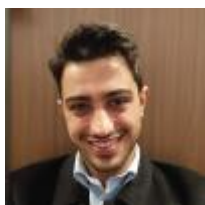




A fan wears a promotional pope hat during a baseball game between the Cincinnati Reds and Chicago White Sox, Aug. 11, 2026, in Chicago. Pope Leo's beloved White Sox lost to the Cincinnati Reds, 5-4. (AP/Melissa Tamez)



by Jeromiah Taylor

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White Sox fans celebrated their [most famous fan](#), Pope Leo XIV, at a papal-themed game which included some distinctly Catholic elements — including a stadium-wide "sign of peace" during the fifth inning. Tens of thousands of fans wore black and gold Sox-themed "pope hats" at Rate Field* for the [sold-out](#) Aug. 11 game against the Cincinnati Reds. The "pope hats," a play on the papal mitre, were originally limited to a special 2,500-hat run, but the team ultimately gave away hats to the entire 40,000-person crowd after selling out.

Brooks Boyer, White Sox executive vice president and chief revenue/marketing officer, told Major League Baseball that producing the giveaway hats was a last-minute decision and posed a challenge.

"The only anxiety was: Can we get 40,000 here by the time of this day? So as soon as we figured out we could, it's been a lot of fun to be part of," Boyer said.

The crunch was evidently worth it as thousands wore the hats, with some fans wearing their own pope gear. Even the team's mascot Southpaw donned a chasuble and White Sox mitre.

The Catholic presence wasn't limited to costume, however. [Dominican Sr. Mary Jo Sobieck](#), threw the first pitch — repeating her viral 2018 turn at the plate. In a sign of respect to the pope, the pregame ceremony included presenting a \$14,000 check to the Midwest Province of the Order of St. Augustine, the religious order Leo once led, courtesy of White Sox Charities.

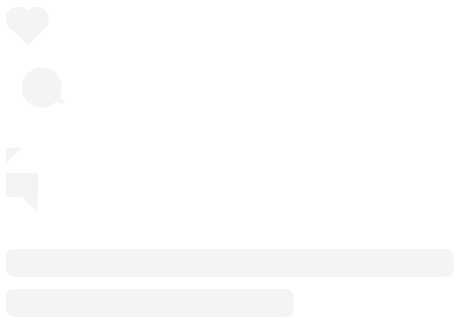
At the end of the fifth inning, Chicago priest Fr. Tom Hurley led the crowd in the sign of peace, explaining to the entire stadium, "We offer each other a sign of peace because we want to bring peace to the world and I think the pope would really love that, whether you're Catholic or not."

Hurley told NCR that the team was looking for a way to commemorate one of their fans becoming pope, and initially had considered [a Pope Leo bobblehead](#). But when

the Vatican balked at that idea, Hurley threw out another one: a papal mitre, or "pope hat." But Hurley said the idea to honor Leo with a "sign of peace" belonged to Mike Downey, White Sox director of marketing.



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"It was so well received, I was shocked," Hurley wrote in an email to NCR.

"The people loved it! We set it up by asking the question 'what would Pope Leo like to see?' " he added. "The pope is a voice for peace in this world so let's stand, find a new friend, and offer to each other a 'Sign of Peace' – and they did!"

Students from Our Lady of Mt. Carmel — who held [a mock conclave](#) earlier this year — were also briefly [on the field](#) with players. And Chicago Auxiliary Bishop John Siemianowski wore his own Sox "pope hat" in a photo along with Fr. Chris Doering, St. Julian parish associate pastor.

Fans lined up to take photos in front of a replica of [a stained glass window](#) depicting Pope Leo holding a baseball and a bat, as well as [a painted mural](#) overlooking the field.

Raised in the [south Chicago suburb](#) of Dolton, Illinois, Leo is a confirmed White Sox fan, and he's been [photographed wearing the team's hat](#) during appearances in St. Peter's Square. The team has capitalized on the connection, even putting [a special marker on the seat](#) where the future pope sat during the 2005 World Series.

The team refrained from committing to an annual pope game.

"We'll see," Boyer told the [Chicago Sun Times](#). "We wanna be super respectful to the pope, to the Vatican. Hopefully this represents a tie to his childhood team, doing it the exact right way."

As for whether Leo's prayers are helping the Sox, they are tops in their division, [a surprise](#) even to their own fans. But on pope night, the team lost 5-4 to the Cincinnati Reds.

*Correction: This story has been updated to correct the stadium of the Chicago White Sox.

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