The HOLY SEE

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LEO XIV

GENERAL AUDIENCE

St Peter's Square
Wednesday, 18 March 2026
[**Multimedia**]

Catechesis. The Documents of Vatican Council II. II. Dogmatic Constitution Lumen gentium. *4. The Church, a Priestly and Prophetic People*

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

Today I would like to revisit the second chapter of the Conciliar Constitution *Lumen gentium* (*LG*), devoted to the Church as the people of God.

The messianic people (*LG*, 9), receive from Christ the participation in the priestly, prophetic and kingly work office through which his salvific mission is carried out. The Council Fathers teach that the Lord Jesus, through the new and eternal Covenant, has established a kingdom of priests, constituting his disciples as a 'royal priesthood' (*1 Pet* 2:9; cf. *1 Pet* 2:5; *Rev* 1:6). This common priesthood of the faithful is given with Baptism, which enables us to worship God in spirit and truth, and to "confess before men the faith which they have received from God through the Church" (*LG*, 11). Furthermore, through the sacrament of Confirmation, all the baptized "are more perfectly bound to the Church ... and the Holy Spirit endows them with special strength so that they are more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith, both by word and by deed, as true witnesses of Christ" (*ibid.*). This consecration is at the root of the common mission that unites the ordained ministries and the lay faithful.

In this regard, Pope Francis observed that, "Looking at the People of God is remembering that we all enter the Church as lay people. The first sacrament, which seals our identity forever, and of which we should always be proud, is Baptism. Through Baptism and by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, (the faithful) 'are consecrated as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood' (*LG*, 10), [so that] everyone forms the faithful Holy People of God" (*Letter to the President of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America*, 19 March 2016).

The exercise of the royal priesthood takes place in many ways, all aimed at our sanctification, first and foremost through participation in the offering of the Eucharist. Through prayer, asceticism and active charity, we thus bear witness to a life renewed by God's grace (cf. *LG*, 10). As the Council summarizes, "it is through the sacraments and the exercise of the virtues that the sacred nature and organic structure of the priestly community is brought into operation" (*LG*, 11).

The Council Fathers then teach that the holy People of God also participate in the prophetic mission of Christ (cf. *LG*, 12). In this context, the important theme of the *sense of the faith* and the *consensus of the faithful* is introduced. The Doctrinal Commission of the Council specified that this *sensus fidei* "is like a faculty of the whole Church, by which she in her faith, recognises the revelation handed down, distinguishing between true and false in matters of faith, and at the same time penetrates it more deeply and applies it more fully in life" (cf. *Acta Synodalia*, III/1, 199). The sense of faith therefore belongs to individual believers not in their own right, but as members of the People of God as a whole.

Lumen gentium focuses on this latter aspect, and places it in relation to the infallibility of the Church, to which that of the Roman Pontiff is inherent and by which it is served. "The entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One (c. *1 Jn* 2:20,27), cannot err in matters of belief. They manifest this special property by means of the whole peoples supernatural discernment in matters of faith when from the Bishops down to the last of the lay faithful they show universal agreement in matters of faith and morals" (*LG*, 12). The Church, therefore, as the communion of the faithful – which naturally includes the pastors – cannot err in matters of faith: the organ through which this truth is preserved, founded on the anointing of the Holy Spirit, is the *supernatural sense of faith* of the entire People of God, which is manifested in the *consensus of the faithful*. From this unity, which the Magisterium of the Church safeguards, it follows that every baptized person is an active agent of evangelization, called to bear consistent witness to Christ in accordance with the prophetic gift which the Lord bestows upon His whole Church.

Indeed, the Holy Spirit, who comes to us from the Risen Christ, “distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts He makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks and offices which contribute toward the renewal and building up of the Church” (*LG*, 12). A particular demonstration of this charismatic vitality is offered by consecrated life, which continually germinates and flourishes through the work of grace. Ecclesial associations, too, are a shining example of the variety and fruitfulness of spiritua fruits for the edification of the People of God.

Special greetings:

I greet all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, particularly the groups from Nigeria, Tanzania, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and the United States of America. With prayerful good wishes that this Lent will be a time of grace and spiritual renewal for you and your families, I invoke upon all of you joy and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Summary of the Holy Father's words:

Dear brothers and sisters, in our continuing catechesis on the Second Vatican Council, today we consider the participation of the faithful in Jesus Christ’s priestly, prophetic and royal offices, as presented by the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*. Through the sacrament of baptism, each of us are called to share in Christ’s royal priesthood (1 *Pt* 2:9) and to worship him in spirit and truth, especially through our participation in the Eucharist. We also partake in Jesus’ prophetic mission, for we are called to bear witness to the truth of the faith. Indeed, the Council Fathers taught that “the whole body of the faithful … cannot be mistaken in belief. It shows this characteristic through the entire people’s supernatural sense of faith when, from the bishops to the last of the faithful, it manifests a universal consensus in matters of faith and morals” (*LG*, 12). Along with these gifts shared by all members of the Church, the Holy Spirit continues to allot special graces to the faithful in order to enrich and build up the body of Christ. It is important that we recognize these manifold gifts and express our gratitude to God for allowing us to be partakers in his work of salvation.

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