

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article8993>



USA

What Will an American Pope Mean for the US?

- IV Online magazine - 2025 - IVP604 - May 2025 -

Publication date: Monday 12 May 2025

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights
reserved

The conclave of cardinals has for the first time elected a pope from the USA, a man who has been critical of the policies of President Donald Trump and Vice-president J.D. Vance. What will the choice of this American to be head of the Catholic Church mean for the US?

The Catholic Church is an enormous and influential organization. There are 1.4 billion Catholics worldwide. Twenty percent of all Americans are Catholic, that is 73.2 million. There are more Protestants but divided into many churches, while the Catholic Church is the largest single religious organization in the United States. While mostly white, immigrants from Mexico, Central and South Americans have changed the ethnic composition of the church, so today 36% of US Catholics are Hispanic, while 54% are white, 4% are Asian, and 2% are Black. And in 2024 Trump won the votes of 54% of all Catholics and 61% of white Catholics.

Yes, the Catholic Church is a fundamentally conservative, even reactionary institution, patriarchal and sexist, denying women leadership roles or even a voice in deliberations, and denying their right to divorce and abortion. True, it has failed to protect children from sexual abuse by priests. Yes, historically it has been linked in many places, and especially in Latin America to the ruling class of landlords and capitalists and to the state. Yes, for centuries it had the character of the “opium of the people,” a drug for the oppressed.

Yet even this conservative institution has produced progressive and even socialist currents, such as the theology of liberation that was so influential in Latin America in the 1960s and 70s. A virtually Marxist theology, it inspired millions in Latin America to resistance, rebellion, and revolution. Horrified, the reactionary Pope Benedict (2005-13) attempted to eradicate it, firing priests and professors.

The recently deceased Pope Francis was an advocate of a theology of the people emphasizing concern for working people and the poor, for migrants, but also for the marginal and the oppressed, such as LGBT people. The new Pope Leo XIV it seems will follow in Francis’ footsteps.

Robert Francis Prevost, who was born in Chicago in 1955, earned degrees from the Catholic Villanova University in Pennsylvania, the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, and the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome. From 1985 to 1999 he was a missionary in Peru, and from 2014 to 2023 he was back in Peru and became a Peruvian citizen. He served as a leader of the Augustinian order and held important posts in the Catholic hierarchy.

Prevost’s chose the name Leo XIV, placing himself in the tradition of Leo XIII, pope from 1878 to 1903 and who in his encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (Of New Things) took up “the misery and wretchedness pressing so unjustly on the majority of the working class.” Leo XIII, while opposing socialism and defending capitalism, recognized the necessity and right of workers to organize labor unions, bringing the church from the Middle Ages into the modern world.

Both Trump and Vance congratulated Leo XIV on becoming pope and congratulated the USA on having produced him. But what will happen to these Trump voters if the pope opposes the president’s racist and xenophobic policies? Will the new pope be able to change some minds? Trump’s followers are critical. Laura Loomer, a far-right activist who influences Trump, said the new pope was, “anti-Trump, anti-Maga, pro-open Borders, and a total Marxist like Pope Francis.” And she has a point. While not a Marxist, Prevost’s posts on social media before his election indicate that he is for the protection of immigrants, for reducing gun violence, and for working to stop climate change.

Trump will now find that he has to share the world stage with another powerful American leader, Pope Leo XIV who

will on many issues be an opponent.

11 May 2025

PS:

f you like this article or have found it useful, please consider donating towards the work of International Viewpoint. Simply follow this link: [Donate](#) then enter an amount of your choice. One-off donations are very welcome. But regular donations by standing order are also vital to our continuing functioning. See the last paragraph of [this article](#) for our bank account details and take out a standing order. Thanks.