

DICASTERY FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

VENITE AD ME

Considerations on the Transmission of the Faith in an Epochal Change

1. [Venite ad me] “Come to me, all you who labor and are heavily laden, and I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28). The Lord Jesus Christ presents himself as a source of deep rest in the face of the weariness and toil of the human heart. From this perspective, the transmission of the faith appears as an encounter in which Christ draws near to each person in the concrete circumstances of their life, granting them that true peace which can be found only in him.

Introduction

2. Jesus is the true light of the world, and whoever believes in him, the living Risen One, overcomes the darkness of death and lives by the light of life (cf. Jn 1:6–9; 8:12). This is the faith of the Church, and this is the faith that every believer is called to spread to the ends of the earth. This task, the transmission of the faith under today’s sociocultural conditions, is at the heart of these *Considerations*.

3. This responsibility of every believer in Christ, the true light of the world, is a topic of great importance for the life and mission of the Church. Pope Francis repeatedly urged the Dicastery to offer a reflection on this matter, and so it initiated the ordinary procedure for preparing these *Considerations*. Recent events—especially the accession of Pope Leo XIV to the See of Peter, the celebration of the Jubilee, and the prospect of the upcoming Jubilee of Redemption in 2033—have given even greater impetus to proceed more swiftly in preparing this document.

4. These *Considerations* are intended, above all, to take up anew, for the whole ecclesial community, the invitation that the Holy Father Leo XIV extended to the Italian bishops when he met with them in June 2025: “First of all, there is a need for renewed zeal in the proclamation and transmission of faith. It is a question of placing Jesus Christ at the center of our proclamation and of our existence and, following the path indicated by *Evangelii Gaudium*, helping people to live out a personal relationship with him, to discover the joy of the Gospel. In a time of great fragmentation, it is necessary to return to the foundation of our faith, to the *kerygma*. This is the first major commitment that motivates all

the others.”¹ Therefore, as the Holy Father further observes, “today, evangelization must, in particular, also grapple with the changed conditions and dynamics surrounding the transmission of the faith from one generation to the next. In some parts of the world, this transmission has all but ceased, and this requires the ability to take on new challenges.”² The specific aim of this document is, therefore, to offer a focused reflection and to suggest concrete paths for proclaiming the *kerygma* amid the epochal change we are experiencing.

5. Such a proclamation is capable of reawakening faith in those who have not practiced it for some time (especially among adults and the younger generations), or of fostering an experience of faith (*fides qua*) in those who have not yet come to know Christ, without delving into the specific work of catechesis and the formation of believers, both of which are called to provide an orderly and gradual introduction to the Church’s doctrine (*fides quae*). The reflection contained in these *Considerations* regarding *fides qua* precedes the question of the transmission of the *depositum fidei*, which this document does not claim to address exhaustively.

6. In drafting these *Considerations*, the contributions of many National Bishops’ Conferences have been truly invaluable; they responded with great diligence to the Dicastery’s request to submit materials related to the theme of the transmission of the faith.

7. Of particular significance are the personal testimonies that the bishops sent to us from those who, as young adults or later in adulthood, discovered or rediscovered the Lord Jesus and his Gospel. Many of these are included in the final chapter of these *Considerations*.

8. One final clarification concerns the document’s genre: it is a set of *Considerations*, not a *Doctrinal Note*. Its purpose, in fact, is primarily to stimulate ecclesial reflection and pastoral commitment regarding the transmission of the faith. For this reason, the text examines a variety of points of view without, however, claiming to settle the matter, which remains open to further analysis and development. This means that these *Considerations* are not marked, as are other documents of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, by terminological precision and systematic treatment, but instead allow a more discursive style, as is especially evident in the section on personal testimonies mentioned above.³

¹ LEO XIV, *Address to the Italian Episcopal Conference* (17 June 2025): *L’Osservatore Romano*, 17 June 2025, 2.

² LEO XIV, *Address to Participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Dicastery for Evangelization—Section for Fundamental Questions Regarding Evangelization in the World* (28 May 2026): *L’Osservatore Romano*, 28 May 2026, 2.

³ To help the reader find their way through these *Considerations*, which unfold across several chapters, it may be useful to provide, from the outset, a brief overview of their thematic progression.

Chapter I

The Proclamation of the Father's Love

9. Speaking of the mission of John the Baptist, the evangelist John describes him as the witness to the light, as the one who must bear witness to the true light—that light which alone has the power to enlighten every human being (cf. *Jn* 1:6-9). This true light has a name: Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God made man for the salvation of the world. He is the “true light of the world,” and those who follow in his footsteps will never be lost in darkness but will always find within themselves the full light of life (cf. *Jn* 8:12). This is the heart of the Christian faith, and it is also the driving force that leads believers—in every age, including our own—to pass on the faith they live.

10. Jesus is indeed the true light that illuminates every person, for he has revealed what no one had ever seen or could have seen: *the unconditional love that dwells in the heart of the Triune God*. This is the good news of the Gospel of the Son—that *God is love, forever and for everyone* (cf. *1 Jn* 4:8). God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This good news, unheard of until Jesus, can now lead us to full salvation and happiness; at the same time, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, it can bring to light and purify everything that might stand in the way of the new life it opens up.

11. Even more radically, Jesus proclaims the truth that, because of this love of the Father, there is no human reality marked by failure or sin that cannot be restored to its original purpose. Indeed, thanks to the continuous action of the Holy Spirit who acts in ways known only to him,⁴ the light and power of that love are always available to everyone, at every time and in every place. Those who embrace this revelation leave the realm of darkness behind forever, finally opening themselves to the light of life and to a life of light.

12. Precisely for this reason, Jesus' entire life is marked by the desire to enlighten every human being with the good news of God who is Love forever.

Chapters I and II lay the theological foundations, beginning with the proclamation of the Father's love manifested in the person and works of Jesus of Nazareth and moving on to its primary contexts of transmission within the Church—namely, the family and the community. Chapter III focuses on the challenges posed by this epochal change, characterized by an unprecedented difficulty in maintaining the traditional forms of transmitting the faith. Chapter IV responds to these challenges by pointing to the beating heart of this work—namely, the proclamation of the *kerygma*. Chapter V presents practical reflections on the transmission of the faith in community life, considering the various aspects of that life, while Chapters VI and VII, respectively, explore the relationship between faith and culture and highlight certain specific pastoral concerns. Finally, Chapter VIII brings together several concrete personal testimonies that illustrate the transmission of the faith in the context of people's daily lives.

⁴ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (7 December 1965), par. 22: *AAS* 58 (1966), 1043.

He thus goes out to meet others with an open and free heart and allows them to draw near to him. He follows the paths of the men and women of his time and allows them to encounter him. Those who seek him find him, and if they seek him, it is because they have already been reached by Christ (cf. *Phil* 3:12). Jesus places no barriers between himself and the people. He is always attentive, always present, never distracted. And his word is never abstract. He continually seeks to direct everyone's heart and mind toward the true light of the Father's love and mercy—a love and mercy directed simply toward the good life of all. No one is excluded. Everyone's life is worthy of being lived to the fullest.

13. Moreover, those who open themselves to the light of the revelation of God's love receive from Jesus a word of forgiveness, a word of liberation, a word of love, a word of freedom, a word of life, and a word of hope (cf. *Lk* 4:18–19). Jesus stirs up in all who come to meet him and open themselves to him with a sincere heart a renewed interest in and love for life: for their own lives, the lives of others, and the life of all that exists (cf. *Jn* 14:6). God's love leads every man and woman back to the good reasons for their existence in the world.

14. With this in his heart and mind, Jesus, as described by the Evangelists, is always on the move. He does not wait. He does not establish his own sanctuary or school. He moves about; he travels. He enters the villages and towns of his people and his era. He spends time with ordinary people, but also with those in positions of public, religious, or political authority. Through these actions and words, Jesus fulfills the revelation entrusted to the people of Israel (cf. *Mt* 4:12–17; *Mk* 1:14–15; *Lk* 3:21–22).

15. Particularly striking is the way in which Jesus proclaims the Gospel of God, who is love always and for everyone. His preaching contains numerous references to people's daily lives, the animal kingdom, and the world of trees, plants and flowers, just as it abounds in references to the trades of his time, the preparation of food, and children's games. Jesus also demonstrates a remarkable familiarity with the use of numbers and frequently draws on the construction of buildings or on the weather; he knows the coinage of his day and is deeply conversant with the various religious groups then present and connected in different ways with Judaism. He is truly a man who “looks” attentively and constantly invites everyone to “look” with the same gaze at the fabric of creation and human history. This is, in truth, his unshakable certainty: when one's heart is free from all selfishness and useless anxiety, one can recognize the footprints of God's love even in the smallest and seemingly most insignificant event (cf. *Lk* 12:22–34). It is precisely this love that leads Jesus to express himself through the language of people's daily lives.

16. It is not surprising, then, that such preaching, while easily winning the hearts of ordinary people who find it so close and familiar, disconcerts and, to

some extent, unsettles those who wield political and religious power. It is like a light that can reveal every possible use and abuse of that power: “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you” (*Mt* 20:25–26); “Woe also to you lawyers! For you load people with burdens hard to bear” (*Lk* 11:46).

17. In carrying out his mission, Jesus does not limit himself to proclaiming God’s unconditional love but also bears concrete witness to it by showing a special predilection for all those who expect almost nothing from anyone: neither from their relatives, nor from their friends, nor from their fellow citizens, nor from their fellow believers, and perhaps not even from the God of the Covenant of the Fathers. Because of their suffering—caused by incurable illnesses or tragic reversals of fortune—these people are often considered “the last” in society. Yet it is precisely they who become “the first” in the heart of the Lord Jesus (cf. *Mt* 20:16). Indeed, it is these “last/first” whom Jesus invites, more than anyone else, to draw near to the light that illuminates every man and woman—that is, to the light of the Father’s love. Thus, through his closeness, his words, and his miracles, Jesus rekindles in them the hope of being able to hope again, the trust of being able to trust again, the possibility of having possibilities again. *He works in them the wonder of being able once more to believe in a miracle for their own life.*

18. In the course of his preaching, Jesus almost inevitably comes into conflict with a religious and political society that made the Law of Moses its structural foundation, yet in whose concrete application attitudes of division and exclusion often prevailed. While his Father in heaven causes the sun to rise on all alike (cf. *Mt* 5:45) and sends rain on all alike, discrimination and the separation of people were widespread features of the political and religious environment of his time, just as they are in ours. In bringing the light of a divine love that seeks to reconnect each person with their own troubled existence, with others in their community, and ultimately with God himself—with a view to a fraternity marked by justice and peace—Jesus cannot help but clash with the powers of his time, since his message possesses the force of authority (cf. *Mk* 1:27). By proclaiming the loving face of God, Jesus removes any basis for that despotic exercise of religious and political power that has forgotten its own nature as a means of service and unity. God does not bless division, much less discrimination. He is Father and loves every living being (cf. *Wis* 1:13–14). No human or religious law or authority can ever declare anyone unworthy of his love or of the love of other human beings.

19. The tension between Jesus’ words and deeds, and the incomprehension of the powers of his time, reaches its climax in the decision of the religious and political authorities to condemn him to death. His preaching, accompanied by

extraordinary signs, must be stopped and silenced forever. Thus, his death on the cross is decreed, with the endorsement of the Roman authorities.

20. Yet, that death sentence lacks the power to extinguish the “true light of the world.” In the economy of salvation, that unjust instrument of execution becomes the highest throne from which the Gospel message resounds with absolute clarity, and the illuminating power of the Gospel of the Son is revealed to the whole world. And that Gospel is this: God is love for everyone; God is mercy for everyone. This is truly so for everyone, including those who condemn and put the Son to death. The “yes” that God, in Jesus, says to humankind—which keeps the true light of the world, his Son, brightly burning—can never be transformed into a “no.” The love of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit for humanity is without reserve, limit, measure, or, ultimately, boundary (cf. *1 Jn* 4:7–8).

21. In the final moments of Jesus’ earthly life, the wonderful words of the ancient and marvelous book of the Song of Songs find their full realization: “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it” (8:7). The misunderstanding and relentless hostility that led the leaders of the people to condemn Jesus—with the full complicity of the Roman authorities—failed to extinguish his desire to lead humanity out of darkness and to kindle within it the light of life. Indeed, the good and great news of Christianity is precisely this: not even the power of death could extinguish the true light of the world.

22. There is, therefore, one fundamental certainty for Christians, without which, as the Apostle Paul says, everything would be in vain: “If Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain” (*1 Cor* 15:14). This same awareness was also expressed during the Synod on Young People: “Christ is alive! He is our hope, and in a wonderful way he brings youth to our world, and everything he touches becomes young, new, full of life.”⁵ This is what the Lord’s disciples, in every age, believe, proclaim and bear witness to through their lives: Christ is alive and wills life for every human being. He is with us always and will never abandon us (cf. *Mt* 28:20). No matter how far a person may stray from him, Jesus will never turn away from that person. Through his Church, the Risen One always remains at everyone’s side, ready to illuminate their existence with divine love, filling it with life, strength, and hope. Ecclesial communion is today the privileged place where Christ continues to allow himself to be encountered through men and women who are progressively transformed by his very life.

23. To carry out her mission of being the light of the world, the Church joyfully celebrates the fulfillment of Christ’s great promise: “The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you” (*Jn* 14:26); “He will testify on my

⁵ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* (25 March 2019), par. 1: *AAS* 111 (2019), 391.

behalf. You also are to testify” (*Jn* 15:26–27). Without his action in the depths of our hearts, it is impossible to transmit the true light of Christ, as the Pentecost Sequence also reminds us: “Come, Father of the poor [...] without your strength, there is nothing in us.” We place our trust in him as we prepare to seek the many ways of cooperating with his grace in the evangelization of our time. We ask him for the fervor and joy needed to respond faithfully to this call.

Chapter II The Light of Faith

24. In light of what has been said so far, we can better understand the foundation of Christianity as expressed by Benedict XVI: “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, with a person who gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”⁶ That new horizon and decisive direction are marked by joy, as Pope Francis reminds us at the beginning of *Evangelii Gaudium*: “The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ, joy is constantly born anew.”⁷

25. This, therefore, is the heart of the Christian experience: an encounter with the Lord Jesus that brings us into contact with the true light of divine love, keeps us from losing our way in darkness, and leads us to life. It is precisely in this sense that we can speak of the “*light of faith*,” as stated in Pope Francis’s first encyclical of the same name, to the drafting of which Benedict XVI also contributed: “The light of Faith: this is how the Church’s tradition speaks of the great gift brought by Jesus. In John’s Gospel, Christ says of himself: ‘I have come as light into the world, that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness’ (*Jn* 12:46). Saint Paul uses the same image: ‘God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts’ (2 *Cor* 4:6). The pagan world, which hungered for light, had seen the growth of the cult of the sun god, *Sol Invictus*, invoked each day at sunrise. Yet though the sun was born anew each morning, it was clearly incapable of casting its light on all of human existence. The sun does not illumine all reality; its rays cannot penetrate to the shadow of death, the place where men’s eyes are closed to its light. ‘No one—Saint Justin Martyr writes—has ever been ready to die for his faith in the sun.’ Conscious of the immense horizon which their faith opened before them, Christians invoked Jesus as the true sun ‘whose rays bestow life.’ To Martha, weeping for the death of her brother

⁶ BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (25 December 2005), par. 1: *AAS* 98 (2006), 217.

⁷ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), par. 1: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1019.

Lazarus, Jesus said: ‘Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?’ (*Jn* 11:40). Those who believe, see; they see with a light that illumines their entire journey, for it comes from the risen Christ, the morning star which never sets.”⁸

26. The experience of faith can thus be imagined as the vital and decisive encounter with that “true sun” who is Christ, who frees us from darkness and fills human existence with light. It is an experience of light that, by its very nature, radiates outward to other lives, illuminating them with the same light; as they shine in turn, they extend the reach of the original light: the true light of the world, which is Christ. How can we fail to recall, in this regard, the words of Jesus himself addressed to his disciples: “You are the light of the world” (*Mt* 5:14)?

