

16 Fun Facts About Pope Leo XIV

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As the Church welcomes Pope Leo XIV, and the new pontiff takes up his residence in Vatican City, the whole world is eager to learn all about him. We've gathered some facts, from the essentials to some extra-special details, to help you get acquainted with Pope Leo XIV!

1. Pope Leo is the first American pope. For generations, Americans have wondered if one of their own would ever be elected pope. That moment has come with Pope Leo XIV, born and raised in Chicago. His choice of name is also significant—honoring Pope Leo XIII, who helped shape the Church in the United States by encouraging two future American saints in their missionary work: St. Frances Xavier Cabrini and St. Katharine Drexel. Pope Leo XIV continues that legacy, the first American pope following in the footsteps of a pontiff who believed deeply in the Church's mission in the West.

2. Pope Leo likes to play Wordle! In a light moment before stepping into one of the most sacred decisions in the Church, Pope Leo was playing Wordle! According to his brother, the soon-to-be pontiff squeezed in a quick puzzle session right before the Conclave—proof that even popes enjoy a little brain game before making history.

3. He is also the first Peruvian pope. Pope Leo XIV is a naturalized citizen of Peru—although he was not born there, he legally obtained citizenship of the country. He spent 20 years in Peru, serving as Apostolic Administrator and then Bishop of the diocese of Chiclayo and as Apostolic Administrator of Callao for a few years. This means that he is a dual-citizen of both the United States and Peru—and the first pope from both countries! He's the second pope with a Latin American connection, as Pope Francis was an Argentinian, the first Latin American pope.

4. Pope Leo watched "Conclave" right before his very own Conclave! Just before heading into the Conclave that would change his life forever, Pope Leo had wrapped up watching "Conclave"—yes, the movie about electing a pope! But before you check out reviews before you watch this movie (it's FICTION, not fact).

5. He has a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics. Our new pope graduated with his Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from Villanova University in 1977. This is a unique academic path for a man who would one day become pope!

6. Pope Leo met Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis! Pope Leo's journey to the papacy included some unforgettable moments—he met Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis! And yes, there are photos to prove it—holy encounters captured in time.

7. Pope Leo XIV's birthday is the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Pope Leo XIV turned 69 in September, before he was elected pope. His birthdate is September 14, 1955, the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, commemorating the day that St. Helen located the relics of the True Cross of Christ in Jerusalem.

8. Pope Leo's favorite sport? Tennis! The new pope brings a new athletic interest to the Vatican. Argentinian Pope Francis fancied soccer, but it sounds like Pope Leo XIV won't pass up a game of tennis. We suddenly find ourselves fans of tennis, too! The sports news site Bolavip reports him telling an Argentinian newspaper: *"I consider myself a great tennis fan... Since I left Peru, I've had few opportunities to practice, so I'm looking forward to getting back on the courts."*



9. His native language is English, but he speaks and reads several languages. Given his American upbringing, Pope Leo XIV is fluent in English as his first language. But there's more: it takes all the fingers on one hand to enumerate how many languages Pope Leo XIV knows how to speak: English, Spanish, Italian, French, and Portuguese. Additionally, he can read Latin and German, two important theological languages.



10. Pope Leo is the youngest of 3 boys. Pope Leo XIV has two older brothers: Louis and John. The upbringing of the Prevost boys was solidly rooted in the Catholic Faith, and they all served their Chicago parish of St. Mary of the Assumption as dedicated altar boys, musicians, lectors, and volunteers.

11. Pope Leo's parents: his dad was a Navy Lieutenant; his mom ran the parish and worked in the library. Pope Leo XIV's mom, Mildred Martinez Prevost, was one of the fabled "church ladies" — cleaning the church, running fundraisers, singing in the choir, and somehow leading both the altar society and the Rosary group without cloning herself. She also had a degree in library science and a master's in education, which means she could shush you in six different ways *and* explain why. Meanwhile, his dad, Louis Prevost, was a Navy vet from World War II who later became a school superintendent, a principal, and — because he apparently didn't believe in free time — a catechist too.

12. Pope Leo is a Chicago White Sox fan! Pope Leo may be the first American pope, but let's settle one thing right now—he's a White Sox fan, not a Cubs fan. Grace builds on nature, after all. Sorry, North Side! And in case you need further proof, here's a photo of him at the World Series in 2005.



13. He grew up surrounded by priests. Pope Leo XIV's mother enjoyed hosting priests and cooking for them—and they enjoyed frequenting the family's home for Mrs. Prevost's excellent cooking when the pope was a young boy. Given this regular and familiar exposure to the priestly vocation, his family and friends were not surprised when he felt drawn in the same direction!

14. Young Robert Prevost was the smartest boy in his class. According to one of Pope Leo XIV's elementary school classmates, our new Holy Father is a bit of a genius. The Chicago Sun Times reports on his intellectual abilities. Through rigorous academic training in his student years and a very structured elementary school experience, he was dedicated to learning his Catechism well. In high school, he was a member of the National Honor Society and a participant in speech and debate.

15. Pope Leo's seminary formation began in high school. Let's just say, no one is surprised that Pope Leo is where he is today. Drawn to the priesthood from a very young age (his brother John says he knew that "from the time he could walk" that his brother was going to be a priest), Pope Leo XIV chose to attend St. Augustine Seminary High School for his secondary school education.

16. Pope Leo XIV was an editor-in-chief for his school yearbook. Long before he was shepherding the global Church, Pope Leo was editing high school memories—literally. As editor-in-chief of his yearbook, he was already shaping stories and spotlighting classmates like a pro.