

MEDIA RELEASE

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## Catholic Religious Australia celebrates Augustinian Pope, Leo XIV

Catholic Religious Australia (CRA), the representative body for almost 4500 sisters, brothers and priests who belong to 150 religious orders spread throughout Australia, welcomes the election of Pope Leo XIV and expresses its joy in this moment of newness and opportunity as another chapter commences in the life of the Church.

“We join with the whole people of God in celebrating the fruits of these days of prayerful discernment in Rome and committing ourselves to praying for and working with Pope Leo XIV as his pontificate unfolds”, said Br Gerard Brady, President of CRA.

The new Pope’s choice of the name Leo is significant. The previous Pope Leo XIII was a champion of social justice and workers’ rights and laid the foundation for modern Catholic social teaching. It is an indication that the new Pope will continue the social and ecological justice mission of Pope Francis, navigating the current artificial intelligence revolution.

Cardinal Robert Prevost makes history not only as the first American Pope, but also the first Augustinian Pope. He was born and raised in Chicago and entered the novitiate of the Order of Saint Augustine in 1977, taking his solemn vows in 1981 and ordained a priest on June 19, 1982. He was twice elected as Prior General of the Order of St Augustine. He served for over 20 years as a missionary in Peru, where he was Bishop of Chiclayo. He was also Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops and President of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America.

Many Australian Augustinians know Pope Leo XIV personally, particularly from his time as the Order’s Prior General, during which he visited Australia four times. On a visit during World Youth Day in Sydney (2008), he celebrated Mass on Collaroy Beach, New South Wales, with young people.

Most recent former CRA President, Peter Jones, Prior Provincial of the Order of St. Augustine, Australasian Province, has known Pope Leo XIV since he lived in community with him as a student in the 1980s. “The Augustinians are humbly grateful for the election of Pope Leo XIV and are confident he will continue to live as Pope as he has in Religious life. He has always valued human dignity, relationships, dialogue, peace and bridge-building, and I am sure he will carry those values with him into his papacy,” said Peter.

“It is significant that Pope Leo, like Francis, comes from a Religious Order, and it clearly shows that the Cardinals in the Conclave value Religious life in the Church, and that they hold a great respect for the different charisms and spiritualities of Religious Institutes,” Peter continued.

“In his first *Urbi et Orbi* Address and Apostolic Blessing, Pope Leo XIV used the word *tutti*, all, many times to emphasise the importance of human solidarity, achieved through dialogue, encounter, and synodality,” said Anne Walker, National Executive Director of CRA.

“CRA looks forward with joy-filled anticipation to the particular gifts that Pope Leo XIV brings, knowing he will be influenced by St. Augustine and Augustinian spirituality with its emphasis on seeking God together in friendship and community and loving service of the Church as the Body of Christ,” she added.

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