



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Dec. 3, 2025

Statement of the Catholic Bishops of the Metropolitan Province of Atlanta

Reflection on Pope Leo XIV's first apostolic exhortation

Dilexi Te (I have loved you)

The Catholic Bishops of Georgia and the Carolinas gathered recently and reflected on Pope Leo XIV's first apostolic exhortation *Dilexi Te (I have loved you)*. The heart of his message and the fruit of our conversation is to call Catholics beyond simply believing in Jesus, to the deeper relationship of being his disciples in service to the poor by fully implementing the mind and heart of Christ in every human endeavor.

We, your shepherds, invite all Catholics and people of goodwill to prophetic acts to reach that goal. Many of us fall short of this invitation by not fully infusing the mind and heart of Christ into every aspect of the human endeavor, especially as it relates to the fullest respect for the dignity of every human person. We do this when we do not see the face of God in the unborn, the poor, the migrant, the incarcerated, the aged, the undereducated, the unloved, the ill, and those with whom we disagree. We nine bishops would like to raise a greater consciousness of all Catholics in Georgia and the Carolinas to bring the communion we share at the altar of Christ to our world in need.

We are called to ensure that the flesh of Christ whom we encounter in the Eucharist is seen and revered in the faces of all God's children as expressed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1397): *"The Eucharist commits us to the poor. To receive in truth the Body and Blood of Christ given up for us, we must recognize Christ in the poorest, his brethren."* As disciples seeking the fullness of life, we must unite ourselves with, advocate for, and care for those who are cast aside: the poor among us.

How can the insights of Pope Leo XIV move the hearts of the faithful to further embrace the values of the Gospel by engaging those who feel distanced by the Church and excluded from society? How can we change ourselves and spur systemic change?

We are committed to further exploration of bringing this vision of Jesus to open hearts and deepen our desire for the lead of the Holy Spirit over the views of the world and invite everyone to join us in this conversation.

Archbishop Gregory Hartmayer, OFM Conv., Archbishop of Atlanta

Bishop Joel Konzen, S.M., Auxiliary Bishop of Atlanta

Bishop Bernard Shlesinger, Auxiliary Bishop of Atlanta

Bishop John Tran, Auxiliary Bishop of Atlanta

Bishop Jacques Fabre-Jeune, CS, Bishop of Charleston

Bishop Robert Guglielmone, Retired Bishop of Charleston

Bishop Stephen Parkes, Bishop of Savannah

Bishop Luis Zarama, Bishop of Raleigh

Bishop Michael T. Martin, OFM Conv., Bishop of Charlotte