



DIOCESE of
PARRAMATTA

MEDIA RELEASE

9 May 2025

****Images attached****

"Thrilled and in awe": The Diocese of Parramatta and Sydney's west celebrate the election of Pope Leo XIV

The Diocese of Parramatta joins the universal Church in joyful celebration of the election of Cardinal Robert Prevost OSA as the 267th successor to St Peter – with the papal name Pope Leo XIV.

Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv, Bishop of Parramatta, welcomed the announcement with prayerful optimism.

"This is a joyful moment for the universal Church and a deeply meaningful one for our local community in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains."

"Pope Leo XIV brings a missionary heart, shaped by decades serving among the poor in Peru. As an Augustinian, he will gift the Church and the world with a deeply contemplative spirit," Bishop Vincent said.

"I have met him on several occasions, as have many of the Augustinians in our Diocese who know him well. He is a humble, prayerful man, dedicated to Christ and steeped in the mystical charism of the Augustinian tradition and I pray that he will guide our church with renewed hope and joy during this challenging time," he said.

For the local Augustinian community in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains, the announcement brings both excitement and profound personal connection.

Fr David Austin OSA, Assistant Priest at Holy Spirit Parish St Clair and former Provincial of the Australian Augustinians, was "absolutely thrilled" with the news and described Pope Leo XIV not only as a spiritual leader but also "a personal friend."

"He's truly a remarkable man. He's a humble man, understated in many respects, but very astute," Fr David said.

With respect to the 2,500 Augustinian priests around the world, Fr David added, "As Prior General, he knew everyone in the order. He knows us by name."

Having worked closely with Cardinal Prevost for decades – including at the 2004 Intermediate General Chapter in Spain and the 2012 Augustinian International Lay Congress in Rome – Fr David reflected on his longstanding relationship with the man now leading the global Church.

"He always remained grounded, no matter the role. As Prior General, he knew the names of Augustinians across the world. That's who he is – connected, humble, and present," he said.



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The Order of Saint Augustine (OSA) is the third oldest continuous religious order in the Catholic Church and was inspired by the spirit of St Augustine, the great ascetic and philosopher. There are two Augustinian churches in the region of Sydney: Holy Spirit Parish St Clair in Sydney's west and the parish of North Harbour in the Diocese of Broken Bay.

Its presence in the Diocese of Parramatta stretches back 30 years, when the Order arrived in St Clair in 1995. The Augustinians later expanded their ministry with the opening of the Augustinian Spirituality Centre in Greystanes and the formation of a lay group called Friends of St Augustine, fostering community through study, prayer, and a strong connection with Augustinians worldwide.

Rachael Kama, a member of the Diocese's Mission Enhancement Team and Asia-Pacific Lay Representative for the Augustinians, shared her surprise and joy upon hearing the news. Having met "Fr Bob" – as many still affectionately call him – at multiple international gatherings, she remembered his humility vividly.

"Last year at the International Lay Congress in Rome, he was literally driving participants to and from the airport," she said.

"He is a very humble man. When I was at the OSA International Lay Congress last year, he was driving people to and from the airport!" she said.

"I was part of the leadership team for the International Augustinian Youth Encounter in 2008, and he was the Provincial. We called him "Fr Bob" – that's his name to us. I've had confession with him...he's a really great guy."

Br Mark O'Connor FMS, Vicar for Communications and currently in Rome covering the conclave, was not surprised by the election.

"He has lived and worked with the poor, with Indigenous people and his contemplative, peaceful attitude will complement the prophetic gestures of Pope Francis," he said.

Br Mark, who has met with the then-Cardinal in Rome over the past three years, including as recently as April this year, was "ecstatic" about the election and described the conclave's decision as an "inspired choice".

Last year, he invited the then-Cardinal for a visit to Australia.

"We had a great chat. I brought him a present from Australia and his first comment was 'I hope that's not Vegemite!', and I reassured him it's Tim Tam's, which he likes."

"He's a gentle, quiet, humble man. He's not a man of grand gestures," Br Mark added.



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As Pope Leo XIV begins his pontificate, the Diocese of Parramatta stands in prayerful solidarity with the global Augustinian family, deeply inspired by the values and spirit that he brings to the Chair of Peter.

For more information about our parishes and Orders, visit the Diocese of Parramatta website: www.parracatholic.org

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About the Diocese of Parramatta

The Diocese of Parramatta is the Catholic Church in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains and is home to over 320,000 Catholics with 47 parishes and churches. The Diocese educates more than 43,000 students across its 80 schools, employs more than 5,500 people and cares for thousands of people in need through its social services arm, Catholic Care.

Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv was appointed the fourth Bishop of Parramatta in 2016. He is Australia's first Asian-born Bishop, and the first Vietnamese-born Bishop to lead a Catholic Diocese outside of Vietnam. You can read more about [him here](#).