Vatican
Vatican News



Newly elected Pope Leo XIV, a native of Chicago, concelebrates Mass with the College of Cardinals inside the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican the day after his election as 267th pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church May 9, 2025. (AP/Vatican Media)



by Christopher White

Former Vatican Correspondent (2021-2025)

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Rome — May 9, 2025
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Pope Leo XIV implored clergy in church authority to "make oneself small" in order to glorify Christ, echoing a theme of his predecessor Pope Francis in his first public Mass on May 9.

"Move aside so that Christ may remain, to make oneself small so that he may be known and glorified, to spend oneself to the utmost so that all may have the opportunity to know and love him," Leo said a day after his election as the 267th pontiff of the Catholic Church

The first pope elected from the United States — a global superpower that many thought would disqualify any American from leading the papacy — acknowledged that he must lead by example.

The Mass of Thanksgiving was celebrated in the Sistine Chapel with the College of Cardinals, notably alongside the same 132 cardinals who yesterday (May 8) cast ballots in the world's most secretive election process in that same sacred space and stunned many around the world with their choice. Also at the Mass were the more than 80 retired cardinals that could not participate in the papal conclave.

Read this next: The pope from Chicago backed Pope Francis' major church reforms

In a 10-minute homily that began in English before switching to Italian, Pope Leo said that he was counting on all his brother cardinals who elected him to walk with him on this journey.

A dizzying journey it has been. In the less than 24 hours since the shock election, Leo has catapulted from a relatively unknown Chicago-born cardinal who has spent most of his life outside the United States to become the successor of Pope Francis.

During his homily, Leo paid tribute to his predecessor, saying that Pope Francis "taught us so many times, we are called to bear witness to our joyful faith in Jesus the Savior."

This can be difficult in today's world, he said, where Christianity is often "considered absurd, meant for the weak and unintelligent" and "other securities are preferred, like technology, money, success, power or pleasure."

Pope Leo XIV celebrates his first Mass as pope with the cardinals who elected him in the Sistin

Pope Leo XIV celebrates his first Mass as pope with the cardinals who elected him in the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican May 9, 2025. He is the first U.S.-born pope. (CNS/Vatican Media)

Preaching the Gospel and bearing witness to its truth is not easy, Leo said.

"Believers are mocked, opposed, despised or at best tolerated and pitied," Leo said. "Yet, precisely for this reason, they are the places where our missionary outreach is desperately needed."

Leo said that a lack of faith has often resulted in a "loss of meaning in life, the neglect of mercy, appalling violations of human dignity, the crisis of the family and so many other wounds that afflict our society."

The task of all Christians — beginning with the leader of the Catholic Church, he said — is to commit to a "daily journey of conversion" of "fidelity to the Lord and bringing the Good News to all."

During the Mass, Scripture was read in both English and Spanish — a nod to the new pope's missionary work in both the United States and Peru.

On Thursday evening (May 8), following his election, he returned to the Vatican residence inside the palazzo that also houses the Vatican's doctrinal office where he lived, greeting many neighbors and building personnel. In photos that have appeared on social media, he posed for selfies with Vatican officials and even gave an autograph to a young girl.

Advertisement

The new pope will deliver his first Regina Coeli address at noon Sunday (May 11) from the balcony of the Vatican's Apostolic Palace.

As Leo processed out of the Sistine Chapel at the conclusion of the Mass, he received spontaneous applause from the cardinals present — along with the choristers and security personnel on hand for the historic occasion.

The National Catholic Reporter's Rome Bureau is made possible in part by the generosity of Joan and Bob McGrath.

NCR is an independent nonprofit and relies on support from readers like you, especially at this crucial moment in church history. Please donate here to the Spring Fund Drive.

Read this next: Pope Francis reminds us — again — to reject clericalism
This story appears in the **Pope Leo XIV** feature series. View the full series.