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**ADDRESS OF POPE LEO XIV  
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE MEETING WITH  
THE MODERATORS OF ASSOCIATIONS OF THE  
FAITHFUL,  
ECCLESIAL MOVEMENTS, AND NEW COMMUNITIES  
PROMOTED BY THE DICASTERY FOR LAITY, FAMILY AND  
LIFE**

*Synod Hall*  
*Thursday, 21 May 2026*  
**[Multimedia]**

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In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Peace be with you!

*Dear brothers and sisters, good morning to you all!*

It is a pleasure to meet with you this morning, to offer some words, some reflections, but above all to think about the importance of the charisms of the Holy Spirit, especially in these days before Pentecost.

I am delighted to welcome you once again this year, at the start of your meeting. You hold positions of responsibility, at an international level, within many different lay organisations, and you have been invited by the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life to strengthen the bonds of communion amongst you and to reflect together on the theme of the governance of an ecclesial community.

In every social entity there exists a need for suitable people and structures to guide and coordinate communal life. At its root, the term "to govern" refers to the action of "holding the helm", of "steering a ship". It is, therefore, a matter of providing a sure direction, so that the community may be a place of growth for the people who belong to it. Thus, in the Church too, some are assigned to governance.

However, in the Church, governance does not arise simply from the need to coordinate the religious needs of its members. The Church was established by Christ as a lasting sign of His universal salvific will and is the place, willed by God, where all people, in every age, may receive the fruits of Redemption and experience the new life that Christ has given us. In this sense, the nature of the Church is sacramental: it certainly has an external and institutional dimension with its structures and, at the same time, is an effective sign of communion through which we participate in the very life of the Trinity.

These distinctive characteristics of the Church are by necessity also present in its governance, which is never merely technical; on the contrary, it has a salvific orientation in itself, that is, it must be directed towards the spiritual good of the faithful. Indeed, Saint Paul counts it among the charisms: there are "workers of miracles", he writes, "then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues" (1 Cor 12:28).

With these premises in mind, let us now turn our attention to associations of the faithful and ecclesial movements. Here, governance is generally entrusted to laypeople and expresses participation in the royal *munus* of Christ received in Baptism. It is placed at the service of other faithful and of the life of the association, and is the fruit of free elections, which must be understood as an expression of common discernment: allowing everyone's voice to be freely expressed.

If, as we have said, governance is a particular gift of the Holy Spirit, which the members of a community recognize as present in some of their brethren in the faith, at least three consequences derive from this. The first is that it must be for the benefit of all (cf. 1 Cor 12:7), that is, to promote the good of the community, of the association, and of the whole Church. Governance, therefore, can never be exploited for personal interests or worldly forms of prestige and power. The second consequence is that it can never be imposed from above, but must be a gift recognizable within the community and freely accepted; hence the importance of free elections to bring it into effect. The third consequence is that, like every charism, the governance of an association is also subject to the discernment of the Pastors, who monitor the authenticity and orderly use of charisms (cf. *Lumen gentium*, 12; *Iuvenescit Ecclesia*, 9 and 17).

Certain characteristics must always be present in governance: mutual listening, shared responsibility, transparency, fraternal closeness, and communal discernment (cf. [\*Address to the participants in the General Chapter of the Legionaries of Christ\*](#), 19 February 2026). In addition to this, I would like to recall that "good governance, instead of focusing everything on itself, promotes subsidiarity and the responsible participation of all the members of the community" (*ibid.*). These are simple guidelines, but ones always to be kept in mind in the exercise of authority.

Dear friends, your associations and movements have different origins and possess well-defined histories, identities and ideals. Those who govern them, therefore, take on a delicate task: on the one hand, they are called to safeguard and promote the memory of a living heritage; on the other, they have a "prophetic" role, which involves listening to current pastoral needs in order to understand how to respond to the new challenges and to the cultural, social and spiritual sensibilities of our time. Indeed, only in this way can one be a Christian, a disciple and a missionary in today's society and Church. Part of the prophetic task of those in leadership, therefore, is to promote the openness of the association or movement—and of each of its members—to historical situations. Membership, in fact, is authentic and fruitful when it is not limited to participation in activities within the group, but interprets the signs of the times and reaches outwards, addressing everyone, the culture of the times and mission areas that have not yet been explored.

Another element of vital importance is communion. Those who govern are required to have a particular sensitivity towards the safeguarding, growth and consolidation of communion. This applies both to life within the association or movement, and to communion with other ecclesial realities and with the Church as a whole. Those who exercise a mission of leadership in the Church must learn to listen to and welcome different opinions, different cultural and spiritual orientations, and different personal temperaments, always seeking to preserve, especially in necessary and often difficult decisions, the greater good of communion. This requires a witness of meekness, detachment and selfless love for one's brothers and sisters and for the community, which serves as an example to everyone.

Here I would like to emphasize the importance of this dimension of communion with the Church as a whole. At times we find groups who close themselves up and think that their specific reality is the only one, or that it is the Church, but the Church is all of us, it is much more! And so our movements must truly endeavour to live in communion with the entire Church, at diocesan level. The bishop is therefore a very important figure of reference, and if a group says, “No, we are not in communion with this bishop, we want another one”, this will not do. We must try to live in communion with all the Church, at diocesan level as well as at universal level.

In this light, we can better understand the meaning of fidelity to the founding charism, which constitutes an indispensable point of reference for the governance of an ecclesial community. Every authentic charism already contains within itself fidelity and openness to the Church. To govern in a manner faithful to the founding charism therefore means finding in it the inspiration to open oneself to the journey the Church is undertaking in the present, without becoming entrenched in the models—however positive—of the past, but allowing oneself to be challenged by new realities and challenges, in dialogue with all the other members of the ecclesial body.

Dear friends, thank you for all that you are and all that you do. Associations of the faithful and ecclesial movements are an inestimable gift to the Church. There is great richness amongst you: so many well-formed people and so many fine evangelizers; so many young people and diverse vocations to the priesthood and married life. The variety of charisms, gifts and methods of apostolate developed over the years allows you to be present in the fields of culture, art, social life and work, bringing the light of the Gospel everywhere. Cherish and, with God’s grace, nurture all these gifts! The Church supports and accompanies you.

I bless you from the heart, invoking for all of you the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church.

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