27. It is precisely this dynamism that we must keep in mind when reflecting on the delicate topic of the transmission of the faith in the contemporary context, referred to here as a time of epochal change. The text of *Lumen Fidei* confirms this with great precision: “Those who have opened their hearts to God’s love, heard his voice, and received his light, cannot keep this gift to themselves. Since faith is hearing and seeing, it is also handed on as word and light. Addressing the Corinthians, Saint Paul used these two very images. On the one hand he says: ‘But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—‘I believed, and so I spoke’—we also believe, and so we speak’ (*2 Cor* 4:13). The word, once accepted, becomes a response, a confession of faith, which spreads to others and invites them to believe. Paul also uses the image of light: ‘All of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image’ (*2 Cor* 3:18). It is a light reflected from one face to another, even as Moses himself bore a reflection of God’s glory after having spoken with him: ‘God... has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ’ (*2 Cor* 4:6). The light of Christ shines, as in a mirror, upon the face of Christians; as it spreads, it comes down to us, so that we too can share in that vision and reflect that light to others, in the same way that, in the Easter liturgy, the light of the paschal candle lights countless other candles. Faith is passed on, we might say, by contact, from one person to another, just as one candle is lit from another. Christians, in their poverty, plant a seed so rich that it becomes a great tree, capable of filling the world with its fruit.”⁹

28. The same document, in the following paragraph, then recalls that “the transmission of the faith not only brings light to men and women in every place; it travels through time, passing from one generation to another. Because faith is born of an encounter which takes place in history and lights up our journey

⁸ FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei* (29 June 2013), par. 1: *AAS* 105 (2013), 555–556.

⁹ FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei* (29 June 2013), par. 37: *AAS* 105 (2013), 580.

through time, it must be passed on in every age.”¹⁰ Thus, while on the one hand the transmission of the faith resembles the kindling of one flame from another through what we might call personal contact, on the other hand the community of disciples has always felt called to create occasions for transmitting the faith—occasions when everyone could come into contact with the true light of life. This light frees us from all darkness and is found in the Lord Jesus. The disciples, therefore, felt a duty to pass on the faith: a duty that must be preserved and honored from generation to generation.

29. The transmission of the faith has its ultimate foundation in God’s initiative, who, in Christ, revealed his face and entrusted to the Apostles the task of proclaiming the Gospel to all nations. This mission, however, did not end with the apostolic preaching but continues throughout history through the Church. The Second Vatican Council affirms, in fact, that “the Church, in her teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations all that she herself is, all that she believes.”¹¹ The Church is thus the living historical subject in which the Gospel is heard, preserved, celebrated, and continually made present anew under the action of the Holy Spirit. For this reason, the faith is not transmitted primarily as a body of doctrinal content or religious information, but as a form of ecclesial life into which the believer is gradually introduced. The primary subject of the transmission of the faith is, therefore, the Church in her entirety,¹² which, while ceaselessly receiving the gift of the divine Word, communicates and bears witness to it through preaching, the liturgy, works of charity, and the concrete experience of communion. It can thus rightly be said that the Church “is a Mother who teaches us to speak the language of faith.”¹³

Forms of Transmitting the Faith

30. It is important to state clearly that the most authentic force of the evangelizing mission of the community of the Lord’s disciples remains the *power of attraction*, as Benedict XVI recalled in his homily during the Holy Mass for the inauguration of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean: “*Christ’s mission is accomplished in love*. He has kindled in the world the fire of God’s love (cf. *Lk 12:49*). It is Love that gives life: and so, the Church has been sent forth to spread Christ’s Love throughout the world, so that individuals and peoples ‘may have life, and have it abundantly’ (*Jn 10:10*). [...] The Church considers herself the *disciple and missionary of this Love*: missionary only insofar as she is a disciple, capable of being attracted constantly

¹⁰ FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei* (29 June 2013), par. 38: *AAS* 105 (2013), 580.

¹¹ SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* (18 November 1965), par. 8: *AAS* 58 (1966), 821.

¹² Cf. THIRTEENTH ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Instrumentum Laboris* (2012), par. 105.

¹³ FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei* (29 June 2013), par. 38: *AAS* 105 (2013), 581.

and with renewed wonder by the God who has loved us and who loves us first (cf. *1 Jn* 4:10). The Church does not engage in proselytism. Instead, she grows by ‘attraction’: just as Christ ‘draws all to himself’ by the power of his love, culminating in the sacrifice of the Cross, so the Church fulfills her mission to the extent that, in union with Christ, she accomplishes every one of her works in spiritual and practical imitation of the love of her Lord.”¹⁴ Pope Leo XIV also embraced this reflection: “Today, I joyfully revisit this theme and share it with you. I invite us to pay close attention to what Pope Benedict signaled as the ‘power’ that drives this movement of attraction. Indeed, this power is *Charis*, it is *Agape*, it is the love of God that became incarnate in Jesus Christ and that, in the Holy Spirit, is given to the Church, sanctifying all her actions. Furthermore, it is not the Church that attracts, but Christ; and if a Christian or an ecclesial community attracts, it is because through that ‘channel’ flows the lifeblood of Charity that cascades from the Heart of the Savior.”¹⁵

The Family

31. Among the settings in which the Church is called to share the light of Christ and let it shine, the family is the first and most essential place for the transmission of the faith. Already in the New Testament, the role of family members in handing on the faith is evident. To Timothy, for example, the Apostle Paul says: “I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well” (*2 Tim* 1:5). Pope Leo XIV also emphasized this aspect, saying: “In the family, faith is handed on together with life, generation after generation. It is shared like food at the family table and like the love in our hearts. In this way, families become privileged places in which to encounter Jesus, who loves us and desires our good, always.”¹⁶

32. Over the decades, as Christian communities became established and consolidated, their active role in transmitting the faith also emerged. With the spread of infant baptism, communities and families have felt united in their shared responsibility for introducing children to an encounter with the Lord Jesus. This reflects the awareness that, while they receive life from their parents, in baptism they receive “the grace by which to live it: faith. When we know that something is essential, we immediately seek it for those we love. Indeed, who among us would leave newborn infants without clothing or nourishment, waiting until they are grown to choose how to dress and what to eat? Dear brothers and sisters, if

¹⁴ BENEDICT XVI, *Homily for the Holy Mass for the Inauguration of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean* (13 May 2007): *Insegnamenti* III, 1 (2007), 848–849.

¹⁵ LEO XIV, *Address on the Occasion of the Extraordinary Consistory* (7 January 2026): *L’Osservatore Romano*, 8 January 2026, 2.

¹⁶ LEO XIV, *Homily on the Occasion of the Jubilee of Families, Grandparents, and the Elderly* (1 June 2025): *L’Osservatore Romano*, 2 June 2025, 2.

food and clothing are necessary for life, faith is even more vital, because in God, life finds salvation.”¹⁷

33. In any case, there remains the need for a deep integration between the Church and the family, as *Lumen Fidei* clearly reiterates: “the structure of baptism, then, demonstrates the critical importance of cooperation between Church and family in passing on the faith. Parents are called, as Saint Augustine once said, not only to bring children into the world but also to bring them to God, so that through baptism they can be reborn as children of God and receive the gift of faith. Thus, along with life, children are given a fundamental orientation and assured of a good future; this orientation will be further strengthened in the sacrament of Confirmation with the seal of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁸ In this regard, it is interesting to note the connection that can be discerned in the Latin Church between the liturgy of the lighting of the paschal candle—a prelude to the great celebration of Easter, the center and culmination of the Christian faith—and the celebration of baptism, the gateway to that same faith, especially in its reference to Christ the Light, who must be welcomed into the life of every believer.

34. Particularly significant in this context is what the same magisterial document says later on: “In the family, faith accompanies every age of life, beginning with childhood: children learn to trust in the love of their parents. This is why it is so important that within their families parents encourage shared expressions of faith which can help children gradually to mature in their own faith. Young people in particular, who are going through a period in their lives which is so complex, rich, and important for their faith, ought to feel the constant closeness and support of their families and the Church in their journey of faith.”¹⁹

35. It is significant to recall here a deeply moving account written by the Jesuit Father Aimé Duval, which offers a glimpse of the quiet and almost natural witness to the Christian faith that parents can offer to their children. In the context of recounting his troubled personal and religious journey, Father Duval writes: “I was the fifth of nine children in my family. Before me were Lucie, Marie, Hélène, and Marcel; after me were René, Raymond, Suzanne, and André. In this family, I did not learn piety in a particularly expressive or extraordinary way. There was simply the daily evening prayer, which we recited together. But I remember it well, and I shall remember it until my eyes are closed for the last time. *My sister*. My sister Hélène would say the prayers, which were long for children (a quarter of an hour). She would rush through them, mumble, and take shortcuts until my father would say to her in dialect, ‘Go back... Begin again...’ I learned then that it was necessary to speak to the good Lord slowly, earnestly, and with gentle

¹⁷ LEO XIV, *Homily on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord* (11 January 2026): *L’Osservatore Romano*, 12 January 2026, 4.

¹⁸ FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei* (29 June 2013), par. 43: *AAS* 105 (2013), 584.

¹⁹ FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei* (29 June 2013), par. 53: *AAS* 105 (2013), 591.

patience. *My father.* What moves me today is the memory of my father's demeanor. He was always tired from working in the fields or driving the oxen, and when he returned from work, he made no attempt to hide his weariness. Yet after dinner, he would kneel down, resting his elbows on the seat of a chair, his forehead in his hands, without so much as a glance at his children gathered around him, without a single movement, without coughing, without losing his patience. And I would think to myself: 'My father, who is so strong, who rules the household and his two big oxen, who stands proud in the face of life's setbacks and is so unafraid of the mayor, the rich, or the wicked—here he is making himself so small before the good Lord. Truly, speaking with God changes him. Truly, the good Lord must be someone very great if my father kneels before him, but also someone very familiar if one can speak to him while wearing his work clothes...' *My mother.* As for my mother, I never saw her on her knees. Too tired, she would sit in the middle of the room, with the youngest child in her arms, her black dress reaching down to her heels, her beautiful brown hair loose around her neck, and all the children gathered around her, leaning against her. Her lips followed the prayers from beginning to end; she did not want to miss a single word and recited them quietly to herself. The most striking thing was that she kept her eyes fixed on us; each of us was held in her gaze. A longer gaze for the youngest ones. She watched us but said nothing, even when the little ones fidgeted and whispered, even when thunder crashed over the house, even when the cat knocked over a pot. And I would think to myself, 'Truly, the good Lord is very kind if one can speak to him while holding a child in one's arms and still wearing a work apron. Truly, the good Lord is someone important if neither the cat nor the thunder matters anymore.' My father's hands and my mother's lips—these are the things that taught me more about the good Lord than the catechism did. He is Someone; he is Someone close to us. You can speak with him even when you have been working."²⁰

36. This touching account of the simple and joyful initiation of young children into the mystery of God, made possible by the witness of their parents, fully confirms an insight repeatedly emphasized by Pope Francis: within the family, faith must be handed on "in dialect." On the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, 7 January 2018, he addressed the parents who had brought their children to be baptized in these words: "I would like to tell you only one thing, which pertains to you [parents]: transmission of the faith can only be done 'in dialect', in the dialect of the family, in the dialect of daddy and mommy, of grandpa and grandma. Then the catechists will come to develop this first transmission, with ideas, with explanations... But do not forget this: it is done 'in dialect,' and if the dialect is missing, if at home that language of love is not spoken between the parents, then the transmission is not very easy; it cannot be done. Do not forget.

²⁰ Personal testimony of Fr. Duval, available at <http://pierre.aime.duval.free.fr/priere.htm> (original in French, translation by the Dicastery).

Your task is to transmit the faith, but to do so with the dialect of love of your home, of your family.”²¹ This point was also emphasized by Pope Leo XIV: “Our first catechists are our parents: those who first spoke to us and taught us to speak. Just as we learned our mother tongue, so too the proclamation of the faith cannot be delegated to someone else; it happens where we live, above all in our homes, around the family table. When there is a voice, a gesture, a face that leads to Christ, the family experiences the beauty of the Gospel.”²²

37. Until recently, the family was the primary setting in which faith passed from one generation to the next. Parents, above all, constitute that first “tabernacle” in which children can glimpse all the beauty and strength of being disciples of the Lord Jesus. This witness takes shape in a pattern of simple, everyday gestures: personal prayer and prayer as a couple, reading the Gospel, recalling the words and deeds of Jesus, remembering the patron saints, the constant invocation of the maternal protection of the Virgin Mary, participation in Sunday Mass, visits to shrines and various forms of popular piety, care for the poor and disadvantaged, prayers of thanksgiving before meals, asking the Lord’s blessing on birthdays of family members, and the devout preparation of the Nativity scene during the Christmas season.

38. However, it must be noted that this favorable situation is gradually disappearing. Indeed, as will be discussed in greater detail below, one of the defining characteristics of our era is that, although it retains its importance in certain regions of Africa and Asia, the transmission of the faith within the family has been interrupted in many parts of the world.²³ Consequently, the handing on of the experience of the Christian faith to new generations no longer occurs, so to speak, “automatically.”

The Ecclesial Community

39. Only at this point, as a second stage, does the ecclesial community enter the process of transmitting the faith. What a person has received from their parents—namely, the witness of faith in Jesus, who fully revealed the face of God’s infinite love, freeing human beings from darkness and opening them to the true light of life—finds in the Church the means and the opportunities to become the guiding principle of how that person sees the world. Through catechesis, the celebration of the sacraments, the various spaces that foster active participation in community life (as proposed by the current synodal journey), commitment to the most disadvantaged, and gathering in the house of the Lord on Sundays, one

²¹ FRANCIS, *Homily for the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord and the Celebration of the Baptism of Several Children* (7 January 2018): *L’Osservatore Romano*, 8–9 January 2018, 8.

²² LEO XIV, *Homily on the Occasion of the Jubilee of Catechists* (28 September 2025): *L’Osservatore Romano*, 29 September 2025, 2.

²³ Cf. FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), par. 70: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1049–1050.

reaches that maturity of faith which ultimately consists in seeing everything “through the eyes of Jesus.”

40. Indeed, thanks to the coordinated efforts of parents and the ecclesial community, each person learns that “in faith, Christ is not simply the one in whom we believe, the supreme manifestation of God’s love; he is also the one with whom we are united precisely in order to believe. Faith does not merely gaze at Jesus, but sees things as Jesus himself sees them, with his own eyes.”²⁴ This is the culmination of the process we refer to here as the transmission of the faith: enabling each person to attain such intimacy with the Lord Jesus that he or she may finally look upon oneself, others, the world, and the mystery of God through the very eyes of Jesus. It thus becomes clear that the accompaniment of the community is essential not only for receiving the Gospel, but also for remaining faithful to the gift received, since it is very difficult to persevere alone.

41. It must also be acknowledged that, in countries with a long-standing Christian tradition, such a context for the transmission of the faith appears today to have been weakened, since it is increasingly characterized by the presence of “*the baptized whose lives do not reflect the demands of Baptism,*” who lack a meaningful relationship to the Church and no longer experience the consolation born of faith. The Church, in her maternal concern, tries to help them experience a conversion which will restore the joy of faith to their hearts and inspire a commitment to the Gospel.”²⁵ Furthermore, especially among young people, the number of those who do not know Jesus and the Gospel is growing.

42. For this very reason, the transmission of the faith today requires, in a particular way, the evangelization of adults and a move beyond pastoral ministry focused solely on the catechesis of children and adolescents.

Chapter III

The Epochal Change

43. Special attention must be given to the context of the transmission of the faith—the subject of these *Considerations*—as expressed through the concept of an “epochal change.” As is well known, it was Pope Francis who made this expression famous in his address to the Roman Curia during the exchange of Christmas greetings on 21 December 2019, stating: “What we are experiencing is *not simply an epoch of changes, but an epochal change*. We find ourselves

²⁴ FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei* (29 June 2013), par. 18: *AAS* 105 (2013), 565.

