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Association of U.S. Catholic Priests Concludes 15th Annual Assembly in St. Louis

ST. LOUIS, MO — The Association of U.S. Catholic Priests (AUSCP) officially concluded its 15th Annual Assembly, held from June 22–25, 2026, at the Renaissance St. Louis Airport Hotel.

Centered on the theme “*Building the Future: Church, Priesthood, and Global Engagement*,” the assembly brought together ordained priests and lay Friends to deliberate on structural renewal, global migration, and the evolving role of pastoral leadership within a modern, relational Church.

The four-day gathering opened with an immersive spiritual retreat led by **Dr. Damian Zynda** and focused on Ignatian Spirituality and internal reflection, which participants overwhelmingly lauded as an extraordinary, deeply rewarding experience.

Keynote speakers addressed critical theological and societal shifts. **Fr. Dan Groody, CSC**, delivered a powerful and challenging presentation on a theology of migration, connecting the physical journey of refugees directly to the Body of Christ and the Eucharist. **Sr. Kathy Duffy, SSJ**, provided a breakdown of the complex thought of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, using rich tree imagery to explore how the Church can build its future.

A major anchor of the assembly was a formal address sent by **Cardinal Mario Grech**, General Secretary of the General Secretariat of the Synod. Read dynamically on his behalf by two attending bishops, Cardinal Grech’s text expressed profound gratitude for the AUSCP’s continued commitment to the Church’s synodal journey.

Drawing heavily upon Pope Leo XIV’s newly released first encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*, Cardinal Grech contrasted the exclusionary “Tower of Babel” with the collaborative leadership of Nehemiah, framing the modern priest as a “co-builder” of communion rather than an architect of isolation. He stressed that synodality does not threaten ordained ministry, but instead offers the framework to alleviate clergy loneliness and structural polarization.

The Archbishop of St. Louis, **Most Rev. Mitchell Rozanski**, presided at the closing liturgy, which was followed by a banquet honoring Fr. Gerry Kleba of St. Louis, Fr. John Heagle of Seattle, and Most Rev. John Stowe, OFM. Conv., bishop of Lexington, KY.

Next year’s Assembly will be held in Orlando, Florida. It will focus on the extensive pastoral and societal implications of Pope Leo XIV’s landmark artificial intelligence encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*.

About the AUSCP

The Association of U.S. Catholic Priests (AUSCP) is the largest association of Roman Catholic priests in the United States. Founded to keep alive the pastoral vision of the Second Vatican Council, the AUSCP serves as a prophetic voice and a sanctuary of professional and spiritual support for clergy and lay friends working to build a synodal, missionary Church.

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