

FROM FATHER JOHN: *“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19 – 20)*



One of the titles for His Holiness, Leo XIV, is ***Shepherd of the Church***. When Pope Leo XIV was elected, God sent us a Shepherd to lead us to Christ Jesus, to watch over us, to protect us from the evils of the world, to deepen us in faith, hope, love and unity, to proclaim the Good News of Christ Jesus to all the world, to proclaim the Resurrection of our Lord and the gift of salvation that God gives us. This is a gift from God to each of us and to His Church on earth.

The following is Bishop Hicks’ article for the month of June. He offers a reflection on the election of Pope Leo XIV and his own personal encounter with then-Cardinal Prevost. I thought I would forward his article to you. I hope you find it interesting.

May God bless you and all those who love the Lord.

FROM BISHOP HICKS:

It was a moment I will never forget!

On May 9, 2025, I was traveling from Omaha back to the Diocese of Joliet after attending the installation of my classmate and friend as the new Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Omaha. I was glued to my phone, watching as white smoke billowed from the chimney at St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome.

As I stood in line for TSA security at the Omaha airport, a woman in front of me asked, ‘Bishop, do you think we might get an American pope this time?’ I quickly responded, ‘No, that’s impossible.’

I then placed my carry-on and phone on the conveyor belt, went through the metal detector, put my belt back on, and reclaimed my phone—only to see the news that the impossible had just happened. We had a new

pope, born and raised in the USA... Pope Leo XIV! That moment solidified for me that the Holy Spirit is still in charge of our Church. Indeed, with God, all things are possible (Matthew 19:26).

My flight home was abuzz with joy and curiosity about this new pope as passengers all around me asked, 'Do you know him?' The short answer is: 'Yes, I know him.' While I am twelve years younger than he is, we actually grew up in the same neighborhood in the South Suburbs of Chicago. He lived in Dolton, and I was raised next door in South Holland—and we even share a favorite pizza place.

I had the privilege of meeting Pope Leo XIV when he was still Cardinal Robert Prevost. On August 7, 2024, he came to our diocese to speak at St. Jude Parish in New Lenox. I attended his lecture, which focused on the Catholic Church and Pope Francis. What struck me most was the clarity with which he spoke—he was both deeply intelligent and remarkably pastoral. His insights were not hidden behind academic jargon. Instead, they were spoken plainly and with heart, taking complex concepts and making them understandable to all.

After his talk, I still remember him saying to me, 'Can we get five minutes by ourselves to talk?' Our conversation lasted over fifteen minutes, just the two of us. I was moved by his warmth and attentiveness. He was not rushed or distracted—he was present. And as we wrapped up our conversation, he handed me his card and said, 'If you ever need to talk, just call.' That kind of humble openness left a lasting impression.

Besides asking if I know our new Holy Father, the other most common question I have received is: 'What kind of pope do you think he will be?' That answer will unfold in the years to come. However, after greeting the world with the words Peace be with you, he has continued to preach about the absolute importance of cultivating a personal relationship with Jesus. While emphasizing the need for justice and peace for all people, he has also insisted that without faith, life lacks meaning.

During his inauguration Mass, Pope Leo XIV offered a powerful homily centered on unity, love, and humble service. He said, 'I come to you as a brother, who desires to be the servant of your faith and your joy, walking with you on the path of God's love, for he wants us all to be united in one family.' He urged the Church to be a 'small leaven of unity' in a divided world, calling us to walk together as instruments of healing, hope, and reconciliation—to foster dialogue within the Church and beyond.

So far, it seems that Pope Leo XIV—formed by the Augustinian tradition and shaped by his missionary experiences—strongly desires to be a bridge-builder, encouraging all of us to tear down walls of division and live as one body in Christ.

On one last lighter, yet poignant note—even though he grew up a Sox fan and I am a Cubs fan—it's a joy to remember that we both play on the same team: working together for Christ and for the Church!

So, giving thanks to God for our new Holy Father, please join me in prayer—asking the Holy Spirit to guide, protect, and strengthen Pope Leo XIV.

Habemus papam! And may God bless him always.