²⁵ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), par. 14: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1025, which cites BENEDICT XVI, *Homily at Mass for the Conclusion of the Synod of Bishops* (28 October 2012): *AAS* 104 (2012), 890. Emphasis in the original.

living at a time when change is no longer linear, but epochal. It entails decisions that rapidly transform our ways of living, of relating to one another, of communicating and thinking, of how different generations relate to one another and how we understand and experience faith and science.”²⁶ As the *Final Document* of the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops, held in May 2007 in Aparecida, Brazil, had already noted more than ten years earlier, the “deepest level” of this change “is cultural. The all-embracing conception of the human being, in relationship with the world and with God is vanishing.”²⁷

44. This situation is fundamentally linked to the crisis of the cultural model of modernity, which particularly affects the European context. One might therefore ask whether speaking of an “epochal change,” in the singular, fully captures the processes currently confronting Churches throughout the world. The answer to this question is undoubtedly affirmative, at least from a general perspective, for reasons connected with the well-known phenomenon of globalization, which has contributed to the spread of Western cultural influence to every region of the planet. Moreover, it is undeniable that certain experiences, such as the tragedy of the COVID-19 pandemic, have strengthened the widespread awareness of belonging to a single family, even though there is no shortage of trends moving in the opposite direction.²⁸

45. The urgency of addressing the questions raised by this epochal change was also expressed by Pope Leo XIV in his first encyclical letter, *Magnifica Humanitas*: “We are living through a rapid phase of transition, a ‘change of era,’ in which — while some are vying for the future of new technologies and others dedicate themselves to reflecting on the matter — most people are watching and waiting, observing from afar and merely hoping for the best. For this very reason, crucial questions impose themselves on our conscience and can no longer be avoided: Where are we going? Toward what goal do we wish to orient ourselves? What direction should we choose as a people and as a human community?”²⁹ The Holy Father highlighted the general features of this change: “Artificial intelligence and other innovations are reshaping our understanding of work and relationships, and even raising questions about human identity. Ecological degradation threatens our common home. Political systems often fail to respond to the cries of the poor. Populism and ideological polarization deepen divisions

²⁶ FRANCIS, *Christmas Greetings to the Roman Curia* (21 December 2019): AAS 112 (2020), 43. More precisely, the expression “epochal change” did not first appear in that address; rather, Pope Francis had already used it during his 29 June 2014 interview with the Italian newspaper *Il Messaggero*.

²⁷ LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN EPISCOPAL COUNCIL, *Final Document of the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops* (13-31 May 2007), par. 44.

²⁸ Cf. FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* (3 October 2020), par. 30: AAS 112 (2020), 979–980.

²⁹ LEO XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (15 May 2026), par. 6.

within and among nations. Many are affected by consumerism, individualism, and indifference.”³⁰ To these challenges, one can also add widening economic inequalities, which often lead to the destabilization of entire regions. These are global factors that bring about profound social changes. Such transformations affect nearly every cultural context and do not spare even the Church, since she is incarnate in history and participates in the lives of peoples.

46. On the one hand, in fact, the appeal of an economically comfortable lifestyle and the legitimate aspiration for better living conditions, further encouraged by the technological development discussed above, contribute to the spread of materialistic and individualistic mindsets across all continents. Together with other factors, these dynamics fuel the global phenomenon of migration, which is often marked by dramatic circumstances. On the other hand, these same processes have fostered, even in countries with a long history of evangelization, the emergence of multicultural contexts in which, alongside secularism, different peoples, each with their own cultural outlook, live side by side and face the challenge of peaceful coexistence. It must therefore be recognized that these dynamics are not experienced uniformly across the various regions of the world. Likewise, it is important to emphasize that the relationship with Western modernity—which characterizes, above all, a particular profile of the Church—is worked out differently according to the cultures to which the various Christian communities belong. Pope Leo XIV acknowledged this reality when he said, “the People of God are not only gathered together from many peoples, but are also intertwined through different functions, vocations, cultures and traditions, each being called to support and enrich one another. [...] The fruitful tension between the universality of the Church’s mission and her local roots is an intrinsic aspect of her life, for she encompasses the whole world, while addressing the specific issues of each context as the real setting in which the Gospel takes shape.”³¹ Thus, we may conclude that *one of the most significant aspects of this epochal change concerns the establishment of a new relationship between faith—and thus its transmission—and cultures.*

The Crisis in the Transmission of the Faith

47. One characteristic feature of the epochal change that is affecting, for various reasons, particularly the West—that is, those countries in which the Christian faith has held a dominant sociological significance—concerns *the crisis in the intergenerational transmission* of the Christian faith. This was already highlighted in *Evangelii Gaudium*: “Nor can we overlook the fact that in recent decades there has been a breakdown in the way Catholics pass down the Christian

³⁰ LEO XIV, *Address to the Major Superiors of the Society of Jesus* (24 October 2025): *L’Osservatore Romano*, 24 October 2025, 5.

³¹ LEO XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (15 May 2026), par. 26.

faith to the young. It is undeniable that many people feel disillusioned and no longer identify with the Catholic tradition. Growing numbers of parents do not bring their children for baptism or teach them how to pray. There is also a certain exodus towards other faith communities.”³²

48. This is closely linked—especially in Europe, the United States of America, and Canada, but also in Australia and New Zealand—to an advanced stage of secularization, which has led to a significant crisis in the practice of Christianity within the home. In truth, ever fewer parents are fulfilling their responsibility to introduce their children to the living light of the Gospel message. It is precisely from such family settings that most of the young men and women come who, despite having been part of Catholic parish communities, eventually enter adulthood in a state of substantial religious indifference. For those who, although baptized, have lost the Christian meaning of life, Jesus—his message of love, that light he came to radiate into human history—represents neither an essential element of their identity nor a reliable guide for discerning how to lead a life worthy of human dignity.

49. This does not, however, concern only the so-called advanced West. In Eastern Europe, for example, which endured the severe ordeal of totalitarian communist regimes and the subsequent establishment of societies founded on state atheism—whose effects, however, were not the same everywhere—it was the generation of today’s parents that suffered the interruption in the transmission of the faith. This is attested to especially by the bishops from the territories of the former Soviet Union, who observed “that the faith had been passed down from grandmothers [...] to grandchildren, but without the direct involvement of the middle generation. As a result, the grandchildren’s generation did not see their parents living their faith in everyday life.”³³ Similar testimonies have also been offered by the bishops of Albania.³⁴ The bishops of the Hungarian Greek Catholic Church likewise conclude: “We can no longer take for granted that parents will automatically pass on the faith to their children. What proved effective in the past no longer bears the same fruit in the current situation.”³⁵

³² FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), par. 70: AAS 105 (2013), 1049.

³³ CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF RUSSIA, *Report on the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Episcopal Conference*, 30 March 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

³⁴ Cf. EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF ALBANIA, *Report and Testimonies about the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Episcopal Conference*, 19 March 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

³⁵ HUNGARIAN GREEK CATHOLIC METROPOLITAN CHURCH, *Report and Testimonies about the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Church sui iuris*, 7 April 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

50. This breakdown in the transmission of the faith within the family is also evident in Latin America and the Caribbean, where it manifests itself above all as a disruption of the organic continuity between family and society. Indeed, as the bishops of Chile observe: “For decades, people took it for granted that there was continuity between family, school, culture, and the ecclesial community. In that context, faith could be described as something that was transmitted in a relatively organic way, from one generation to the next.”³⁶ In this regard, the bishops of the Antilles note a weakening of intergenerational continuity,³⁷ particularly in relation to catechesis and sacramental practice. In another context, such as that of Panama, where faith remains very much alive in popular expressions and in significant moments of life, there is an awareness that the faith is “no longer passed on naturally within families.”³⁸ In Colombia, as in other parts of the world, grandparents help compensate for shortcomings in catechesis within the home, alongside what the parish provides.³⁹ In other regions, however, for reasons linked to local cultures, the baptism of children is even postponed until they reach a more mature age, as is the case in the Peruvian Amazon.⁴⁰ Ultimately, all these accounts indicate that a sort of “automatic” transmission of the faith has ceased to exist.

51. A similar problem also affects most of the Churches in Asia, especially in the most technologically advanced regions. In such cases, however, Christianity has always been in a minority position within society, and only recently has it begun to experience some difficulties in the transmission of the faith within families. In South Korea, for example, the bishops note that because parents are primarily concerned with their children’s academic achievement and professional careers, the responsibility for the catechesis of children and young people falls largely to grandparents.⁴¹ The bishops of Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei also decry the priority given to career demands, while spiritual formation is

³⁶ EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF CHILE, *Report and Testimonies about the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Episcopal Conference*, 11 April 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

³⁷ Cf. EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF THE ANTILLES, Pastoral Letter *A Mandate for the Kingdom: Mission and Evangelization in the Caribbean*, 9 January 2018, par. 30.

³⁸ EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF PANAMA, *Report and Testimonies about the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Episcopal Conference*, 14 April 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

³⁹ Cf. EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF COLOMBIA, *Report and Testimonies about the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Episcopal Conference*, 16 April 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

⁴⁰ Cf. PERUVIAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE, *Report and Testimonies about the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Episcopal Conference*, 30 March 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

⁴¹ Cf. CATHOLIC BISHOPS’ CONFERENCE OF KOREA, *Report on the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Bishops’ Conference*, 31 March 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

increasingly relegated to individuals' private use of modern media.⁴² A similar situation is found in Bangladesh, made even more acute by a predominantly Muslim social context.⁴³ In Japan, by contrast, the difficulties encountered are in some respects similar to those experienced in the Western world, especially with regard to parish catechesis and the prevalence of marriages between persons belonging to different religious traditions, which can, to some extent, hinder the transmission of the faith within the home.⁴⁴ This is also the case in the countries of Central Asia that once belonged to the Soviet bloc. There, the Church has nevertheless remained a minority presence and faces conditions similar to those experienced by the communities in Eastern Europe, where a "Church of Silence"⁴⁵ survived for several decades under totalitarian regimes.

52. Despite the wide variety of contexts, Africa is likewise not immune to the dynamics that disrupt the intergenerational transmission of the faith. This is primarily due to a certain secularization of ways of life brought about by the influence of a Western lifestyle, which younger generations have embraced. Other factors are also at work, linked primarily to the relationship with local cultures. In particular, it can be noted that an incomplete inculturation of the Gospel—despite the continued prevalence of public expressions of religion in social life—leads to a superficial faith: one that lacks roots and is more exposed to external influences. The bishops of Southern Africa attest to this reality: "While Christianity has spread widely, it often remains at a surface level, necessitating a deeper incarnation of the Gospel in African spirituality."⁴⁶ Consequently, one of the principal challenges facing the transmission of the faith—a challenge encountered across the entire African continent—concerns the growing and ever more aggressive competition from religious movements of

⁴² Cf. CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF MALAYSIA, SINGAPORE, AND BRUNEI, *Report and Testimonies about the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Bishops' Conference*, 3 April 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

⁴³ Cf. CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF BANGLADESH, *Report on the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Bishops' Conference*, 15 May 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

⁴⁴ Cf. CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF JAPAN, *Report and Testimonies about the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Bishops' Conference*, 20 April 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

⁴⁵ Cf. CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF CENTRAL ASIA, *Report and Testimonies about the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Bishops' Conference*, 3 April 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

⁴⁶ SOUTHERN AFRICAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE, *Report and Testimonies about the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Episcopal Conference*, 4 May 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

various kinds, together with a return to traditional religious practices, even among those who have already received baptism.⁴⁷

53. Without delving into the complexity of the causes that have brought about these transformations, it is within this context—one of a genuine reshaping of the fundamental conditions of human existence—that the crisis in the intergenerational transmission of the faith, and the challenge it presents to the Church, must be understood. In the past, these conditions were interpreted primarily through the lens of Christianity, both in society as a whole and within individual communities. More generally, it must be acknowledged that what is in crisis is not only the transmission of the faith, but also a certain vision of the human person and of his or her foundational values—a vision that had found its fulfillment precisely in the Gospel. The crisis of modernity, which is the hallmark of this epochal change, has thus contributed to the emergence of a new culture that has come into competition with the traditional structures through which the faith has been transmitted. This has, in turn, brought about a crisis of the so-called model of Christendom, accompanied, in various parts of the world, by the widespread perception that the ministry of priests is often limited to the “maintenance” of existing structures, even as the world around them has changed radically.

A New, Widespread Culture

54. Starting from this situation, *Evangelii Gaudium* invites us to recognize the following: “New cultures are constantly being born in these vast new expanses [the metropolises] where Christians are no longer the customary interpreters or generators of meaning. Instead, they themselves take from these cultures new languages, symbols, messages, and paradigms which propose new approaches to life, approaches often in contrast with the Gospel of Jesus. A completely new culture has come to life and continues to grow in the cities. The Synod [of 2012 on the New Evangelization] noted that today the changes taking place in these great spaces and the culture which they create are a privileged locus of the new evangelization. This challenges us to imagine innovative spaces and possibilities for prayer and communion which are more attractive and meaningful for city dwellers. Through the influence of the media, rural areas are being affected by the same cultural changes, which are significantly altering their way of life as well.”⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Cf. ZAMBIAN CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS, *Report and Testimonies about the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Episcopal Conference*, 10 April 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

⁴⁸ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), par. 73: AAS 105 (2013), 1050–1051.

55. The question of transmitting the faith must therefore be considered within the context of that unprecedented culture, which today spreads from urban centers to their peripheries and even reaches rural areas. This culture exerts a pervasive and profound influence, as the bishops of the United States of America observe: today the faithful “tend to be more absorbed in culture than in faith. Culture, through social media and public discourse, in turn shapes how Catholics [...] think more than Catholic faith, tradition, and devotion do.”⁴⁹ The same phenomenon can be observed in many other contexts, especially those most strongly influenced by Western culture and urban lifestyles. As the bishops of Romania warn, the rapid secularization of these societies means that “the lack of religious practice is no longer socially perceived as an absence that needs to be justified.”⁵⁰ In countries with a long history of evangelization, therefore, it is now possible to speak of post-Christian societies.

56. The prevailing trend of this unprecedented culture seems to consist in the exaltation of the “sovereignty of the self,” which asserts its autonomy and freedom to determine every aspect of its own existence, subjecting other human beings and the surrounding reality to its own needs. This trend reflects the spread of an increasingly pronounced individualism, which generates separation, division, envy, jealousy, domination, narcissism, and worship of the self. In this regard, the powerful words of the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* come to mind: “Individualism does not make us more free, more equal, more fraternal. The mere sum of individual interests is not capable of generating a better world for the whole human family. Nor can it save us from the many ills that are now increasingly globalized. Radical individualism is a virus that is extremely difficult to eliminate, for it is clever. It makes us believe that everything consists in giving free rein to our own ambitions, as if by pursuing ever greater ambitions and creating safety nets we would somehow be serving the common good.”⁵¹

57. This widespread individualism is perhaps one of the most evident effects of that long process of secularization that has profoundly shaped contemporary human consciousness, particularly in Western contexts, depriving it of the breadth and horizon of transcendence. As *Evangelii Gaudium* states, “The process of secularization tends to reduce the faith and the Church to the sphere of the private and personal. Furthermore, by completely rejecting the transcendent, it has produced a growing deterioration of ethics, a weakening of the sense of personal and collective sin, and a steady increase in relativism. These have led to

⁴⁹ UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS, *Report and Testimonies about the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Episcopal Conference*, 30 March 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

⁵⁰ ROMANIAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE, *Report on the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Episcopal Conference*, 14 April 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

⁵¹ FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* (3 October 2020), par. 105: AAS 112 (2020), 1005.

a general sense of disorientation, especially in the periods of adolescence and young adulthood which are so vulnerable to change.”⁵²

58. All of this naturally has repercussions for the process of transmitting the faith. Among the phenomena highlighted by the bishops, in addition to the aforementioned difficulties concerning the family, is the substantial separation between the individual and the community. As the bishops of Spain observe: “The individual and the family suffer the consequences of the cultural and social crisis that accompanies this process and, in turn, become its cause, due to the weakening of the transmission of the faith and the resulting breakdown of the bonds essential for life in society.”⁵³ This means that the individual struggles to integrate into a tradition that precedes him or her, into a “we” that shapes not only his or her thinking and feeling, but also his or her faith. As a result, young people especially become increasingly vulnerable to passing trends, as the bishops of Brazil observe: “The gradual loss of a sense of belonging to the Church, combined with the spread of subjective forms of religiosity, has weakened the traditional processes of Christian initiation. In this context, it can no longer be taken for granted that baptism automatically leads to a mature faith integrated into the life of the community.”⁵⁴ Consequently, in such contexts, faith is perceived above all as a private matter, as the bishops of Austria emphasize: “Religion is increasingly being privatized in our society, with a tendency to exclude it from the public sphere. [...] It is not possible, so to speak, to bury the Christian experience in the heart without this having an impact on the reality of the world and society.”⁵⁵ This is further exacerbated in countries such as France and Canada, where secularism also finds expression at the legislative level, limiting the freedom to express one’s faith in public spaces.

Digital Technologies

59. One of the most evident signs of the epochal change we are experiencing is undoubtedly the spread of digital technologies. As Pope Leo XIV observes in *Magnifica Humanitas*, these technologies have led to the emergence of “a new situation. The power and prevalence of emerging technologies are interwoven into the fabric of daily life, shaping decision-making processes and deeply

⁵² FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), par. 64: AAS 105 (2013), 1047.

