

Pope Leo XIV
Third Friday in the Easter Season
Homily of Bishop Barres
St. Agnes Cathedral
May 9, 2025

Habemus Papum! We have a Pope!

With my brother bishops, the clergy, religious, and lay faithful of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, I give thanks to Almighty God for the gift of our new Holy Father, His Holiness Pope Leo XIV.

As the 267th Successor of Saint Peter, we pray Pope Leo XIV will receive every grace to strengthen the Church in unity and peace, preach Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and confirm the Faith.

With years of global missionary experience in Peru and leadership in his Augustinian community here in the United States, we pray, too, that his evangelizing pastoral charity and wisdom will guide the mission of the Church he now serves as the Supreme Pontiff.

Our readings for this Friday of the Third Week of the Easter season help to illumine this moment of World and Church history.

In the Acts of the Apostles Chapter 9, we hear of Saul's encounter with the Risen Christ on the Road to Damascus.

The power, presence and peace of the Risen Christ changes Saul from a persecutor of Christians to an Apostle-Missionary of the Risen Christ.

How beautiful that Pope Leo XIV began his Pontificate from the St. Peter's Basilica loggia focusing the mission of the Church on the Risen Christ.

He said: "Peace be with you! Dearest brothers and sisters, this was the first greeting of the Risen Christ, the Good Shepherd who gave his life for the flock of God. I, too, would like this greeting of peace to enter your hearts, to reach your families and

all people, wherever they are; and all the peoples and all the earth. Peace be with you! This is the peace of the Risen Christ, a disarming and humble and preserving peace...We are disciples of Christ. Christ goes before us, and the world needs [Christ's] light.”

With Pope Leo XIV, St. Paul, and St. Thomas, we touch the glorified wounds of the Risen Christ so that we can touch the wounds of humanity in this 21st Century.

Pope Leo XIV said clearly that he is “a son of St. Augustine.”

The conversion of St. Paul on the Road to Damascus and the Conversion of St. Augustine described in his *Confessions* remind us of the dynamics of personal conversion as these dynamics relate to Church reform and global worldwide Catholic evangelization.

In his book *The Conversion of Saint Augustine*, Romano Guardini (1885-1968), a great figure of the Liturgical Movement of the 20th Century and a key influence on Pope Benedict XVI, Pope Francis and now Pope Leo XIV said that St. Augustine's *Confessions* remains the greatest psychology of conversion ever written.

Each of us is called to daily conversion.

Each of us is called to respond at the deepest level to the Risen Christ and our baptismal call to heroic “holiness and mission.”

Pope Benedict XVI states: “When I read St. Augustine's writings, I do not get the impression that he is a man who died more or less 1,600 years ago; I feel he is like a man of today: a friend, a contemporary who speaks to me, who speaks to us with his fresh and timely faith. In St. Augustine who talks to us, talks to me in his writings, we see the everlasting timeliness of his faith; of the faith that comes from Christ, the Eternal Incarnate Word, Son of God and Son of Man. And we can see that this faith is not of the past although it was preached yesterday; it is still timely today, for Christ is truly yesterday, today and forever. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Thus, St. Augustine encourages us to entrust ourselves to this ever-living Christ and in this way find the path of life.”¹

¹ Pope Benedict XVI, January 16, 2008 General Audience on Saint Augustine of Hippo (3).

It is clear that Pope Leo XIV would resonate with Pope Benedict XVI's powerful words about St. Augustine.

St. Augustine has helped to shape his life and so we ask this Church Doctor's intercession for Pope Leo XIV this morning.

We give God thanks for this son of St. Augustine, this son of the United States of America and Chicago, this son of the Church in Peru, and this son of Rome and the global universal Catholic Church.

The Church's social justice teaching and witness are at the heart of the Church's worldwide mission and evangelization.

As his namesake Pope Leo XIII confronted the dramatic societal change of the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century with the Church's moral teaching in his 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, so too will Pope Leo XIV confront with the charity and truth of the Church's moral teaching the dramatic societal change involved in the evolution of Artificial Intelligence.

And so as I prepare to say "Leo, our Pope" in the Eucharistic Prayer for the first time this morning, we go to the Bread of Life discourse in John Chapter 6 and together we proclaim with our new Holy Father: "Whoever eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day."