



THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF **BIRMINGHAM** *in* **ALABAMA**

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Statement on the election of Pope Leo XIV

(May 8, 2025) With profound joy and heartfelt gratitude, we welcome the joyful news of the election of **His Eminence Robert Francis Cardinal Prevost, O.S.A., as the new Bishop of Rome—our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV**. It is, indeed, a surprise, one filled with grace. The Holy Spirit has once again stirred the Church in a remarkable way, gifting us with a new Supreme Pontiff to shepherd God’s people during this time of global uncertainty into a future filled with hope and truth.

In his first greeting to the Church and to the world, Pope Leo XIV offered the words of the Risen Christ: “Peace be with you.” These are not simply words of comfort; they are a commission. Just as Christ breathed peace upon His disciples and sent them forth, our new pope comes to us as a bridge-builder (*pontifex*), a messenger of reconciliation in a world so deeply divided and in need of healing. His voice, echoing the Risen Christ, now becomes a point of unity for the global Church and a moral compass for the wider world.

The name he has chosen—**Leo**—calls to mind strength, courage, and steadfastness. The last Pontiff to bear this name, **Pope Leo XIII**, gave the Church the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, the foundational text of modern Catholic Social Teaching during the Industrial Revolution. In this same spirit, Pope Leo XIV ascends to the Chair of Peter not only as a successor of the apostles, but also as a successor of courageous advocacy by his predecessors, especially for the dignity of the human person, for workers, for the poor, and for justice.

As an Augustinian, our new Holy Father brings the deep spiritual wisdom of St. Augustine—his love for truth, his restless search for God, and his profound understanding of grace. As a missionary bishop in Peru, he has walked alongside the poor, learned from the humble, and witnessed firsthand the hope that blossoms even in the most forgotten corners of the world.

The Church desires in her pope what every disciple of Christ longs for: one who **boldly proclaims the Resurrection**, who pastors the flock with compassion and strength, who teaches the Gospel with clarity, and who leads us ever more deeply into the mystery of God through the sacraments.

Here in the Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama, we offer Pope Leo XIV our warmest welcome, our filial devotion, and, most importantly, our prayers for the fruitfulness of his Petrine ministry. We pray that the Lord may bless him with wisdom like Solomon’s, courage like Leo’s, and the heart of a shepherd after God’s own heart. May he lead us ever more faithfully toward Christ, the Good Shepherd, Whose peace he now bears to the whole world. *Ad multos annos*, Pope Leo XIV!

+ *Steven J. Raica*

Most Reverend Steven J. Raica, D.D., J.C.D.
Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama