

Homily of Lazzaro Cardinal You Heung sik,
Prefect of the Dicastery for the Clergy
Holy Mass for Priestly Vocations
Jubilee of Priests
Saint Peter's Basilica
26 June 2025

Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord,

It is with joy that we celebrate today this Holy Eucharist in the context of the Jubilee, a year of hope and renewal. It is good for us to be here, **called by Christ**, to rediscover the beauty of our vocation and to renew our *fiat*.

Today's readings accompany us on a true **vocational journey** that we can summarise with the following three verbs: **call, form, and send**: these are anchored in that unique source, which is **friendship with Christ**, the foundation and strength of our ministry.

1. Letting oneself be called - (Lk 5:1-11)

In the Gospel according to St. Luke, Jesus climbs into Simon's boat at the very moment of weariness and discouragement. '*Master, we worked hard all night long and caught nothing*'. How many times during the course of our vocational journey, have we too found ourselves in a similar night, empty, disappointed, and perhaps even tempted to resign ourselves to the empty catch? Yet, right there, **within the experience of our own limitedness**, the Lord speaks to us: '*Put out into deep water*'; and He calls us in love to trust in his word. Peter pays out his nets, and the miracle happens: both **the boat and his heart are filled to overflowing**. Jesus calls us not because we are perfect, but because we are His friends. A vocation

comes from an encounter, not from a curriculum. Every call is first and foremost an **embrace**, which tells us: *‘Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men’*. Let us pause for a moment in silence and **think about the moment of our calling!**

2. Let us be formed - (Heb 5:1-10)

The second stage of this journey is **formation**. The passage from the Letter to the Hebrews reminds us that *‘every high priest is chosen from among men and constituted for the good of men’*. The priest is not separated from the people, but is **a man among men**, with a compassionate, patient, and human heart. Jesus Himself, the Son of God, *“learnt obedience through his sufferings”*. He too has passed through the school of suffering, of silence, of prayer, of Gethsemane.

Formation is not only intellectual, but spiritual and affective. A priest is formed not only to know, but above all to love like Christ, with his own sentiments and his own heart, to have a gaze as gentle and full of compassion as that of Christ, hands that embrace, bless and console, like those of Christ.

Dear priests and seminarians, formation means allowing yourselves to be configured to Christ each and every day of your lives. Do not be in a hurry to ‘become priests’: rather, thirst to become **sons in the Son**, disciples capable of listening, serving, and rejoicing in communion.

Let us pause here for a moment and consider **how the Lord is forming us**, oftentimes in the midst of pain and difficulty!

3. Let us be sent - Ps 109 (110)

The Psalm sings with solemnity: ‘*You are a priest for ever, of the order of Melchizedek*’. We are sent with a dignity that is not ours, but **given by grace**: not to exercise power, but to **wash feet**, to build up the Body of Christ, to be **artisans of communion**, as Pope Leo XIV reminds us.

On the day that we are sent, the Lord anoints us with his power, and accompanies us with the cross. We are not sent to hold ourselves back, but to **give** of ourselves, every day, with freedom and joy. I would like to encourage you to always have **radiant faces**. The priest must be a man of joy. Even in trials, his smile opens the hearts of many to the Gospel. A vocation lived well generates other vocations. There is no need for many words: a joyful priest is enough to light up a young person’s heart.

Let us ask ourselves for a moment: **am I joyful?** Am I happy to share my life with Christ? Am I **happy to be, like Christ, a gift** for my brothers and sisters?

Be signs of hope

Dear friends, **our ministry is a work of hope**. In this Holy Year, as ***pilgrims of hope***, we are called to **offer Christ**, to bear **witness to Him in our daily lives**, with simple gestures, with patience, with a word that saves and a gaze that blesses.

Let us not forget that every **Eucharist** celebrated with a sincere heart is already a mission accomplished; every **confession heard** is a victory of mercy; every **visit to the sick** is a caress from God.

Let us today allow two words, often repeated by Pope Leo since the beginning of his pontificate, to resonate with us: **love and unity!**

As priests we are called to be **men of communion and dialogue**. What does this mean? Ours is a “**collective work**” and has a **radical “communal form”** (cf. Ap. Ex. *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 17). To give life to the family of God, firstly we need to be **brothers among ourselves and in unity with the Bishop**, not only sacramentally, but truly, **concretely**. We know this is not easy, but accepting the challenge of communion is a **key to fruitfulness**. ‘*We have passed over from death to life because we love our brothers*’, writes St. John in his First Letter (1Jn 3:14). In his Gospel, he relays the words of Jesus: ‘*And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to myself*’ (Jn 12:32).

Let us then entrust ourselves to **Mary, Mother of priests and Mother of Hope**. May she who has pondered every word in her heart, teach us how to **renew our “yes” every day**, even when it is silent, even when it costs. Let us walk together, **sowing hope, building fraternity, and living with joy the grace of being friends of the Lord, sharing in a common brotherhood, and servants of His people**. Amen.