News



Pope Leo XIV is flanked by Fr. Alejandro Moral Antón, Order of Saint Augustine prior, upon his arrival at the St. Augustin Basilica in Rome, Monday, Sept. 1, 2025, to address his fellow Augustinians at the start of their global assembly. (AP/Domenico Stinellis)

by Associated Press

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Pope Leo XIV's Augustinian religious order elected a new prior general Tuesday, tapping another American to lead during the pontificate of history's first American pope.

Fr. Joseph Farrell, 62, had been vicar general of the international order and the general assistant for the North American branch. He takes over from Fr. Alejandro Moral Antón, a close friend of Leo's whose second, six-year term as superior ended.

Farrell was elected the 98th prior general during the Augustinians' general assembly, which has been under way this month at its headquarters just outside the Vatican. Leo, who had led the Augustinians for two consecutive terms from 2001-2013, opened the proceedings by celebrating a special Mass for his confreres on Sept. 1 and urging them to work for unity.

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A native of Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania, Farrell is a graduate of Leo's alma mater, the Augustinian-run Villanova University, where Farrell later taught and served in the office of ministry.

Leo has emphasized the importance of his Augustinian identity, frequently citing the writings of St. Augustine of Hippo, the fifth century theologian who inspired the 13th century order as a community of "mendicant" friars.