News



Students from Everest Academy in Lemont, Ill., cheer May 8, 2025, react after it was announced that Chicago-born Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost was elected as the next pope. He chose the papal name Leo XIV. (OSV News/Reuters/Vincent Alban)



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May 9, 2025

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After Pope Leo XIV was announced to the world as the first North American pontiff, reactions in the U.S. — from monastic communities, school classrooms and city churches — not only cheered the significance of this moment but many also said it gave them hope for the church's future.

Trappist Fr. Joe Tedesco, superior of Mepkin Abbey in Moncks Corner, South Carolina, called the day extraordinary.

"I don't think anybody expected an American pope, but when you look at his résumé, he's a perfect choice." He said Leo's commitment to social justice and his leadership within the church align him with the values of Pope Francis.

"He brings all the right stuff to the post," he said, referring to Leo's focus on the poor, migration, social justice, language abilities and Vatican leadership.

He also said the monks at Mepkin Abbey pray daily for the pope and encouraged others to join in prayer for the new pontiff's health, strength and inspiration.

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Students at St. Paul Catholic High School in Norwalk, Ohio, were also pretty excited about the announcement.

"The school today was electric," principal Mike Gocsik told the National Catholic Reporter. "When [the announcement] finally occurred, our parish church bells started ringing. The kids were excited, so it really is a moment in time that I believe they'll remember the rest of their lives."

The news also resonated with Catholic families around the globe. Shynimole Prassad, a nurse in North Charleston, South Carolina, stayed in close contact with relatives in Kerala, India, throughout the day.

Prassad, a parishioner at St. John Catholic Church in North Charleston, said she felt inspired and encouraged by the selection of an American pope and hopes he will bring about a new era of peace and ease growing tensions and conflicts around the world.

In New York City, just hours after Leo was introduced to the world, several visitors at the landmark St. Patrick's Cathedral said they felt that the new pontiff, who spent much of his life in Peru, could symbolically be a pope for all of the Americas.

"He could represent all of America and continue the traditions set by Pope Francis, " said Arthur Hernandez, a Colombia native who now resides in the New York City borough of Brooklyn.



Television broadcast personnel line Fifth Avenue in Manhattan outside of St. Patrick's Cathedral on May 8 after news of the selection of Pope Leo XIV. (NCR photo/Chris Herlinger)

Edna Alzpuro and Erika Haro, two friends visiting New York City from Mexico, said they wanted to know more about the new pope but liked what they had heard so far.

"I'm glad he's American. It feels good," said Alzpuro, from Mexico City. "We're all Americans, and we'll be happy to have an American representative." She also praised the new pope's relative youth — he is 69.

"I am happy that he's an American," said Haro, from Guadalajara. "That means inclusive, full of love, sharing with the people and helping find peace. We're missing that in the world."

Minutes later, just feet away from a framed photograph of the late Pope Francis near the cathedral's entrance, Alpro and Haro lit candles in memory of family members.

One 65-year-old cathedral visitor, a native of Poland who has homes in both New York City and Pennsylvania and who did not want to be identified, said she was happy with the selection, calling Leo "a true Catholic who accepts [the gifts of] both men and women."

Max Bremkes, 26, a visitor from Cologne, Germany, said it was not a surprise to him that a North American could be elected pope. He praised the possibility that Leo might continue Francis' church reforms.

"It is good to bring the church forward into current times," he said.

This story appears in the **Pope Leo XIV** feature series. View the full series.