Opinion
NCR Voices



Pope Francis hands Cardinal Robert Prevost, the future Pope Leo XIV, a copy of *Spes Non Confundit*, ("Hope Does Not Disappoint"), his document proclaiming the Holy Year 2025, during a ceremony in front of the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican May 9, 2024. (CNS/Lola Gomez)

Shannon Evans O'Brien

Spirituality and culture editor

View Author Profile
sobrien@ncronline.org



John Grosso

View Author Profile

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May 8, 2025

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The new pope is a reader of the National Catholic Reporter.

Pope Leo XIV, when he was Cardinal Robert Prevost, twice shared NCR articles on his personal X (formerly Twitter) account: Once in 2016, and again, recently, on Feb. 3, 2025. The latter was a commentary from columnist Kat Armas criticizing Vice President JD Vance's widely panned and incorrect interpretation of the Catholic teaching *ordo amoris*.

"JD Vance is wrong: Jesus doesn't ask us to rank our love for others https://ncronline.org/node/292716 via @NCRonline," Prevost tweeted.

Joining Prevost in his criticism was Pope Francis, who categorically rejected the vice president's theology.

Kat Armas, a highly respected Cuban American author and theology scholar, specializes in the intersection of empire and the Bible. Her column for NCR was notable not just for its comprehensive repudiation of Vance's understanding of the hierarchy of love, but for its clarion call for all baptized Catholics: "If we find ourselves asking, 'Who is my neighbor?' — we are already missing the point. The better question is: How do I love without limits?"

In hindsight, it's not surprising that this resonated with Prevost enough for him to share it. Shortly after he stepped onto the balcony as Leo XIV, the new pontiff, referencing the Easter blessing of the late Francis, had love on his mind: "God loves us, all of us, evil will not prevail."

There is only so much we can learn about Pope Leo XIV from his X account, an account in which he mostly retweeted others. But if we read between the lines, we can see a common thread of deep concern for the marginalized and the poor, and an emphasis on the role of government in ensuring the welfare of its citizens. For those who hoped for continuity with Francis' pontificate, Prevost's X feed is a reassuring, and downright hopeful, scroll.

Whether it's posting a Spanish language video interview condemning the death penalty with compassion and nuance, or resharing a stern rebuke of those who offer "thoughts and prayers" without policy changes in the face of mass shootings, our new pontiff has not minced words about the sweeping implications of nonviolence.

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During the tumultuous year of 2020, he posted multiple calls for racial justice and promoted COVID-19 vaccinations as a means of caring for the vulnerable. (He was also seen wearing a face mask as late as 2022.)

It only takes one brief glance at Prevost's X profile to see that immigrants are particularly close to his heart. His last post before becoming pope, shared on April 14, was a retweet drawing attention to the suffering of the deported — and calling out President Donald Trump specifically for a lack of compassion. But this wasn't new for Prevost; he's been challenging Trump's position on immigration since before Trump even won the 2016 election.

But immigration isn't the only issue that compelled Prevost to speak out against Trump. In 2017 he shared a post by the Laudato Si' Movement pushing for the president to read Francis' climate justice encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, and another by Catholic News Service Rome expressing concern about the environmental impact of Trump's policies.

Perhaps the biggest difference between our current American political leaders and our new American-born pope can best be summed up by a 2021 post that appears

to bear an original caption from Prevost himself. Linking to a commentary on a homily on the Beatitudes delivered by Francis, Prevost wrote: "These beatitudes also highlight the temptations faced by bishops, like that of seeking power and a comfortable lifestyle."

Could Pope Leo XIV prove to be, like his predecessor, the kind of leader who eschews power and comfort in favor of service and solidarity? It's too early to tell, but his social media history gives us reason to hope.

This story appears in the **Pope Leo XIV** and **Looking for Leo in History** feature series.