

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Habemus Papam!

I'm sure many of you were glued to the screen last Thursday to view the exciting events in Rome as our new pope was presented to the world.

How privileged we are to live in this modern age in which we can join with millions of other Catholics around the world to share in these historic events! It will probably not happen again for a long time. Pope Francis was 88 years old when he died. Pope Leo is only 69. It is possible, therefore, that we may not experience a papal conclave for another twenty years.

After the tumultuous and often controversial pontificate of Francis it seems we have a steadier hand on the tiller of the barque of St. Peter. Pope Leo XIV is an experienced prelate on the international level. He is a highly qualified canon lawyer, theologian, seminary professor and Augustinian friar who speaks seven languages and is not only an American, but also a Peruvian citizen. Cardinal Dolan of New York described Pope Leo as "a citizen of the world." As such, our new pope is ready to be a spiritual leader for Catholics the world over.

Those who have researched the new pope's background say he is a "centrist" In other words—not left wing or right wing (those categories don't really work for Catholics anyway) but a simple preacher of the good news of Our Lord Jesus Christ. As an American he will understand first world challenges. As a Peruvian he will sympathize with the problems of Catholics in the developing world.

This is his central task: to uphold the Catholic traditions and to preach the timeless gospel of the Lord. I was very encouraged by Pope Leo's first words from the balcony and his first homily to the cardinals after his election. He spoke clearly and firmly about the need to "preach Christ and him crucified."

As Pope Leo begins this historic pontificate let us all promise to pray for him every day and to share with him the task of showing forth in our words and our works the redeeming love of the Lord.

Your pastor,
Fr. Longenecker