⁵³ SPANISH BISHOPS’ CONFERENCE, *Report and Testimonies about the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Episcopal Conference*, 14 April 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

⁵⁴ BRAZILIAN BISHOPS’ CONFERENCE, *Report on the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Episcopal Conference*, 31 March 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

⁵⁵ AUSTRIAN BISHOPS’ CONFERENCE, *Report and Testimonies about the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Bishops’ Conference*, 31 March 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

affecting the collective imagination.”⁵⁶ In particular, the document continues, “the pervasiveness of digital media fosters a culture of immediacy and hyper-stimulation, which gives rise to fatigue, boredom and apathy concerning the effort required for seeking the truth.”⁵⁷ As the Synod on Synodality had already noted in the *Synthesis Report* of the First Session (2023): “Digital culture represents a fundamental change in the way we conceive of reality and consequently relate to ourselves, one another, our surroundings, and even to God.”⁵⁸ Especially among the younger generations, this culture is characterized not only, as is often emphasized, by broader access to knowledge, but also by a shift in the very categories of thought and, ultimately, in the way we relate to reality. Furthermore, if we consider the scenarios opened up by the advent of artificial intelligence, an ever more concrete risk emerges—as the Holy Father has recalled—that such a culture “threatens to alter radically some of the fundamental pillars of human civilization that at times are taken for granted. By simulating human voices and faces, wisdom and knowledge, consciousness and responsibility, empathy and friendship, the systems known as artificial intelligence not only interfere with information ecosystems but also encroach upon the deepest level of communication: that of human relationships. The challenge, therefore, is not technological, but anthropological.”⁵⁹ This has significant consequences for the inculturation of the faith.

60. The spread of digital technologies and the advancement of artificial intelligence naturally affect faith and religion as well. On the one hand, the digital world offers ample opportunities for people to share testimonies from their lives and spiritual experiences, and it allows catechetical content to be disseminated more widely than was ever possible through the means available in the past; here, new technologies undoubtedly open unprecedented possibilities for evangelization. On the other hand, however, in some contexts, the invitation to faith risks becoming disembodied, detached from concrete life, or tied to ideologies promoted by vocal minorities. This can lead to distortions of the faith itself or of conscience, or it can lead people to construct a so-called “do-it-yourself” faith, shaped by their own tastes and preferences rather than by the teaching of the Church.

61. Furthermore, it has been noted that digital culture tends to reshape certain fundamental categories of thought—such as space, time, and authority—which

⁵⁶ LEO XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (15 May 2026), par. 4.

⁵⁷ LEO XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (15 May 2026), par. 139.

⁵⁸ 16TH ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Synthesis Report of the First Session* (28 October 2023), par. 17 a). Cf. LEO XIV, *Address to Participants in the Conference “Artificial Intelligence and Care of Our Common Home”* (5 December 2025): *L’Osservatore Romano*, 5 December 2025, 2.

⁵⁹ LEO XIV, *Message for the 60th World Day of Social Communications* (24 January 2026): *L’Osservatore Romano*, 24 January 2026, 2.

constitute essential elements of the very concept of tradition. Therefore, as our understanding of tradition changes, the transmission of the faith is inevitably transformed at its very foundations. Regarding space, as mentioned, the sense of belonging to a concrete local setting would be weakened, though not lost entirely, since people are simultaneously embedded in a global network in which physical distances appear relativized, if not entirely overcome. Regarding time, however, the very meaning of memory would change; the fact that all content uploaded to the internet remains there indefinitely, combined with the rapid pace of exchanges between people, contributes to the loss of a genuine sense of history and the past, since everything is flattened into a sort of eternal present. This makes those who use the internet particularly susceptible to passing trends.

62. On the theme of authority, we must pay close attention to the warning issued by Pope Leo XIV in his first encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*: “Tools that could foster dialogue and participation are often used to construct distorted narratives and blur the boundaries between truth and falsehood, mixing facts with opinions. Disinformation did not begin with AI, yet today it finds a powerful amplifier in AI. The ability to manipulate content, images, and videos exposes people to biased or misleading perspectives. This problem has both cultural and moral dimensions, since the quality of public communication depends directly on social trust and, in turn, shapes it. At the same time, truthful information does not arise from centralized or automated control. In public discourse, the truth of facts has a rational dimension, as it requires verification, cross-checking of sources, and responsible argumentation. Moreover, it is deeply relational, built through bonds of trust and shared practices, as well as an honest exchange with others and with the world.”⁶⁰ Consequently, widespread access to multiple sources of knowledge, together with the presence of a large number of voices all placed on the same level—where the only distinguishing factor is communicative effectiveness—poses a serious threat to the credibility of traditional institutions, since, for many, it is no longer clear who is truly capable of speaking with authority on the fundamental issues of human life.

New Frontiers of Evangelization

63. Nevertheless, a realistic view of this situation must not lead us to despair about the future of the Church. Among the opportunities the Holy Spirit offers in the current context of epochal change is, in fact, a more conscious and convinced adherence to the faith, as the bishops of Belgium maintain: it is “a positive opportunity to allow people to make a conscious choice to deepen their faith.”⁶¹ A similar attitude can also be found in a geographically distant context, such as

⁶⁰ LEO XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (15 May 2026), par. 132.

⁶¹ BELGIAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE, *Report and Testimonies about the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Bishops' Conference*, 3 April 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

that of Chile, whose bishops observe that “faith can no longer be taken for granted as a stable cultural heritage, nor as a spontaneous adherence to a shared symbolic universe. Rather, it appears to be a proposal that must be freely accepted, accompanied along various paths, and verified on an existential level.”⁶² Furthermore, we must not overlook a phenomenon affecting the most secularized areas of Europe and America: the growing number of conversions and returns to the Church, especially among youth and young adults. Particularly noteworthy is the case of France, where, despite a general decline in infant baptisms and religious practice, there has been an exceptional and steady increase in requests from young people and adults to receive the Sacrament of Baptism. According to a survey conducted on behalf of the French Bishops’ Conference, the number of adults baptized in 2026 increased by 28% over the previous year and is now more than three times the 2016 figure. As mentioned, this phenomenon primarily concerns younger generations: the vast majority are under 40, and about half fall within the 18- to 25-year-old age group. According to the personal testimonies collected, the motivations for seeking the sacrament include an encounter with the faith following a time of crisis (such as bereavement or illness), spiritual experiences or experiences of beauty, and contact with other believers, both in person and through social media.⁶³

64. In general statistical terms, this phenomenon still affects relatively small percentages of the total population; however, this does not detract from the fact that these are by no means negligible developments and are always a cause for joy. A broader view of the situation, however, suggests adopting a cautious approach when evaluating this reality. Indeed, while there is a genuine increase in demand for the sacraments of Christian initiation in these highly secularized areas, there is also a parallel difficulty concerning the perseverance of neophytes, who often, shortly after receiving baptism, return to a state of practical indifference. For this reason, while it is appropriate to avoid triumphalistic attitudes in this regard, it cannot be denied that these phenomena constitute concrete signs of hope and evangelical vitality. At the same time, the situation described calls for a rediscovery of the importance of the community in welcoming and accompanying new members of the faithful.

65. It is evident that, in these cases, the proclamation of the Gospel—carried out in a variety of ways, from word of mouth and invitations to pilgrimages to an active presence in new media—makes it possible to respond to an authentic search for meaning that is reemerging amid the suffocating effects of immanence. Such a search can take many forms, none of which should be disregarded: the

⁶² EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF CHILE, *Report and Testimonies about the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Episcopal Conference*, 11 April 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

⁶³ For details on the research, see <https://eglise.catholique.fr/approfondir-sa-foi/la-celebration-de-la-foi/les-sacrements/le-bapteme/baptemes-adultes/>.

search for greater openness of heart, the need for peace and harmony with the world, the desire for consolation and healing, experiences of rupture and conflict that prompt a fresh start, new forms of beauty, a certain rediscovery of the past and of traditions, as well as many other examples that could be mentioned. These are realities that we should view with gratitude, recognizing in them the work of the Holy Spirit, who continues to act in people's hearts.

66. Thus, the need to transmit the faith, beginning with the *kerygma*, remains essential. This applies both to secularized countries with a long Christian tradition and to those in which the Church is generally a minority, as is the case in Asia. In fact, many Asian countries are also affected by secularization and individualism, especially in regions experiencing rapid economic growth. However, in those contexts, these cultural influences affect communities of the faithful differently than they do in societies with a Christian tradition. Precisely because the faithful are often in the minority within their respective societies (with some notable exceptions, such as the Philippines and Timor-Leste), the Churches in Asia have developed as sociologically well-defined communities. This has fostered the consolidation of a strong identity, which has enabled them to endure throughout history, even in contexts that were at times hostile or marked by outright persecution. In the current context of epochal change, this reality has twofold implications for the transmission of the faith: on the one hand, Christian communities are not immune to the widespread secularized culture described above, which consequently leads to an erosion of religious practice, especially among the younger generations; on the other hand, they are called to move beyond a commitment to Christianity based merely on the inertia of social affiliation,⁶⁴ so that it may become a personal and conscious choice, capable of guiding one's decisions in life. This is especially true in regions characterized by ancient cultures, such as India and China, where efforts to embody the Gospel message in people's lives must engage with the particular ways in which a given culture relates to realms such as truth, goodness, and beauty. Added to this is the need to rethink how we proclaim the Gospel, prioritizing narrative forms over the mere transmission of abstract concepts. This effort is essential for preparing each human heart (cf. *Mt* 13:3–8) for an authentic encounter with the Good News.

67. Despite the variety of situations that characterize this vast continent, Africa, too, faces the problem of Western-style secularization and individualism, which especially affect urban contexts and the younger generations. In the African Churches, however, the response to these cultural influences on the transmission of the faith takes place within the framework of two equally demanding challenges, to which reference has already been made: the

⁶⁴ Cf. MARONITE PATRIARCHATE OF ANTIOCH, *Report and Testimonies about the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Patriarchate*, 1 April 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

inculturation of the Gospel into local cultures and the “competition” created by proselytizing activity from other religions. The bishops of Nigeria attest to the importance of the first aspect: “the significant presence of indigenous clergy has facilitated the transmission of faith within their home cultures, as they serve as relatable role models and spiritual guides, effectively bridging the gap between traditional Nigerian values and Catholic teachings.”⁶⁵ Another valuable initiative is that of the “Small Christian Communities,” which, as reported by the bishops of Tanzania, “act as the primary unit for prayer, catechesis, and fellowship. The faith is often transmitted through a ‘community-as-family’ approach.”⁶⁶

68. As already mentioned, the transmission of the faith in Africa (but also elsewhere) suffers from the antagonistic activities of religious groups that promote a “prosperity gospel” by appealing to immediate material needs. In regions such as Ivory Coast, for example, people seek out movements that promise well-being and happiness, while many baptized Christians are returning to traditional and esoteric practices.⁶⁷

69. It must be acknowledged that the appeal of such proposals often stems from certain objective shortcomings in the ways the Gospel is proclaimed, which do not always adequately consider the actual and concrete needs of families. This means that Christian communities are called to seek healthy ways of presenting the Gospel as an effective response even to the most tangible needs, following the example of Jesus, who traveled throughout the land of Israel “doing good and healing all” (*Acts* 10:38), thus demonstrating his ability to respond not only to the ultimate questions but also to the “penultimate” ones. Indeed, such desires are not always rooted in selfishness (for example, concern for the well-being of children, care for one’s health, the desire to heal family bonds, etc.). Discovering that the Church can offer concrete spiritual help in the face of these concerns opens the heart to receive the kerygmatic proclamation with renewed vigor.

70. However, in other African contexts, such as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in addition to pressure from fundamentalist groups, Christian communities also face the threat posed by the aggressive expansion of Islamist groups.⁶⁸ All these factors influence many believers who have not received a solid

⁶⁵ CATHOLIC BISHOPS’ CONFERENCE OF NIGERIA, *Report on the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Bishops’ Conference*, 6 May 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

⁶⁶ TANZANIA EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE, *Report on the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Episcopal Conference*, 26 March 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

⁶⁷ Cf. EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF CÔTE D’IVOIRE, *Report on the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Episcopal Conference*, 15 April 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

⁶⁸ Cf. NATIONAL EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF THE CONGO, *Report on the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Episcopal Conference*, 30 March 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

formation in the faith or have not personally experienced the transforming effect of the *kerygma* in their lives.

71. Finally, we cannot remain silent about the fact that, in many parts of the world, believers in Jesus are still victims of outright persecution by extremist religious groups. In this regard, it is urgent to reaffirm that any form of violence perpetrated on the basis of religious belief is an unacceptable violation of human dignity. Indeed, “those who use the name of God to legitimize terrorism, violence or war betray his true nature, for to fight in the name of religion means attacking religion itself.”⁶⁹ These are distortions of the religious message that must be publicly denounced, and every political authority is called upon to act without hesitation to put a stop to them.

Chapter IV

The Centrality of the *Kerygma*

72. Faced with the situation described above, it seems entirely natural that believers should embark on a renewed period of proclaiming the Gospel, finally responding to what Pope Francis called for in *Evangelii Gaudium* regarding the urgent need for the entire Church to launch a new phase of evangelization. This call was reiterated by Pope Leo XIV, who recognizes the need for a “Christ-centered and kerygmatic” mission, one that is “born of an encounter with Christ that is capable of transforming lives and spreading through attraction rather than conquest. It is an integral mission, holding in balance explicit proclamation, witness, commitment and dialogue, and yielding neither to the temptation of proselytism nor to a merely institutional mentality of preservation or expansion.”⁷⁰ We do this not primarily to respond to a new epochal challenge, but out of fidelity to Christian identity itself, which necessarily includes the gift of self in transmitting Christ’s light. With all this in view, it is appropriate to reflect on the theme of proclaiming the *kerygma* and how it reorients the life and mission of the Church.

73. Divine revelation, as the Second Vatican Council teaches, is not merely the transmission of doctrinal truths or an “instruction” from God to humanity, but a covenant dialogue: “God, who is invisible, out of the abundance of his love, speaks to human beings as friends and associates with them, to invite them and

⁶⁹ LEO XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (15 May 2026), par. 223.

⁷⁰ LEO XIV, *Letter to the Cardinals* (14 April 2026): *L’Osservatore Romano*, 14 April 2026, 7. Cf. ID., *Address on the occasion of the Jubilee of Digital Missionaries and Influencers* (29 July 2025): *L’Osservatore Romano*, 29 July 2025, 2.

admit them into fellowship with himself.”⁷¹ This means that the *kerygma*—the fundamental proclamation of the faith—requires a *response* from those who receive it that is not limited to the intellectual level but involves their entire existence in accepting God’s call to share in his very life. Precisely because it is not confined to the realm of knowledge alone, but has, so to speak, an existential reach (cf. *Jn* 17:3), such a response is, by its very nature, an event of *salvation*: “If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (*Rom* 10:9).

74. The truth of the Gospel, therefore, is salvific; it is alive. Indeed, it is a person: Christ himself (cf. *Jn* 14:6). This is reflected in the structure of the act of faith, which is characterized, at the same time, by the “total commitment of oneself”⁷² to Christ on the part of the individual human being enlightened by his grace (*fides qua*), and by the “things believed” (*fides quae*), which make explicit the content of that act of self-commitment.⁷³ The soundness of the presentation of the faith and the human search for meaning, which is never fully exhausted (cf. *1 Cor* 15:28), belong together.

Fostering an Experience of Faith

75. In this regard, therefore, what we read in *Evangelii Gaudium* still holds true: “In catechesis too, we have rediscovered the fundamental role of the first announcement or *kerygma*, which needs to be the center of all evangelizing activity and all efforts at Church renewal. The *kerygma* is trinitarian. The fire of the Spirit is given in the form of tongues and leads us to believe in Jesus Christ who, by his death and resurrection, reveals and communicates to us the Father’s infinite mercy. On the lips of the catechist the first proclamation must ring out over and over: ‘Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you.’ This first proclamation is called ‘first’ not because it exists at the beginning and can then be forgotten or replaced by other more important things. It is first in a qualitative sense because it is the principal proclamation, the one which we must hear again and again, in different ways, the one which we must announce one way or another throughout the process of catechesis, at every level and moment.”⁷⁴

76. The first point suggested by these words is that the proclamation of the foundational and fundamental truth of Christianity—*Jesus Christ, who is alive*,

⁷¹ SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* (18 November 1965), par. 2, *AAS* 58 (1966), 818.

