and sisters. We are called to live as men given over, consecrated, who find in the Eucharist the source and summit of our existence. It is at the altar that we allow ourselves to be conformed to Christ,

receiving the strength to accompany, to forgive and to console. Service, then, is the concrete form of this love. “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve” (Mk 10:45); He who, at the Last Supper, washed the feet of the Apostles: this is the measure of ordained ministry. To live in a Eucharistic way means to live within the horizon of the gift of self, making one’s life an offering for all. Only in this way will our pastoral action be fully evangelical and fruitful.

Dear brothers, do not be discouraged by the difficulties of our time. Even when the soil seems barren and the seed struggles to grow, the Lord continues to act. He has chosen us, He has consecrated us and He never abandons us. Therefore, be priests with open hearts, capable of closeness, listening and compassion; men of communion, credible signs of a synodal and missionary Church; joyful witnesses of the Gospel, even when this entails sacrifice. Feel yourselves united as presbyters, in communion with your bishops before whom you renew your priestly promises at the Chrism Mass, “by an intimate sacramental brotherhood” and, within your presbyterate, “by special bonds of apostolic charity, of ministry and of fraternity” (PO 8).

A special thought also goes to our Brother Deacons, who, through their generous and discreet service, make visible the charity of Christ the Servant: your ministry is precious and necessary for the life of the Church, today more than ever.

And to you, dear Seminarians, who are preparing with dedication for the Priesthood: do not be afraid to give your entire life to the Lord. Safeguard the joy of your calling and allow yourselves to be formed each day by His love. The Church needs your authenticity, your enthusiasm and your faith.

We entrust all of us to the Virgin Mary, Mother of priests, that she may accompany us on the path that opens before us on this Holy Thursday and teach us to live with humility and fidelity the gift we have received.

As we commit ourselves to sustain one another fraternally in mutual prayer, we wish you a fruitful Holy Triduum, in deep union with the Lord Jesus.

May the Risen Lord grant us light that dispels darkness and peace that heals every conflict!

Card. Lazzaro You Heung-sik  
Prefect

✠ Carlo Roberto Maria Redaelli  
Archbishop Secretary