

HABEMUS PAPAM!

P O P E L E O X I V

On the announcement “Habemus Papam”—“We have a Pope”—Cardinal Robert Prevost stepped out onto the balcony of St Peter’s Basilica, taking the name Leo XIV.

WHO IS POPE LEO XIV?



Robert Francis Prevost was born on September, 1955, in Chicago, Illinois. Raised in a Catholic family of Italian, Spanish and American heritage, he developed a strong sense of faith, service, and social justice from an early age. He entered the Order of St Augustine—a religious community known for its deep commitment to education and the common life—and was ordained a priest in 1982.

What makes Pope Leo XIV unique is the path he walked: not through Vatican diplomacy, but through missionary service. He spent many years in Peru, ministering to some of the Church’s most vulnerable communities. Fluent in English, Italian and Spanish, he served as a parish priest and teacher, later becoming a bishop in Chiclayo, where he gained a reputation as a humble, compassionate leader who listened before speaking.

Immediately after accepting the papacy the new pope is asked what name they wished to be called; a signal to the world of what they wish their papacy to be defined as. The choice of the name Pope Leo XIV connects the new pope to a long tradition of strong, reforming leaders. Most notably, Pope Leo XIII (1878–1903) was known for championing social justice, especially through his encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, which defended the rights of workers and promoted the dignity of labour and is where Catholics get the principles of CST. The name “Leo” (meaning “lion”) symbolises strength, courage, and leadership. By choosing this name, Pope Leo XIV may be signalling a desire to guide the Church through the challenges of the modern world with wisdom, clarity, and moral authority—boldly but pastorally, like a lion shepherding his flock.

As a man who was born in America, but lived most of his life in Peru, he is a connection between the global north and the global south, a man with a real knowledge of inequality to challenge the world.



Robert Prevost was appointed a Cardinal by Pope Francis in 2023, just one year after taking on one of the most influential positions in the Church: Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops. This role is crucial. It involves overseeing the selection, guidance, and support of Catholic bishops all over the world. In simple terms, Cardinal Prevost helped shape the leadership of the global Church—making decisions that affect how dioceses are run, how bishops are appointed, and what kind of pastoral priorities the Church pursues. He had never worked in the Vatican before, but his grounded, compassionate leadership and his experience of building bridges between cultures made him an ideal choice. In one example, he resisted calls for a wealthy, high-profile bishop to be promoted and instead recommended a humble priest working in a dangerous rural area—because that priest “knew the names of his people and lived among them.”



THE SERVANT TO THE SERVANTS OF GOD

BECOMING POPE IS NOT LIKE BECOMING A HEAD OF STATE. THE POPE IS NOT ONLY A LEADER OF OVER A BILLION CATHOLICS WORLDWIDE—HE IS ALSO A SPIRITUAL FATHER, MORAL VOICE, TEACHER, DIPLOMAT, AND SERVANT. THEIR CHOICE OF POPE LEO XIV REFLECTS A HOPE THAT HE CAN GUIDE THE CHURCH THROUGH A TIME OF CHANGE, TENSION, AND OPPORTUNITY.

While the Pope is the visible head of the Church on earth, he does not lead alone. Pope Leo XIV will rely on the College of Cardinals, bishops, priests, religious sisters and brothers, and lay people—including teachers, carers, medics, and families.

In fact, Cardinal Prevost has the words of his predecessor that bishops (and all Church leaders) must be “shepherds who smell like the sheep.”

- Listen with humility
- Speak with clarity
- Act with courage
- Lead with love

He must walk a delicate path: preserving tradition, while also responding to the needs of the 21st century. His voice will matter. But more than that, his witness—how he lives, serves, and prays—will shape the tone of Catholic life for years to come.

SECULARISATION
REDEFINING FAITH IN A WORLD THAT SEES FAITH AS PRIVATE OR EVEN IRRELEVANT TO MODERN LIFE

YOUTH
ENSURING THAT THE CHURCH IS ACCESSIBLE AND RELEVANT TO YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY

INCLUSION
HOW DOES THE CHURCH REACH OUT AND SUPPORT THOSE PEOPLE WHO ARE MOST IN NEED?

CONFLICT
THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH AS A PEACEMAKER IN A WORLD TORN APART BY WARS

VOCATIONS
REIGNITING CATHOLICS AROUND THE WORLD TO JOIN THE CHURCH AND BE CALLED BY GOD