⁷² Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* (18 November 1965), par. 5, *AAS* 58 (1966), 819.

⁷³ Cf. INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *The Interpretation of Dogma* (1990), B.I.1.

⁷⁴ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), par. 164: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1088–1089.

loves you and gave his life to save you—must take place in such a way as to bring about an experience of faith capable of initiating the formation of one's Christian identity. This outlines a threefold process that must characterize the transmission of the faith refocused on the *kerygma*: above all, the central proclamation of the presence and love of the Risen Christ; the inner experience of his presence and love, sparked by that proclamation; and finally, the beginning of a journey of knowing and loving Christ, made possible by the recipient's acceptance of the proclamation with a free and sincere heart.

77. It is not, therefore, a mere transmission of content—however important that content may be, even as it concerns the salvation of every human being. It must be a “performative” proclamation, capable of truly touching the hearts of those who receive it and of drawing them toward the heart of the Lord Jesus, where it is possible to contemplate and come into contact with that fire of love that he came to cast upon the earth (cf. *Lk* 12:49). The proclamation of the *kerygma* must set ablaze the hearts of those to whom it is addressed, following the sublime model that Jesus himself exemplified with the disciples on the road to Emmaus: “They said to each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?’” (*Lk* 24:32).

78. The link between the *kerygma* and catechesis, in the context of this epochal change, is very close, to the point that the latter “cannot always be distinguished from the first proclamation,” and therefore it “is called to be in the first place a proclamation of the faith.”⁷⁵ Precisely in this regard, it may be helpful to recall a situation that is now increasingly common. As has already been noted, it happens more and more often that Christian parents are unable to pass on the faith to their children. Yet the very fact of requesting baptism for their children or accompanying them to catechesis already demonstrates a certain presence of faith and a fragile but genuine witness that should not be disregarded. In such cases, it is even possible that the children or adolescents who come to catechesis have not yet received an explicit first proclamation of the Gospel. Precisely for this reason, catechesis becomes the setting in which this proclamation can be offered anew, confirming the need for a profound kerygmatic renewal of catechesis, since it does not always give rise to an intense experience of encounter with Christ, one that can endure over time.⁷⁶

79. On the other hand, it is a fact that the large number of children and adolescents who drift away from the Church and the sacraments immediately after completing their Christian initiation or their course of formation in a

⁷⁵ PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING THE NEW EVANGELIZATION, *Directory for Catechesis* (2020), par. 57.

⁷⁶ Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING THE NEW EVANGELIZATION, *Directory for Catechesis* (2020), pars. 56–57.

Catholic school indicates that catechesis still struggles to find the most appropriate ways to foster a solid and lasting personal encounter with Christ.

The Question of Language

80. In the context of this epochal change, the true challenge for the Church is to ensure that the word of the Gospel is taken “as a living standard for guiding concrete choices, inspiring paths of personal and communal conversion, promoting structural reforms and supporting new forms of evangelical witness in public life.”⁷⁷ In this sense, drawing on the numerous documents and resources prepared by the Dicastery for Evangelization,⁷⁸ it is now more urgent than ever to examine wisely and with discernment the current ways of organizing catechesis, so that the transmission of the faith is not confined to language that can be labeled as “scholastic,” “dogmatic,” or “moralistic.” All too often, repetitive and self-referential communication of the Gospel message risks failing to speak to the hearts of the faithful. For this reason, the language of faith must not be limited to a cold exposition of concepts. It must certainly possess the clarity that facilitates understanding, but above all, it must be characterized by an appeal from the heart, remembering that “the Lord saves us by speaking to our hearts from his Sacred Heart”⁷⁹ and that “the Christian’s program [...] is ‘a heart that sees’.”⁸⁰ Only in this way will it become a language that truly brings about change in people’s lives, because it will be an expression of the Lord’s own voice—the only one that can truly touch people’s hearts: “Speak to me yourself within my heart in truth, for you alone speak so.”⁸¹

81. In summary, for the transmission of the faith to be truly effective, it must take the form of an engaging interpersonal relationship. To this end, “we need to use above all the language of closeness, the language of generous, relational and existential love that touches the heart, impacts life, and awakens hope and desires.”⁸² Such communication does not presume to speak first, but arises above all from listening, making possible a genuine exchange of gifts between the one who proclaims and the one who receives the proclamation, thereby facilitating the encounter with Christ who walks with us.

82. This means that the transmission of the faith can take place where language becomes testimony—an event of the Spirit in its own right. As Saint Alberto Hurtado once said, as quoted in the Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*: “Being

⁷⁷ LEO XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (15 May 2026), par. 22.

⁷⁸ Cf. <https://www.evangelizatio.va/content/pcpne/en/attivita/catechesi.html>.

⁷⁹ FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter *Dilexit Nos* (24 October 2024), par. 26: *AAS* 116 (2024), 1377.

⁸⁰ BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (25 December 2005), par. 31: *AAS* 98 (2006), 245.

⁸¹ AUGUSTINE, *Confessions* XII, 16, 23: *PL* 32, 834.

⁸² FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* (25 March 2019), par. 211: *AAS* 111 (2019), 450.

an apostle does not mean carrying a torch in hand, possessing the light, but being that light [...]. The Gospel, [...] more than a lesson, is an example. A message that becomes a life fully lived.”⁸³ In this way, the Church can offer, also today, a word that is at once memory and prophecy, capable of rekindling the hearts of the disciples along the way as they are accompanied by the Master, allowing grace to stir that mystical adherence to the faith,⁸⁴ concerning which the words of the prophet Jeremiah remain unsurpassed: “within me there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones; and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot” (*Jer* 20:9).

Christian Formation

83. It follows from what has been said that Christian communities are strongly called to promote—in season and out of season—a renewal of the proclamation of the *kerygma*. Moreover, *Evangelii Gaudium* also highlighted another truly important point in this regard: “We must not think that in catechesis the *kerygma* gives way to a supposedly more ‘solid’ formation. Nothing is more solid, profound, secure, meaningful, and wisdom-filled than that initial proclamation. All Christian formation consists of entering more deeply into the *kerygma*, which is reflected in and constantly illumines, the work of catechesis, thereby enabling us to understand more fully the significance of every subject which the latter treats. It is the message capable of responding to the desire for the infinite which abides in every human heart. The centrality of the *kerygma* calls for stressing those elements which are most needed today: it has to express God’s saving love which precedes any moral and religious obligation on our part; it should not impose the truth but appeal to freedom; it should be marked by joy, encouragement, liveliness and a harmonious balance which will not reduce preaching to a few doctrines which are at times more philosophical than evangelical.”⁸⁵

84. Here we see the great teaching of the Second Vatican Council regarding the hierarchy of truths among the Christian mysteries. In fact, we read in paragraph 11 of *Unitatis Redintegratio* that “in ecumenical dialogue, Catholic theologians, standing fast by the teaching of the Church yet searching together with separated brethren into the divine mysteries, should do so with love for the truth, with charity, and with humility. When comparing doctrines with one another, they should remember that in Catholic doctrine there exists an order or ‘hierarchy’ of truths, since they vary in their relation to the foundation of the

⁸³ A. HURTADO, “Ustedes son la luz del mundo,” address in Cerro San Cristóbal, Chile (1940), as cited in FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, par. 175: *AAS* 111 (2019), 440.

⁸⁴ Cf. FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), par. 70: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1050.

⁸⁵ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), par. 165: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1089.

Christian faith.”⁸⁶ This perspective has been extended by *Evangelii Gaudium* to the realm of the proclamation of the Gospel, theology, and the Church’s moral vision.⁸⁷ For this reason, in the epochal change we are experiencing, it does not seem fitting—when communicating the faith to new generations, adult catechumens, and so-called “returnees”—to get lost in the many areas of Catholic doctrine, however important they may be, and thus lose sight of what is most “solid, profound, secure, [and] meaningful”⁸⁸ within it: namely, the love of God, which is like a flame capable of restoring life, joy, hope, and trust to every human existence. Thanks to the action of the Holy Spirit, this flame is accessed through an encounter—with faith and in faith—with the Lord Jesus.

85. It is precisely by proclaiming the *kerygma* in a way that is both renewed and renewing—passionate and capable of inspiring passion—that the community of believers will be able to fulfill the task of passing on, from generation to generation, the light that Jesus came to bring to the earth.

86. In practical terms, in order to truly inspire an experience of faith, the proclamation of the *kerygma* must adopt a style, language, and tone capable of reaching people where they are—with their desires and dreams, their struggles and trials. It must, therefore, be capable of presenting the good news of God’s love and mercy in such a way that those who receive it can truly understand that it is precisely to them that this love and mercy are directed. This is the style that characterizes the parables of the Lord Jesus, which even today capture the hearts of those who hear them.

Chapter V

The Transmission of the Faith in Communities

87. Starting from this general consideration about the centrality of the *kerygma*, we can make some more specific observations. The first, and most essential, concerns the *quality* of the communal life of the Lord’s disciples. It must reflect sincere love among brothers and sisters, a commitment to caring for one another, generous openness toward all—especially the most disadvantaged—an atmosphere of joy and celebration and, finally, a life lived with one heart and one soul (cf. *Acts* 4:32). Such qualities distinguish a welcoming and hospitable community that, even in this time of epochal change, is capable of attracting the

⁸⁶ SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* (21 November 1964), par. 11: *AAS* 57 (1965), 99.

⁸⁷ Cf. FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), pars. 36–37: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1035.

⁸⁸ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), par. 165: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1089.

attention of others and drawing them toward the experience of the Christian faith. In an increasingly fragmented world, where the only bonds among human beings that seem to carry any weight are those mediated by digital infrastructure, the need and desire for belonging are becoming ever more evident among many people. We are not self-sufficient, and social media does not satisfy our innate nature as “social animals.” As believers, we cannot fail to keep our hearts and doors open to these new realities that people face. After all, the first form of evangelization always takes place “from person to person.”⁸⁹

88. In this regard, it is absolutely urgent—especially in countries with a long history of evangelization—to emphasize the importance of promoting, in every ecclesial community, groups dedicated to listening to, meditating on, sharing, and praying with the Word, with regular times set aside for their meetings, complementing the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist. Let the words of Pope Francis serve as an inspiration: “Regular reading of Sacred Scripture and the celebration of the Eucharist make it possible for us to see ourselves as part of one another. As Christians, we are a single people, making our pilgrim way through history, sustained by the Lord, present in our midst, who speaks to us and nourishes us. [...] [W]e urgently need to grow in our knowledge and love of the Scriptures and of the risen Lord, who continues to speak his word and to break bread in the community of believers. For this reason, we need to develop a closer relationship with Sacred Scripture; otherwise, our hearts will remain cold and our eyes shut, struck as we are by so many forms of blindness.”⁹⁰ To foster such familiarity with Sacred Scripture among believers, these Bible study groups can easily incorporate the ancient practice of *lectio divina* and modern narrative methods.

89. Despite all the epochal changes, the primary channels for transmitting the faith continue to be person-to-person encounters. Therefore, among the contexts in which the faith is transmitted, friendship takes on particular importance, as even the most recent cases of conversion attest. The Church’s tradition has always recognized the educational value of genuine fraternal relationships,⁹¹ as the recent Magisterium has also emphasized, especially with regard to the journey of faith of the younger generations. This is expressed, for example, by Pope Francis: “Friendship is one of life’s gifts and a grace from God. Through our friends, the Lord refines us and leads us to maturity.”⁹² Friendship, in fact, constitutes a privileged space in which personal witness, mutual support, and the sharing of life’s joys and struggles make it possible to share the faith in a way that engages

⁸⁹ Cf. FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), pars. 127-129: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1073.

⁹⁰ FRANCIS, Apostolic Letter *Aperuit Illis* (30 September 2019), par. 8: *AAS* 111 (2019), 1500.

⁹¹ Cf. AELRED OF RIEVAULX, *De spiritali amicitia*: *CCCM*, 1, 279–350.

⁹² FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* (25 March 2019), par. 151: *AAS* 111 (2019), 432.

one's entire existence. Along with the family, healthy friendship is the setting *par excellence* for authentic relationships,⁹³ where believers can accompany and support one another in following Christ.

Liturgy

90. The second consideration linked to the rediscovery of the centrality of the proclamation of the *kerygma* concerns the liturgy. If the heart of the Christian proclamation is the encounter with God's saving love in Christ, the liturgy constitutes the privileged place in which this mystery is celebrated and communicated sacramentally. For this reason, it plays a central role in handing on the faith, serving as the beating heart of ecclesial life, where the community is nourished by the Word of God and the Bread of eternal life. In this regard, we must move beyond a reductive view that regards the liturgy as merely a ritual framework for ecclesial life. The liturgy, in fact, is first and foremost an experience of faith, even before it is a teaching, in that it allows the faithful to participate in gestures, words, silences, and symbols, thereby experiencing the mystery of Christ in a living way. As stated in *Evangelii Gaudium*, "the Church evangelizes and is herself evangelized through the beauty of the liturgy"⁹⁴; precisely through its symbolic power and its ability to engage the whole person fully, the liturgy becomes an authentic place of proclamation and encounter with the Lord. In the liturgical action, and particularly in the Eucharist, we are drawn ever more deeply into the Paschal Mystery, while the sacramental character of the Church—called to be a sign of God's love for humanity—is made visible. In this sacramental event, the encounter with the Risen One becomes a shared and vital act that educates believers not only by "informing" them, but by shaping them from within so that they may become participants in the mystery being celebrated. For this reason, in the liturgy, faith is transmitted in a performative way: we do not merely speak of God but enter into a relationship with him. The liturgy is living memory and tradition, generating and shaping Christians capable of bearing witness to the salvation they have encountered: by participating in liturgical prayer, one enters, in fact, into a history, into a shared memory that spans the centuries. Therefore, to celebrate means first and foremost to receive a faith that has been believed, lived, and prayed by others before us.

91. Furthermore, this dynamic highlights the eminently communal dimension of the liturgy. Faith, in fact, is not transmitted solely through individual proclamation or teaching, but within a people who celebrate together. In the liturgy, the believer is never isolated but is part of a "we" that precedes, accompanies, and transcends him or her. This communal dimension serves as a

⁹³ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (7 December 1965), par. 52: *AAS* 58 (1966), 1073.

⁹⁴ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), par. 24: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1030.

powerful antidote to the allure of a selfish and individualistic lifestyle, which, as we have already seen, is so widespread today in many contexts. Precisely because it is an ecclesial and communal experience, the celebration of the faith is closely linked to processes of inculturation—that is, to the effort “to communicate more effectively the truth of the Gospel in a specific context, without renouncing the truth, the goodness and the light which it can bring whenever perfection is not possible.”⁹⁵ Applied to the liturgy, this perspective requires preserving the richness of the Church’s symbolic tradition, while at the same time making it accessible and meaningful to the men and women of our time, within a healthy and fruitful tension between fidelity to tradition and the comprehensibility of the message being celebrated.

92. From the perspective of the transmission of the faith, therefore, the liturgy is of crucial importance, in accordance with the ancient adage *lex orandi, lex credendi*.⁹⁶ It follows that the liturgical celebration cannot be reduced to a mere formal performance, but must be an action in which the signs truly speak to the minds and hearts of the faithful, expressing in a vivid and concrete way the one faith of the Church and strengthening in each believer the awareness of being a member of the Body of Christ. Only through fully conscious participation, which presupposes an adequate education in liturgical language, can faith be transmitted not as an abstract doctrine, but as a new life that is communicated *by attraction* in daily life. The young Augustine also bore witness to this power of the liturgy; years after that experience, he was able to write: “How greatly I wept at your hymns and canticles, how deeply was I moved by the sounds of your Church sweetly singing! Those voices flowed into my ears, and your truth melted into my heart until the feeling of devotion surged up from within; my tears ran down, and I was the better for them.”⁹⁷ Through the beauty of the signs and the power of the Word, the liturgical action thus becomes the generative source of the Church’s mission, enabling the community to give an account of the hope that dwells within it, through the credibility of a life transfigured by grace. For this reason, special care must be taken in the celebrations, and a mystagogical accompaniment of the younger generations is necessary, so that they may fully understand and live out what they celebrate in the liturgy.

93. In addition, the liturgy can be experienced in different ways. Indeed, popular piety also has its own way of expressing a liturgical sensibility, which takes different forms according to the various cultures. To understand this, we can cite a beautiful account by Romano Guardini, in which he recounts his visit to Sicily: “Today I saw something magnificent: Monreale. [...] When we

⁹⁵ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), par. 45: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1039.

