

**APPENDIX II:  
PRESIDENT’S STATEMENT ON THE  
ELECTION OF POPE LEO XIV**

NANCY PINEDA-MADRID  
*CTSA President*  
*Loyola Marymount University*  
*Los Angeles, California*

On May 8, 2025, Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost, O.S.A., 69, was chosen as the 267th pope. He chose the name Leo, making him Pope Leo XIV.

Pope Leo XIV was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois to parents of French, Italian, and Louisiana Creole (African, French, Haitian, and Spanish) descent. He holds a Doctorate and a Licentiate in Canon Law from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas – Angelicum (Rome); a Master of Divinity from Catholic Theological Union (Chicago); and a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from Villanova University (close to Philadelphia). He speaks Spanish, Italian, French, Portuguese, and English. He also reads Latin and German. He was ordained a priest in 1982 at the age of twenty-seven in the Order of Saint Augustine, a religious order with a charism of contemplative prayer, a practical love for all others especially the poor, and an ardent pursuit of truth. In 1985, at the age of thirty, as an Augustinian missionary, he was sent to Peru where he has lived for much of his adult life, serving there early on as a pastor, and as a seminary teacher in Trujillo in the northwestern part of Peru. From 1998 to 2001, he returned to Chicago, serving as Prior Provincial of his religious order. Then, in 2001, he was elected Prior General of the Augustinians and lived in Rome until 2013. Pope Francis named him Bishop of Chiclayo, Peru in 2014 where he served until 2023, the year he became a Cardinal. In 2023 he moved back to Rome when Pope Francis named him President of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, and Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops, a position which oversees the selection of new bishops worldwide.

Pope Leo is an American in the most expansive sense; he is a citizen of Peru as well as of the United States. His significant Latin American background represents a continuity with Pope Francis, an Argentinian. Pope Leo is known as a bridge-builder, as a good listener, as a pastor first, and, as such, he is perceived to be a pope who will likely favor continuity with the reforms initiated by Pope Francis. He is said to share Pope Francis’ views on migrants, the poor, and the environment as well as his commitment to synodality, a promising means for addressing divisions in the US Catholic Church.

Pope Leo's choice of the name "Leo" is telling, signaling his commitment to social justice. The previous Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) is often recognized as the father of Catholic social justice, largely owing to his groundbreaking 1891 encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*. This encyclical, and others that followed, transformed Catholic teaching by launching what is now known as Catholic Social Teaching. *Rerum Novarum* focused on issues of social inequality and social justice, claiming that workers have rights as well as obligations. It was critical of both capitalism and communism.

In addition, the choice of "Leo" may also signal a connection to the first Pope Leo, Leo the Great (440-461), whose theological work on the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ helped the church deepen its understanding of the Incarnation, laying the groundwork for the Council of Chalcedon. In addition, this Pope Leo was known as a Western leader and peacemaker, convincing Atila the Hun, who had been plundering northern Italy, not to attack Rome in 452.

By taking the name "Leo," perhaps our new pope is locating himself within the tradition of these predecessors.

Long live Pope Leo XIV!