
Diocese of Buffalo

Office of Communications



PRESS RELEASE

Bishop Fisher Details Meeting with Pope Leo XIV and Discussions with Dicasteries of the Holy See

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(Buffalo, NY) — **Bishop Michael W. Fisher** has returned from a week-long visit to the Vatican, where he met with **His Holiness Pope Leo XIV** and several Dicasteries (administrative offices) of the Holy See to detail the progress of bringing together diocesan parishes, known as the “Road to Renewal,” as well as emerge from Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, among other topics.

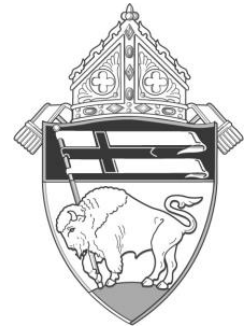
“We were deeply touched by the Holy Father’s warm and heartfelt welcome and by the keen interest of His Holiness in our progress to define a new and more hopeful chapter for the Diocese of Buffalo and Catholic faith and ministry across Western New York,” said **Bishop Fisher**. “In my personal time with Pope Leo, I detailed the long and difficult process entailed with Chapter 11 over the past five years and our determined efforts to finally complete our reorganization in the coming months. The Holy Father expressed his support for the work underway and still ahead in order for the Diocese to emerge from Chapter 11, as well as for our efforts to bring about a true spirit of renewal. He further relayed his empathy and understanding for how difficult the experience of closing and merging parishes can be for many. The Holy Father encouraged us to continue in this important effort and assured me that the Catholic faithful of the Diocese will be remembered in his personal prayers. I assured His Holiness that we, too, would keep him constantly in prayer. It was a special delight to present the gift of a personalized Buffalo Bills jersey to our first American pontiff, and he expressed his gratitude for this symbol of hometown pride.”

Also during his personal discussion with the Holy Father, Bishop Fisher presented the Holy Father with a book on the life of Fr. Nelson Baker, founder of [Our Lady of Victory Basilica](#) in Lackawanna, NY who was declared “venerable” by Pope Benedict XVI in 2011.

(continued)

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In addition to meeting with the **Dicastery for the Clergy** to detail the context and process for organizing parishes into the “families of parishes” model, Bishop Fisher—along with three senior leaders of the Diocese (**Rev. Peter Santandreu, Vice Chancellor/Adjutant Judicial Vicar; Rev. Bryan Zielenieski, Vicar for the Renewal; and Mr. Rick Suchan, Chief Operating Officer of the Diocese**)—engaged in discussions about the work of evangelization across Western New York with the **Dicastery for Evangelization**, and the need to engage all communities of the Diocese to make clear their role and responsibility for spreading the Gospel and ministering to those in need.

The delegation also met with the **Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors** to detail the Diocese’s extensive protocols and procedures to ensure the protection of young people and other vulnerable people. Members of the Commission encouraged the Diocese to maintain audit compliance with its [Safe Environment](#) policies and protocols, in line with the Commission’s own guidelines, as well as promote continuing education and training among diocesan clergy, employees and volunteers. Special emphasis was given to outreach and care for victims of abuse.

Finally, Bishop Fisher and diocesan leaders visited each of the four major basilicas of Rome—also called “Papal Basilicas”—which are considered the most important churches in the Catholic world. Each is steeped in history, spiritual significance, and architectural beauty, and all are central destinations for pilgrims who journey to the “Eternal City.” During specific Masses celebrated by Bishop Fisher, the intentions of victim-survivors were offered, as well as the intentions of educators and directors of religious education, the intentions of those discerning a religious vocation, and also the intentions of the Catholic faithful of the Diocese in general.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

1. Bishop Michael W. Fisher is welcomed to the papal quarters in the Vatican by His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, Monday, October 27, 2025
2. Bishop Michael W. Fisher presents Pope Leo XIV with an official Buffalo Bills jersey with the Holy Father’s name (“Leo”) on the back and number “14” on Monday, October 27, 2025
3. Bishop Michael W. Fisher discusses the progress of the Diocese of Buffalo with Pope Leo XIV in the papal quarters of the Vatican on Monday, October 27, 2025

PHOTO CREDIT: Vatican Media

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