⁹⁶ Cf. PROSPER OF AQUITAINE, *Indiculus*, ch. 8: *PL* 51, 209.

⁹⁷ AUGUSTINE, *Confessions* IX, 6, 14: *PL* 32, 769–770.

arrived—it was Holy Thursday—the solemn Mass had proceeded beyond the consecration. [...] What should I say about the splendor of this place? [...] The crowd sat and watched. [...] Almost no one was reading. All were living in the gaze; all were intent on contemplation. Then it became clear to me what the foundation of true liturgical piety is: the ability to perceive the ‘sacred’ within the image and its dynamism. Monreale, Holy Saturday. [...] Every now and then a ray of sunlight pierced through the vault, and then a golden smile spread through the space above. [...] Yet the most beautiful thing was the people. [...] The sacred ceremony lasted more than four hours, but there was a lively participation throughout. There are different ways of prayerful participation. One takes place through listening, speaking and gesture, and the other through seeing. The first way is a good one, and in Northern Europe it is the only way we know. But we have lost something that was still present in Monreale: the capacity for living-in-the-gaze, for dwelling in the act of seeing, for welcoming the sacred in the form and event, by contemplating them.”⁹⁸

94. Particular care should also be taken to enable the faithful in every diocese, as well as those who are approaching or returning to the community of believers, to encounter the various liturgical sensibilities present within the tradition of the Catholic Church. With due respect for the liturgical norms currently in force, pastors are called to highlight the richness of the Catholic liturgical heritage—consider, for example the variety of musical styles that characterize it—in such a way as to enter into contact with the different sensibilities of their contemporaries. Specific attention should also be given to accompanying the significant stages of human life with the Church’s blessing. Especially in the West, there is a progressive loss of the collective memory of rites and ritual practices in favor of a highly radical form of individualism; yet this does not eliminate the anthropological need for rituality, to which human beings have always responded in different ways. The Christian community grows and is built up through ritual practices, and in this regard, the Church’s rich spiritual heritage represents a precious and inexhaustible resource.

The Role of Witness

95. The third essential consideration concerns the witness of believers. It unfolds in three fundamental dimensions: the witness of holiness, that of closeness, and that of the preferential option for the poor. In every age, anyone who has encountered the witness of an exemplary Christian has always been inspired to discover the secret of that life—so unique and different from that of most of their fellow human beings. A believer who lives out the demands of the Christian message to the fullest is, in and of themselves, a constant reminder of

⁹⁸ R. GUARDINI, *Spiegel und Gleichnis. Bilder und Gedanken*, Mainz-Paderborn 1990, 158–161.

the true light of the world, who is Jesus Christ. As Pope Francis affirms, “holiness is the most attractive face of the Church.”⁹⁹ It would suffice here to recall only the figures of Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Teresa of Calcutta. We must recognize, in fact, that nothing makes the Church more credible in proclaiming and transmitting the faith than the holiness of her members. For this reason, echoing the message on holiness from the Second Vatican Council,¹⁰⁰ Pope Francis has repeatedly and emphatically reaffirmed that the call to holiness is *the ordinary vocation* of every Christian: “To be holy does not require being a bishop, a priest or a religious. We are frequently tempted to think that holiness is only for those who can withdraw from ordinary affairs to spend much time in prayer. That is not the case. We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves. Are you called to the consecrated life? Be holy by living out your commitment with joy. Are you married? Be holy by loving and caring for your husband or wife, as Christ does for the Church. Do you work for a living? Be holy by laboring with integrity and skill in the service of your brothers and sisters. Are you a parent or grandparent? Be holy by patiently teaching the little ones how to follow Jesus. Are you in a position of authority? Be holy by working for the common good and renouncing personal gain.”¹⁰¹

96. Along with bearing witness to holiness, believers are called to offer, in the daily fabric of their lives, a witness of closeness to everyone. This closeness is built through hospitality, kindness, listening, gentleness, and tenderness. As the ancient Latin author Terence once wrote: “I am a human being; nothing human is foreign to me”¹⁰²; indeed, nothing truly human should be foreign to believers. Every Christian is called to help people reinterpret their own stories within the greater story of salvation, discovering that their very lives are part of God’s narrative. This closeness becomes a witness when it is extended to people living in situations of severe suffering, whether physical or mental. In such cases, a gesture of listening and tenderness, combined with a word of faith, can open wide the doors to receiving that true light of Christ, which has the power to free from darkness those who are enveloped by it. Pope Leo reminds us, in fact, that “finitude, when truly accepted, does not diminish us but opens us to recognizing the face of God and others.”¹⁰³

⁹⁹ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate* (19 March 2018), par. 9: *AAS* 110 (2018), 1113.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* (21 November 1964), par. 11: *AAS* 57 (1965), 15–16.

¹⁰¹ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate* (19 March 2018), par. 14: *AAS* 110 (2018), 1115.

¹⁰² TERENCE, *Heauton Timorumenos*, I, 1, 25.

¹⁰³ LEO XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (15 May 2026), par. 122.

97. We thus arrive at that concrete witness to God’s love that believers offer by caring, in a preferential way, for the poor, the disadvantaged, and the excluded. As Pope Leo XIV recalled, following in the footsteps of his predecessor, believers should never forget “the close connection between Christ’s love and his summons to care for the poor.”¹⁰⁴ In truth, “no Christian can regard the poor simply as a societal problem; they are part of our ‘family.’ They are ‘one of us.’ Nor can our relationship to the poor be reduced to merely another ecclesial activity or function.”¹⁰⁵ Through such active and concrete closeness to our brothers and sisters living in poverty, the Church makes that flame of God’s love for all—the flame Jesus came to cast upon the earth—shine out most brightly, and still today it touches, often silently, the hearts of so many. A particularly valuable testimony in this regard comes from the bishops of Myanmar, given during their *ad limina* visit to this Dicastery on 2 June 2026. In that country, which bears the wounds of multiple conflicts, the Church shows her closeness to the poorest, even simply through the silence of listening, without any distinction based on religious affiliation—Myanmar is, in fact, a predominantly Buddhist nation. It is precisely this closeness that stirs in those who do not share the Christian faith a desire to explore the reasons behind this way of facing suffering, thus offering the faithful the opportunity to speak explicitly about their experience of Jesus. In this unity between charity and the proclamation of the Gospel, therefore, the integral beauty of the Christian way is highlighted even more clearly.

Art and Beauty

98. A fourth specific observation concerns the need to make room—in the discourse on the transmission of the faith—for the many expressions of human creativity through which people have sought to give form to that yearning for beauty, love, and transcendence that dwells, often in a tormented way, in the human heart. How can we fail to think, in this regard, of the many works of literature and poetry that evoke sublime wonder and can captivate even minds distracted by modern communications technology? Hans Urs von Balthasar, in particular, emphasized the importance of opening oneself to beauty: “In the luminous form of the beautiful, the being of the existent becomes perceivable as nowhere else, and this is why an aesthetic element must be associated with all spiritual perception as with all spiritual striving.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ LEO XIV, Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te* (4 October 2025), par. 3: *AAS* 117 (2025), 1240.

¹⁰⁵ LEO XIV, Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te* (4 October 2025), par. 104: *AAS* 117 (2025), 1280–1281.

¹⁰⁶ H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*, tr. E. LEIVA-MERIKAKIS, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2009, 148. To this one might add: “If the *verum* lacks that *splendor* which for Thomas is the distinctive mark of the beautiful, then the knowledge of truth remains both pragmatic and formalistic. [...] But if the *bonum* lacks that *voluptas* which for Augustine is the mark of its beauty, then the relationship to the good remains both utilitarian and hedonistic” (*ibid.*, 147).

99. From this perspective, special attention should be given to music, which, as a privileged expression of the *via pulchritudinis*, constitutes an essential language for the transmission of the faith, capable of touching the deepest chords of the human heart and communicating the truth of the Gospel through beauty.¹⁰⁷ It is not merely an aesthetic embellishment of celebrations but a missionary tool that works through attraction, making the glory of the Risen One perceptible especially where words struggle to reach. In fact, as Pope Leo XIV observed, “Music is like a bridge that leads us to God. It is capable of transmitting feelings, emotions, even the deepest stirrings of the soul, lifting them up and transforming them into an imaginary stairway connecting earth and heaven.”¹⁰⁸ Through music, the faith finds unique avenues of expression that purely verbal proclamation, on its own, does not always reach. These considerations prompt us to urge artists and writers who are believers to make a special creative effort to manifest the beauty of the Christian faith and spiritual experience.

The Stages of Life

100. A final observation concerns the different stages of every human being’s life (childhood, adolescence, youth, adulthood, and old age). These stages, in fact, constitute a kind of continual “reappropriation” of the gift of one’s birth into the world and, like that birth, are experiences that are both surprising and challenging. The ecclesial community must therefore develop a proclamation of the Gospel that is more attentive to the different stages of life, giving due consideration to the various situations of growth and renewal that each stage brings with it. At the same time, it should be remembered that many people encounter the Church only during celebrations marking certain fundamental moments in life: baptisms, weddings, and funerals. Therefore, it is essential to recognize that, in such circumstances, a precious opportunity arises to reach them with a proclamation of the *kerygma* capable of touching their hearts, while avoiding words that fail to foster any genuine encounter.

101. Of particular importance is the issue—already discussed—of the generational divide in the transmission of the faith. In this regard, the community of believers finds in the pastoral care of adults, who are also the parents of the younger generations, a new field of ministry marked by particularly complex challenges. Indeed, in the past, *at least in countries with a long Christian tradition*, the proclamation of the *kerygma* was directed almost exclusively at the young. Today, however, there is an increasingly urgent need to accompany people—including those baptized at a very young age—who live apart from the ecclesial community and who, despite feeling an inner call to a life according to

¹⁰⁷ Cf. FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), par. 167: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1090.

¹⁰⁸ LEO XIV, *Greeting to the Participants in the “Concert with the Poor”* (6 December 2025): *L’Osservatore Romano*, 9 December 2025, 4.

the Gospel, struggle to understand and make the Church's language their own. In these cases, the transmission of the faith to the younger generations depends on the evangelization of adults. Indeed, how can adults pass on the faith to the younger generations if they themselves do not first live it out on a personal level? Further difficulties may also arise from situations marked by various forms of existential poverty, especially in urban contexts characterized by marked fragmentation or in isolated rural areas. All of this challenges the Church as a whole, urging her to become ever more synodal and missionary, especially by fostering the charisms that the Holy Spirit stirs up in the People of God.

Chapter VI

Faith and Culture

102. Expanding now the scope of our reflection on the transmission of the faith beyond the strictly ecclesial dimension, we must address the relationship between faith and culture. A first point to note is that many scholars emphasize how, in our time, a broader crisis is underway regarding the transmission of knowledge and values, which also encompasses the specific subject of these *Considerations*. A second point can be drawn from some words of Saint John Paul II, which underscore the importance, with a view to the transmission of the faith, of achieving a synthesis between faith and culture: “The synthesis between culture and faith is not only a requirement of culture, but also of faith. As my predecessor Paul VI taught, ‘it is necessary to evangelize—not in a decorative way, like a superficial coat of paint, but in a vital way, deeply and down to the roots—human culture and cultures... always starting from the person and always returning to the relationships of people with one another and with God.’ For while it is true that faith is not identical with any single culture [...] it is no less true that, precisely for this reason, faith is called to inspire and permeate every culture. It is the whole person, in the concreteness of his or her daily existence, who is saved in Christ; and therefore, it is the whole person who must find fulfillment in Christ. A faith that does not become culture is a faith that has not been fully embraced, not fully thought through, and not faithfully lived.”¹⁰⁹

103. What has been said leads us to recognize that the work of transmitting the faith is in some way inseparable from its inculturation within a specific context, understanding “culture” here both in its broadest anthropological sense—as the set of lifestyles, beliefs, values, and institutions that characterize a given

¹⁰⁹ JOHN PAUL II, *Address to the Participants in the National Congress of the Ecclesial Movement for Cultural Engagement* (16 January 1982), par. 2: *Insegnamenti* V, 1 (1982), 131, which cites PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), par. 20: *AAS* 68 (1976), 18. Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR CULTURE, *Toward a Pastoral Approach to Culture* (23 May 1999).

society—and in its narrower sense, as the body of intellectual knowledge developed primarily in academic circles.

104. Considering this first meaning of “culture,” it is important to recall that the inculturation of the faith constitutes a necessary step in its transmission, since the Gospel message must be made understandable to people who share values and categories that do not perfectly coincide with the Hellenistic-Semitic ones in which the biblical text was originally formulated. In the context of the transmission of the faith, inculturation means “the incarnation of the Gospel in native cultures and also the introduction of these cultures into the life of the Church.”¹¹⁰ In this case, therefore, the inculturation of the faith becomes true evangelization in its own right, even if it is not fully and perfectly realized, since it is “a slow journey which accompanies the whole of missionary life. It involves those working in the Church’s mission *ad gentes*, the Christian communities as they develop, and the bishops, who have the task of providing discernment and encouragement for its implementation.”¹¹¹ This means that culture itself becomes, in turn, a means of transmitting the faith, because “once the Gospel has been inculturated in a people, in their process of transmitting their culture they also transmit the faith in ever new forms; hence the importance of understanding evangelization as inculturation.”¹¹²

105. It must be remembered, however, that we do not evangelize a “place,” but always people, who must not be isolated from their own context: “It has to do with bringing the Gospel to the people we meet, whether they be our neighbors or complete strangers.”¹¹³ Added to this is the task of the faithful—necessary even in countries with an ancient Christian tradition—to translate the Good News into the various specific cultural forms that characterize modern societies or that emerge in certain social sectors, such as the world of youth or that of the poor. This undoubtedly requires recognizing and fostering the charisms present throughout the People of God in an authentic spirit of synodality, since, in the final analysis, they are the work of the Holy Spirit. In this process, the contribution of popular piety can certainly be valuable as well.

106. The presence of diverse social groups within our cities—each with its own specific and often autonomous cultures and languages—requires a special effort to inculturate the faith. In other words, there is an urgent need for the proclamation of the Gospel to reach every level of society. It is not enough simply

¹¹⁰ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Slavorum Apostoli* (2 June 1985), par. 21: *AAS* 77 (1985), 802.

¹¹¹ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), par. 52: *AAS* 83 (1991), 300.

¹¹² FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), par. 122: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1071.

¹¹³ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), par. 127: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1073.

to address the culture of certain groups that constitute the majority; rather, we must learn to enter into dialogue with the wide variety of situations and conditions of life found today. It is a matter, therefore, of reaching what is often referred to in technical terms as the realm of subcultures (e.g. young people on the urban peripheries, various migrant communities, seasonal workers, residents of small villages, etc.). In this regard, it should be noted that the International Theological Commission will devote part of its work over the next five years to the cultural forms of transmitting the faith and will offer a valuable stimulus to the work that is only briefly sketched here.

107. In summary, we must reaffirm the decisive importance of the inculturation of the faith today. Where the faith touches the cultural roots and expressions of a people, its transmission truly becomes easier and more fruitful.

108. As for culture in the academic-intellectual sense, however, we can recall the words of Pope Francis: “Proclaiming the Gospel message to different cultures also involves proclaiming it to professional, scientific, and academic circles. This means an encounter between faith, reason and the sciences with a view to developing new approaches and arguments on the issue of credibility, a creative apologetics which would encourage greater openness to the Gospel on the part of all.”¹¹⁴ It is true that what intellectual research accomplishes is, at most, a *preparation* that introduces one to the faith—in the manner of what have traditionally been called the *praeambula fidei*—rather than its transmission in the strict sense. Nevertheless, a reasonable presentation of the contents of the faith and its demands constitutes an undeniable aid to the proclamation of the *kerygma*, particularly in that it helps to awaken the great questions in people’s minds and hearts.¹¹⁵

109. A particularly significant example to draw upon in constructing such a reasonable presentation of the faith is undoubtedly the Church’s social doctrine, through which believers enter into open dialogue with society and even with non-believers. While remaining within the realm of theological knowledge, the Church’s social doctrine draws extensively on categories from the political, economic, and social sciences, often succeeding in demonstrating the full relevance of the Christian vision for building a more just and fraternal society. In this sense, the Church’s social teachings can also fulfill a function analogous to that of the *praeambula fidei*. Indeed, “founded on Sacred Scripture and Tradition, and in engagement with the sciences, [the Church’s social doctrine] helps us

¹¹⁴ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), par. 132: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1075.

