

Pope Leo XIV Appeals For Peace.

Pope appeals for peace to 'all peoples' in first address.

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Pope Leo appeared on the central balcony of St Peter's Basilica around 70 minutes after white smoke billowed from a chimney atop the Sistine Chapel.

Cardinal Robert Prevost has been elected in a surprise choice to be the new leader of the Catholic Church, taking the name Leo XIV, becoming the first US pontiff.

Pope Leo, appeared on the central balcony of St Peter's Basilica around 70 minutes after white smoke billowed from a chimney atop the Sistine Chapel, signifying the 133 cardinal electors had chosen a new leader for the 1.4 billion-member Catholic Church. "Peace be with you all," the new pope told the cheering crowd. The choice of Prevost was announced by French Cardinal Dominique Mamberti with the Latin words "Habemus Papam" (We have a pope) to tens of thousands of people gathered in St. Peter's Square to hear the news. Aged 69 and originally from Chicago, Prevost has spent most of his career as a missionary in Peru and became a cardinal only in 2023. He has given few media interviews and rarely speaks in public.

Leo becomes the 267th Catholic Pope after the death last month of Pope Francis, who was the first Latin American pope and had led the Church for 12 years and widely sought to open the staid institution up to the modern world. Francis enacted a range of reforms and allowed debate on divisive issues such as women's ordination and better inclusion of LGBT Catholics. Ahead of the conclave, some cardinals called for continuity with Francis' vision of greater openness and reform, while others said they wanted to turn back the clock and embrace old traditions. Prevost has attracted interest from his peers because of his quiet style and support for Francis, especially his commitment to social justice issues. Prevost served as a bishop in Chiclayo, in northwestern Peru, from 2015 to 2023. Francis brought him to Rome that year to head the Vatican office in charge of choosing which priests should serve as Catholic bishops across the globe, meaning he has had a hand in selecting many of the world's bishops.

Prevost said during a 2023 Vatican press conference: "Our work is to enlarge the tent and to let everyone know they are welcome inside the Church."

"It's an amazing feeling," said an elated Joseph Brian, a 39-year-old chef from Belfast, who came with his mother to Rome for the spectacle. "I'm not an overly religious person but, being here with

all these people just blew me away," he said as people around him jumped up and down in excitement.

There were euphoric scenes as one priest sat on someone's shoulders waving a Brazilian flag and another lifted a heavy crucifix into the air in jubilation. "Habemus papam, woooo!" howled Bruna Hodara, 41, from Brazil, echoing the words to be spoken on the balcony as the new pope is introduced. She, like others, recorded the historic moment on her phone, as others waved flags and cried out "Viva Il Papa!" -- "Long live the pope!" in Italian. "It's a once in a lifetime opportunity to be here to see the pope. It's really special... I'm excited!" said Florian Fried, a 15-year-old from Munich, in Germany. Pope Francis died last month aged 88 after a 12-year papacy during which he sought to forge a more compassionate Church but drew anger from many conservatives with his progressive approach. The new Pope now faces a momentous task: as well as asserting his moral voice on a conflict-torn global stage, he must try to unite a divided Church and tackle burning issues such as the continued fall-out from the sexual abuse scandal. Some 133 "Princes of the Church" from five continents, the largest and most international conclave ever, began voting yesterday afternoon. Sworn to secrecy, on pain of excommunication, their only means of communicating their progress to the outside world was by sending up smoke through the chimney of the Sistine Chapel. Yesterday evening and then again, this morning, the smoke was black, eliciting disappointed sighs from the tens of thousands watching. However, on this afternoon just after 5pm Irish time the smoke emitted was white, confirming that the Catholic Church has a new spiritual leader. It was unknown how many ballots it took to elect the new Pope, but it followed recent history in wrapping up in less than two days. In 2005, Benedict XVI, a German theologian, was elected in four ballots and Francis, in 2013, was elected in five ballots. While the details of the election will forever remain secret, the new Pope had to secure at least two-thirds of votes to be elected. By tradition, he now enters the Room of Tears, where freshly elected popes give free rein to their emotions, to don a papal cassock for the first time, before returning to the Sistine Chapel so the cardinals can pledge their obedience. He will then appear on the balcony along with a senior cardinal, who will announce to the waiting crowds "Habemus Papam" ("We have a pope"). The Pope will then give a short speech and impart his first "Urbi et Orbi" ("To the City and the World") blessing. The election has come at a time of great geopolitical uncertainty, which was seen as a key voting issue, along with the rifts within the Church. Francis was a compassionate reformer who prioritised migrants and the environment, but he angered traditionalists who wanted a defender of doctrine rather than a headline-maker. Some 80% of the cardinal electors were appointed by Francis. Hailing from 70 countries around the world, it was the most international conclave ever.