¹¹⁵ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (7 December 1965), Chapter I: *AAS* 58 (1966), 1034–1044.

clearly interpret the challenges of the present and identify appropriate ways for living out a clear Christian witness, with joy and in service to the world.”¹¹⁶

Chapter VII

Some Specific Areas of Attention

110. A community deeply committed to passing on, from generation to generation, the light and fire of God’s love that Jesus wished to bring into the midst of humanity and that have reached our own day must give particular attention to several issues directly related to the theme of these *Considerations*, in addition to what has been set forth thus far. What follows is an illustrative list, which may be expanded and arranged in a different order of priority.

111. A first area requiring attention concerns the cultivation of popular piety. In this context, as is well known, some aspects require a process of maturation and enrichment. Nevertheless, the great strength of this resource within the Catholic tradition remains clear. No one can deny that popular piety remains an important means of transmitting the faith today. For this reason, it is necessary to foster a renewed commitment to it, both intellectually and from the heart. Moreover, its great flexibility has always allowed it to renew itself and take on very diverse forms over the centuries, even surviving the attacks that culture—and at times even members of the Church themselves—have often directed against it.

112. On the evangelizing power of popular piety—and thus its important role in transmitting the faith—the guidance in paragraphs 122–126 of *Evangelii Gaudium* is invaluable. There we read, in fact, that “popular piety enables us to see how the faith, once received, becomes embodied in a culture and is constantly passed on.”¹¹⁷ In truth, every authentic inculturation of the faith always gives rise to a form of popular expression of that faith. Human life unfolds through words and gestures, which form the horizon within which people grow and encounter others. Every culture is expressed in concrete practices and is reflected and handed down through them. The same consideration applies to the experience of faith. Every inculturation of the faith creates specific religious practices that reflect it and allow it to be passed down through the generations. For this reason, then, “underlying popular piety, as a fruit of the inculturated Gospel, is an active evangelizing power which we must not underestimate: to do so would be to fail to recognize the work of the Holy Spirit. Instead, we are called to promote and strengthen it, in order to deepen the never-ending process of inculturation. Expressions of popular piety have much to teach us; for those who are capable of

¹¹⁶ LEO XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (15 May 2026), par. 3.

¹¹⁷ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), par. 123: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1071.

reading them, they are a *locus theologicus* which demands our attention, especially at a time when we are looking to the new evangelization”¹¹⁸ and to the question of the transmission of the faith.

113. In this context, it is worth recalling the appeal that both traditional and more recent forms of pilgrimage hold for the younger generations, as well as the desire to belong to a confraternity, as has been the case recently in Spain, for example.¹¹⁹ For many young people, especially in Western contexts, the search for meaning in a world increasingly closed in upon itself, and the search for a form of religious belonging capable of giving shape to their need for identity in a highly individualized world, stand out as crucial needs. These needs find concrete expression in participation in pilgrimages and in the desire to join a confraternity. Within the context of the principal theme of these *Considerations*, there is an urgent need to ask how best to “make use of” these questions and needs of our younger contemporaries, so that they may become a channel through which the light of Christ can flood their often-troubled lives.

114. A second area of attention must be the homily. Pope Francis devoted considerable space to it in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*,¹²⁰ attesting to its importance for the proclamation and transmission of the faith; readers are referred to that text for further exploration. A well-prepared homily can play a decisive role in presenting the contents of the faith in a narrative form that reinterprets the Word of God in light of the concrete lives of the people, thereby fostering a living experience of encounter with Christ. Jesus himself appears in the Gospels first and foremost as a great storyteller. He rarely begins his discourses with abstract concepts; instead, he uses images, metaphors, and parables. He often draws on people’s daily lives, offering stories that can open his listeners’ imaginations before engaging their intellect. Parables, in fact, do more than simply inform; they can form and transform their listeners. The stories told by Jesus do not simply make his discourse more interesting; rather, they constitute the hermeneutical key through which the listener is introduced to the mystery of the Kingdom. In this regard, the great homiletic tradition of the Church Fathers, both Eastern and Western, can offer a valuable contribution to pastors.

¹¹⁸ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), par. 126: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1073.

¹¹⁹ This is a phenomenon that, for several years now, has seen an ever-increasing involvement of young people in religious confraternities or in youth groups linked to the Catholic world. In addition to participation in the life of the confraternities themselves, which culminates in the traditional processions held on major feast days in the public sphere, there are also national gatherings that are attracting an ever-increasing number of participants, as noted as early as 2016 by the digital magazine of the Archdiocese of Madrid: cf. <https://alfayomega.es/las-cofradias-se-han-convertido-en-puerta-de-entrada-a-la-iglesia-para-muchos-jovenes/>.

¹²⁰ Cf. FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), pars. 135–144: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1076–1080.

115. A third area of attention stems from the desire for commitment that many people, especially the young, express through volunteer work. The concrete pursuit of such a commitment often provides an opportunity to draw closer to the reality of the Church. These people feel a sincere and profound need to give something to others; they therefore feel the urgency to step outside their individual boundaries and move beyond the mindset that views possession as the ultimate criterion of happiness. This does not immediately imply an interest in the faith, but it represents a good opportunity for proclamation and for offering friendship with the Lord Jesus, who provides even deeper motivations for such commitment. The entire community of believers is called to welcome these “Good Samaritans” of our time and to accompany them with kindness and passion toward that encounter with the fire of God’s love, which the Church cherishes as a precious treasure on her journey through the world.

116. A fourth area of attention concerns the need to expand opportunities for women to participate in the leadership of ecclesial processes. In the Catholic Church, in general, the faithful who are most present and active in the life of communities are largely women. In recent years, however, the need to allow women access to those forums where important decisions regarding the life of the community are made has become increasingly clear. The Dicastery has studied this topic extensively and submitted its conclusions to the Holy Father through the Secretariat of the Synod.

117. A specific aspect of our times calls for further attention. Indeed, we should not underestimate the strong desire many people today express to take part in large events (music festivals and the like). This also highlights the fact that even intensive use of digital technologies is not sufficient to meet all the needs of the human person. Thus, even in our time, the need for companionship—the necessity and desire to share with others—is becoming apparent. While acknowledging that faith is transmitted in a privileged way from one “you” to another “you,” we should view this aspect of contemporary life as a valuable opportunity to spread the Gospel by seeking to create occasions that bring people together around the great themes of the present moment, such as peace.

118. Further grounds for reflection can be found in the study of Church history, particularly in those moments when the Church was able to respond positively to the epochal changes she encountered along her historical path. Among these, we can cite the crisis that followed the collapse of Roman institutions in Western Europe, with the resulting abandonment of cities, where Christianity was most deeply rooted. In this context, the emergence of Irish monasticism, which flourished in the second half of the first Christian millennium, proved decisive: not only did it safeguard and deepen the understanding of the faith, but it also gave rise to new forms of evangelization and, at the same time, contributed to significant developments in sacramental practice, such as the spread of auricular

confession. A second example is provided by the doctrinal and pastoral crisis caused by the spread of Catharism and various pauperist movements, often opposed to the Church, during the Middle Ages. In response, the mendicant orders, including those founded by Saint Dominic and Saint Francis of Assisi, embodied renewed evangelical vitality through radical poverty, itinerant preaching, and theological teaching carried out in full communion with the Church. A further example is the impetus toward far-reaching Catholic reform prompted by the profound ecclesial rupture brought about by the Protestant Reformation, in which figures such as Saint Teresa of Ávila and Saint Ignatius of Loyola played leading roles. This renewal coincided with the Church's missionary expansion into newly discovered lands open to the proclamation of the Gospel, thereby helping to give it new momentum. Finally, it is worth recalling the Church's response in the nineteenth century to the profound changes brought about by the social question and the consequences of the Industrial Revolution, which led her to formulate her social doctrine in a more systematic way. In each of these cases, a moment of crisis became the occasion for creative initiatives that proved decisive for evangelization and also coincided with a broader transition between historical eras.

119. Today, a specific investigation into the sudden decline of Catholicism in countries where it was deeply rooted is necessary to understand its causes and develop an appropriate pastoral response.

120. A further and decisive area of attention is the world of Catholic schools and universities, as well as other Catholic institutions, especially those dedicated to charitable works. As the bishops of Ghana attest: "The transmission of the Catholic faith is significantly strengthened through Catholic education, which serves as an important channel for continuous formation among children, youth, and even adults."¹²¹ In other countries, such as Venezuela, the religious education program facilitates integration between school and parish activities, confirming the pastoral value of Catholic schools as well.¹²² Above all, in countries where Catholics represent a minority—sometimes an extremely small one—these institutions often constitute the only point of contact that a large part of the population has with the Catholic Church. However, in several regions, restrictions on the teaching of religion in schools mean that parishes must bear the entire burden of catechesis.

¹²¹ GHANA CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE, *Report on the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Bishops' Conference*, 27 April 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

¹²² Cf. VENEZUELAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE, *Report and Testimonies about the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Episcopal Conference*, 2 April 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

121. Compared to traditional settings for pastoral ministry, schools offer a more institutional and almost professional form of engagement, yet one that is no less capable of transmitting at least a small spark of that fire of love that has burned through the centuries and, from Jesus, has reached our own day. In fact, such institutions can offer an almost transparent witness to intellectual and material charity, capable of spontaneously directing people toward the beauty of the Gospel and its humanizing power. The bishops of France also attest to this: “Catholic education is a fundamental setting for the initial proclamation to children, young people, and families, which can lead young people—but also their parents—to seek Christian initiation.”¹²³ In a broader context, believers are thus invited always to defend the centrality of the school as a place “where new generations can learn to seek and love the truth, to reflect on the meaning of life and to recognize the dignity of every person.”¹²⁴

122. A final point of attention concerns ecumenical commitment, which is an intrinsic dimension of the Church’s evangelizing mission and, therefore, also of the transmission of the faith. In fact, as the Second Vatican Council’s Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* observes, the division among Christians “openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages that most holy cause, the preaching of the Gospel to every creature.”¹²⁵ Far from representing an alternative to proclamation, ecumenical dialogue constitutes a specific form of it, in which the shared search for truth, mutual listening, and the witness of charity make the proclamation of the *kerygma* more credible in the face of an increasingly secularized and pluralistic world. As Saint John Paul II reminded us, “efforts toward unity are themselves a sign of the work of reconciliation which God is bringing about in our midst,”¹²⁶ concretely manifesting that the Father is, forever and for all, love. This invites the community of believers to make Pope Francis’s confident appeal their own: “If we really believe in the abundantly free working of the Holy Spirit, we can learn so much from one another! It is not just about being better informed about others, but rather about reaping what the Spirit has sown in them, which is also meant to be a gift for us,”¹²⁷ so that we may “progress decidedly towards common expressions of proclamation, service and witness.”¹²⁸

¹²³ FRENCH BISHOPS’ CONFERENCE, *Report and Testimonies about the Transmission of the Faith within the Territory of the Bishops’ Conference*, 5 June 2026, in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

¹²⁴ LEO XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (15 May 2026), par. 143.

¹²⁵ SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* (21 November 1964), par. 1: *AAS* 57 (1965), 90. Cf. ID., Decree *Ad Gentes* (7 December 1965), par. 6: *AAS* 58 (1966), 954–955.

¹²⁶ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), par. 50: *AAS* 83 (1991), 297.

¹²⁷ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), par. 246: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1119.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

123. In the same vein, we must recognize that some members of other religions and religious movements are committed to bearing witness to their faith in God within a cultural context that tends to close itself within a barren immanence. Likewise, some members of other Christian Churches and ecclesial communities are seeking new ways to proclaim the Gospel and the love of Christ in our time. We can also learn from their positive experiences and creative efforts, so that our commitment to transmitting the full richness of the treasure of faith, received as a gift, may always bear fruit.

Chapter VIII

Personal Testimonies

124. At this point, as mentioned in the Introduction to these *Considerations*, we present, by way of example, some personal testimonies from people who have experienced an encounter with Christ or rediscovered a living relationship with him in their lives. For reasons of confidentiality, their names will not be disclosed; only their places of origin will be given, with the assurance that these are authentic testimonies, genuinely shared for the edification of the universal Church. The Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith extends its sincere gratitude to those who have shared their stories, as well as to the Bishops' Conferences that have forwarded this material. In many cases, these accounts do not recount great feats or miraculous events but rather share simple occurrences in which the action of grace is manifested in the fabric of daily life, allowing each person to recognize something of their own experience in them. They show how every circumstance, even the smallest and most seemingly insignificant, can become an opportunity to encounter the Eternal One and a step along the history of salvation that God is building with and for us. Due to space limitations, it is not possible to include all the testimonies received; therefore, it was necessary to select those aligned with the themes of this document and to avoid repetition. Each one, however, represents a treasure of grace that bears witness to how the Lord, even in this time of epochal change, never ceases to assist and accompany his Church. The following pages aim to translate some of the aspects developed in the previous chapters into the language of everyday life.

From the Abyss of Addiction to the Freedom of Encounter with Christ

125. The first personal testimony¹²⁹ comes from Colombia and shows how, even in situations of the deepest moral and existential degradation, God never ceases to call a person through the voice of conscience and to offer his salvation through

¹²⁹ The following accounts are summaries compiled from excerpts taken from the original texts of the testimonies. For ease of reading, omissions are not indicated. Any additions made for the sake of summarization are shown in square brackets.

the work of others in the faith: “When I was about 13 or 14 years old, I started using drugs, began to fall into immorality, and got involved with gangs; I hung out with gangs, got into fights, handled weapons, extorted money, stole, and sold drugs. And that was my life. My family grew tired of me until I ended up living on the streets. I’d say to my mother, ‘Mom, I want to change.’ She’d say to me, ‘No, you’re sick; first you need to get better.’ And I’d reply, ‘What are you talking about? I can get out of this on my own.’ But I needed help; my pride and arrogance would not allow it. And I felt a very deep longing in my heart for something more, something wonderful, something good: to love, and to feel loved. I had nowhere to live, nowhere to bathe, nowhere to eat—nothing. By God’s grace and mercy [through my family, I found a rehabilitation center run by a Christian foundation]. They do not use shock therapy or medication there; what you experience there is prayer: the Holy Rosary, *lectio divina*, the Holy Eucharist... That is where my journey of conversion began. In that place, the Lord began to transform my life profoundly, because I began to see how many wounds and how many voids there were in my heart, and how much I needed love, forgiveness, and God’s mercy. Then I went as a missionary for two and a half years, receiving training, serving at retreats, and leading meetings. After that, I returned to the foundation where I had been. I stayed there for a year, accompanying the young people as an educator and sharing with them a little of what the Lord had done in me. Now I have my own job and am part of a community dedicated to prayer, mission, and evangelization. God has transformed my life and my heart and has made me a new man.”

126. Other testimonies show how, at times, a very simple circumstance—such as scrolling through posts on social media—can be enough for grace to make possible a life-transforming encounter, as a young man from Belgium recounts: “When I was around 17, I wanted to be baptized but didn’t know where to go. I had experienced heartbreak, struggled with alcohol addiction, and shed many tears. One day, while scrolling through TikTok, I came across a prayer. It was like an electric shock and a source of comfort all at once. I wasn’t a believer and was going about my life peacefully. If I’m here today, it’s in response to the most significant call of my life. This isn’t an intellectual reflection, but a personal encounter in which Jesus spoke to me. I approached the Church without truly believing, mainly out of respect for my grandparents and a desire to preserve traditions. Since finding faith, I truly have a different view of the world. I feel that everything is all right, whereas my life, before my encounter with Christ, was complicated.”

127. Staying with the theme of redemption and liberation, a significant testimony to the liberating power of the *kerygma* is offered by the account of a chaplain who carries out his ministry in the prisons of a diocese in Canada: “The prison setting is often a place of crisis and of re-evaluating one’s life. The deprivation of freedom fosters a confrontation with oneself, with one’s own

actions, and with the meaning of one's existence. In this context, a request for baptism frequently emerges as a search for a new beginning—indeed, for redemption. The people I meet often express a search for meaning that goes beyond the previous contexts of their lives. Catechetical conversations open a space where the great questions—suffering, guilt, forgiveness, hope—can be addressed in a structured way. It is clear that conversion does not arise solely from doctrinal content, but also from a relationship built on trust and listening. Pastoral accompaniment, sustained over time, serves as an essential bridge through which faith becomes conceivable and accessible. A central element of the conversions observed is the encounter with the image of a God who forgives and lifts people up. This is particularly significant in a context marked by guilt and condemnation. Thus, a renewed interest in the spiritual and existential dimensions of faith is evident. Conversion often appears as a powerful personal experience.”

The “Reawakening” of the Kerygma: The Role of the Family and of Prayer

128. In families, not only the epochal change but also tragic events can severely test personal faith. However, even in these situations, the Lord does not abandon his children, as this account from Chile attests: “My faith had weakened to such an extent that I went as far as to declare myself an atheist. Amid that desert, a devastating blow struck: the death of my mother. For five years I carried an inconsolable grief; I mourned her every day without finding any answers. It was then that God used the simplest of occasions: my youngest daughter’s catechism class. I attended the sessions only out of a sense of duty. It was during that process that the unexpected happened: through the Eucharist, I experienced a personal encounter—or rather, a re-encounter—with Jesus Christ. He took my pain, dried my tears for my mother, and gave me a peace that the world cannot give.”

129. Another testimony, concerning the obstacles to passing on the faith within the family, comes from a mother in Slovakia: “My father was an alcoholic. He destroyed my mother and me during my childhood... When he drank, he was aggressive; he cursed; he blasphemed; he smashed the furniture in the house... whatever came within his reach; we often had to flee the house. Over the years a sense of unforgiveness—and perhaps even hatred—toward him had built up in me. Only within the community, through the Word of God and formation, did I realize that I was judging my father for who he was, and that I was also judging God for giving me such a father. When I found the courage, in the light of God’s Word, I went to my father and asked him for forgiveness. It was a very powerful experience for me. Even though my father didn’t fully understand what I was saying, I saw that I had finally found inner peace, and our relationship improved as well. Although my father did not practice religion in any way, he departed for eternity reconciled with my mother and me after having gone to confession. [Today] my husband and I are committed to passing on the faith to our four

children. We teach them by sharing our own experience, not as moralizing (in the sense that ‘you, too, must see it or do it this way’). We tell them that God will act in a special way in their lives as well, and that it is important to welcome all the help the Church offers them, so that they may live a life that has meaning.”

130. At other times, it is the believing partner who draws the other into a journey of faith, as this experience from the United States of America attests: “My journey toward the Catholic Church began because of my fiancée. She was raised Catholic, and her faith has always been important to her. As we prepared for marriage, she expressed her desire to have a Catholic wedding. Wanting to better understand something so meaningful to her, I decided to explore the faith. I encountered a welcoming community and a group of dedicated teachers who made the learning process engaging and meaningful. I was impressed by the parish’s community and the good that it does in the local community. The people there impressed upon me the value of not only having faith but living it. As I look forward to receiving Baptism and Confirmation at the Easter Vigil, I do so with gratitude and anticipation.”

131. A testimony from Japan points in the same direction: “A man began to come into contact with the Church through his marriage to a Catholic woman. At first, he attended marriage preparation courses simply in preparation for the wedding, but he gradually found himself drawn by the warm welcome of the parish community and by the quietness of the liturgy. After the birth of his child, he began to ask himself what he wished to pass on to his child in life, and, having undertaken a deeper study of the faith, he was baptized several years later. For him, the Church to which he had first come for the sake of his family became the place where his own way of life was called into question.”

132. Even the Sacrament of Matrimony can become an opportunity for rediscovering the faith, as evidenced by an experience shared by the bishops of Angola: “An engaged couple: she was Catholic, from a family in which the faith had been very strongly passed down through the generations; he was indifferent to God and religion. She informed him that a Catholic marriage would be a *sine qua non* condition for the progression of their relationship. [During a family gathering,] a priest—a relative of the fiancé’s family—confronted the Catholic fiancée about her intention to marry a man who was willing only to grant her the pleasure of a Catholic wedding ceremony, while disregarding the intrinsic value of that marriage. [The priest] similarly confronted the fiancé, who was concerned only with the carnal aspect and disregarded every other aspect of marriage’s value. Coming to his senses, the fiancé felt ashamed of his contradictions... he, who had had no Christian background whatsoever—the very thing that was now beginning to make sense to him. This unsettling experience sparked his curiosity about the Catholic faith; he began attending catechism classes, was baptized,

completed a marriage preparation course, got married in church, and became a regular participant in the liturgy and active in the parish's pastoral life."

133. At other times, the reawakening of faith arises from experiences of prayer and fellowship, as in the case of a laywoman from Poland, who recounts having rediscovered a living faith through an initiative promoted by the Catholic charismatic movement: "It all began with the decision to attend a retreat that lasted several weeks, as part of the Seminar on the Renewal of Faith. At the time, I felt as though I had a fairly good, normal, and orderly life. More and more often, however, deep in my heart I felt that what I was building my life on was not lasting. The emptiness that appeared ever more frequently in my heart could not be filled by anything. I realized my faith was dead. It was merely the fulfillment of certain religious duties and practices that I had been taught. During the Seminar, I came to know a God who loves freely, who is a Father, who cares, who waits, and who seeks out the lost to give them love, happiness, and joy. It was my personal encounter with Jesus, who tangibly 'touched' my heart to draw me out of the darkness in which I had been living for years. After those purifying tears came great joy, freedom, strength, and hope that filled my whole heart and my entire being. My faith ceased to be an afterthought in my life; it became the sole meaning of my existence. It ceased to be dead and became alive. I finally felt secure, free, and at peace. Saint Augustine's words, 'The human heart is restless until it rests in God,' have been fulfilled 100% in my life."

134. Another particularly powerful testimony in this regard comes from a French student: "Born to a Lebanese Shiite father who became an atheist and a non-practicing French Catholic mother, I grew up in a state of spiritual wandering. My parents wanted to give us freedom in our religious choices, but this silence felt like a void for a long time. However, when I was 8 years old, I found a Bible... This initial spark was nourished by my school years in Chartres, where I found refuge and peace beneath the cathedral's pillars after classes. The real turning point came in 2004, during my preparatory courses [for university]. Alone, far from my family, and overwhelmed by the pressure of entrance exams, I experienced a true revelation. One evening, sitting at my desk, the truth became clear: God existed; He was there, right beside me, with an almost tangible presence. This immense relief transformed my loneliness into a journey in good company. The Lord then placed witnesses in my path... [including] a Maronite Christian, [who] carried within him a radiant faith. One day, when I saw an image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus that he kept in his wallet, I realized it was He—Jesus—who had visited me that evening in my student dorm room. Nevertheless... the frenetic pace of my work led me to burnout in 2019. In that breakdown, only Jesus saved me. I then embarked on a pilgrimage of healing... I radically changed my life. Today my life is stable and happy; I feel that it is finally time to fulfill my promise. By receiving the sacraments of Christian

initiation, I wish to seal for eternity my covenant with Christ who has never abandoned me.”

135. At other times, it is the power of prayer and the sacraments that provide support in times of crisis, as evidenced by the experience of a woman from Jamaica: “I was a cradle Catholic raised by a mother who was a faithful Catholic. As a child growing up in a very small town in Jamaica, I would even read and serve at the altar because many of the parishioners were hardly educated, and many could not read. I gave God what I was comfortable giving him. There were times when I gave 90%, and other times when it was 20%. About 15 years ago, despite fervently praying to get out of [a certain] situation, it felt like God wasn’t answering. Eventually, it came to a point where I felt that God simply wasn’t listening... I began to believe that there was no point in praying. So, at that time, I stopped praying completely... What followed was a major crisis of faith. I began to truly question and doubt everything. I was feeling very much like an imposter. I was teaching the children their catechism, while I was not even sure that I believed what I was teaching. But God always knows where to find us and how to reach us. My mind began to comprehend the true power in the sacraments... and, above all, in the Eucharist: that Jesus is right there. The challenges I was wrestling with—the ones that caused my crisis of faith—still exist, but what has changed is the way I pray. The focus of my prayers is no longer on what God can give me. Instead, I ask what I can give to God.”

The Witness of Charity, Culture, and Beauty

136. As discussed earlier, an important pathway to faith is beauty—the *via pulchritudinis*—that beauty which, as the medieval masters taught, is the synthesis of truth and goodness. In a word, it is the beauty of love, which manifests itself in a multitude of forms. It is this theme of beauty, capable of bringing together intellectual rigor and aesthetic experience, which provides the context for the testimony of a neurobiology student from Switzerland: “I grew up in an atheist family. For us, ‘Cartesian’ was the watchword—often presented as a clear antithesis to faith. God’s presence in my life manifested itself like a whisper of wind in the distance. The first time I experienced this sense of fulfillment was while listening to an extraordinary performance of a piece by Chopin. Then there was that evening when, from the summit of a mountain in Crimea, I gazed upon the immensity of the Black Sea and the mountains stretching out at my feet. I thought I felt that peace because I was contemplating the beauty of humanity. [Then] one day I walked through the doors of Chartres Cathedral. The question no longer arose: the source was right there, before my eyes. I don’t know when my journey with God began, but I’m certain I welcomed him the first time I knelt down to pray. It was a bath of peace, a balm for the soul. When I realized the path that I was embarking on, I decided to keep a low profile. In scientific circles, any mention of the subject is accompanied by lengthy

debates, disparaging criticism, and even outright blasphemy. I experienced my first prayers, my first rosaries, and my first Masses alone. I thought I would join the community once I had acquired sufficient knowledge. To my great surprise, it was the community that welcomed me. I was fortunate enough to be baptized, thanks to the insistence of my maternal grandparents. I believe the time has come to close the chapter of discovery and move forward fully into my life as a Catholic. I have therefore embarked on my journey toward Confirmation.”

137. At other times, it is the simplicity of charity—manifested in kindness and hospitality—that opens the doors to faith, as in the testimony of a Vietnamese catechumen, shared by the bishops of Malaysia: “I was born into a Buddhist family. I grew up without paying much attention to religion. I came to Malaysia because I wanted to study English. Such classes in Vietnam are expensive, but I found a free English class run by Filipino Christians. I was welcomed by everyone. They taught with sincerity and even provided food and drinks. I could see their kindness and generosity. They treated everyone equally. During one of the classes, a video was shown on the passion and resurrection of Jesus, ending with a simple question: Where is God? But I felt something. It was a small stirring—but it lingered. Years later, I met a Malaysian [Christian] through work and started attending Mass with him. At the church, people were kind, and the homilies touched me. But the old question returned: Who is God? With my friend’s help, I enrolled in catechumenate classes and will be baptized this year. I feel stronger, less afraid of life’s challenges. I am not only ready to become Catholic, but ready to become part of God’s miracle.”

Conclusion

138. Toward the end of his life, Pope Francis entrusted the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith with the task of offering the Church a reflection on the transmission of the faith, and Pope Leo XIV subsequently reiterated this request. The Dicastery has embraced this task in the spirit of the missionary renewal that is asked of the whole People of God, including the institutions of the Roman Curia. In fact, its service is not limited to safeguarding a deposit of doctrines to be believed (*credere Deum*) but also includes promoting everything that fosters personal and active engagement in receiving the light of faith (*credere Deo* and *credere in Deum*). In particular, this falls within the work of the Doctrinal Section of the Dicastery, which is called to foster “studies aimed at increasing the understanding and transmission of the faith in the service of evangelization, so that its light may be a criterion for understanding the meaning of existence.”¹³⁰

¹³⁰ FRANCIS, Apostolic Letter issued “*Motu proprio*” *Fidem Servare* (11 February 2022), par. 2: *AAS* 114 (2022), 288.

The question of the transmission of the faith, therefore, does not distance us from the *depositum fidei*, nor does it imply reducing the discussion to the purely subjective dimension of *fides qua*. Rather, it calls the faithful to return to the heart of the heritage of Christian faith. The *kerygma* is, in fact, its central content, which runs like a golden thread through the harmonious hierarchy of the “truths of Catholic doctrine”¹³¹ and illuminates all the contents of the *depositum fidei*, drawing people toward the experience of a personal and communal encounter with the living Christ.

139. Over the course of the reflections outlined in this document, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith has gladly welcomed the generous response of numerous Bishops’ Conferences, which have expressed their sincere concern for this issue. The wealth of contributions received goes beyond the scope of a single document. Therefore, the issue addressed in these *Considerations* remains open to further study and new developments. This Dicastery recognizes that this work falls within the purview of another Dicastery: namely, the Dicastery for Evangelization’s Section for Fundamental Questions Regarding Evangelization in the World, which has long been engaged in research and dialogue not only on the transmission of the faith but also on related topics, such as the catechumenate, various forms of catechesis, the formation of the faithful, community contexts for welcoming and nurturing new believers, and more.

140. We would like to conclude these *Considerations* on the transmission of the faith in the context of an epochal change with an image very dear to every believer, one capable of serving as a symbol of hope for the future. It is the image of the lighting of the paschal candle and its placement on the altar, following the procession through the nave of the church, during the solemn Easter Vigil in the Latin Rite. As is well known, the procession begins after the candle is lit; everyone proceeds with unlit candles in their hands, except for the deacon, who carries the paschal candle. Subsequently, the celebrant first, and then the other participants, receive from the paschal candle—or from candles lit from it—the flame with which to light their own candles; they, in turn, may pass it on to others.

141. Three times, with the proclamation “The Light of Christ” (or, in some countries, an alternative formula), the deacon proclaims to the world the presence of Christ’s light, which becomes visible as the candles are gradually lit. Thus, from the single flame of the paschal candle, the candles of the faithful are gradually lit in an orderly fashion, and at the end of the procession, the lights of the church are also turned on.

142. We would thus like to envision the impetus that these *Considerations* aim to offer the Church in this time of epochal change. They seek to give a strong

¹³¹ SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* (21 November 1964), par. 11: *AAS* 57 (1965), 99.

reminder that Christ is the *true light*. He enlightens because he frees us from darkness and leads us into the fullness of life, which comes to fulfillment as we welcome God's unconditional love into our hearts. We, believers, have already been granted the gift of encountering the light and of allowing our lives to be illuminated by the "true light" of the world (cf. *Jn* 1:9). It is now up to us to pass on this same gift to the men and women of our time, who—perhaps without fully realizing it—also await the possibility of kindling their lives from that same source of every grace, the light that shines in the world.

143. Finally, we cannot overlook the witness of so many lay evangelizers who, in recent times, have attained holiness. Many young people have admired the passion for evangelization in Saint Carlo Acutis, as well as the admirable example of Saint María Antonia de Paz y Figueroa, known as "Mama Antula," in her long evangelizing pilgrimage. Numerous laypeople have given their lives to the work of bringing the light of Christ: Saint Sebastian, Saint Paul Chong Hasang, and Saint Peter To Rot. Together with them, contemplatives nourish the fire of faith through prayer and intercession, for without the action of the Holy Spirit all our efforts are in vain. We therefore invite all communities to promote times of prayer and intercession that support the transmission of the light of faith.

144. Mary, who has made herself present among the various peoples through the many forms of their faith and devotion, thereby making her maternal closeness more recognizable, always carries with her the light and love of the Lord. The Gospel tells us that she has done so from the very beginning, when she brought Jesus to Elizabeth (cf. *Lk* 1:39–45). She continues to do so today as well, offering the beauty of the Gospel. Mary, in fact, carefully pondered and treasured in her heart all that Christ did and said (cf. *Lk* 2:19, 51). She was the great witness, from the Incarnation and the birth of the Lord to his death on the Cross and his Resurrection, accompanying him throughout his entire earthly life. Therefore, before the face of Mary, the faithful recognize "in this maternal image all the mysteries of the Gospel."¹³² Those who view the Marian faith of the simple with a purely intellectual attitude risk failing to understand that the Gospel of Christ is often transmitted in a mystagogical way: through symbols, experiences, trust, and affection. Let us ask Mary, our teacher of the transmission of the faith, to intercede for us in our renewed commitment to bring the light of Christ to new generations.

¹³² FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), par. 285: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1135. Cf. DICASTERY FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Doctrinal Note *Mater Populi Fidelis* (4 November 2025), par. 77.

Pope Leo XIV, during the audience granted to the undersigned Prefect together with the Secretary for the Doctrinal Section of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith on 21 August 2026, the liturgical memorial of Pope Saint Pius X, approved this document, which was adopted during the Ordinary Session of this Dicastery on 24 June 2026, the Solemnity of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist, and ordered its publication.

Given in Rome, at the headquarters of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, on 22 October 2026, the Memorial of Saint John Paul II.

Cardinal Víctor Manuel FERNÁNDEZ
Prefect

Msgr. Armando MATTEO
Secretary for the Doctrinal Section

Ex Audientia die 21 Augusti 2026
Leo PP. XIV

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