# The Grand Master expresses the Order's greetings to the new Pope

Leo, a surprise name even for the Conclave Cardinals who had just elected Robert Francis Prevost the 267th Successor of the Apostle Peter, the 14th in the series of Popes with the same name, beginning - under the gaze of Michelangelo's Christ in the Sistine Chapel - his Petrine Ministry.

Indeed, since Pope Leo is the new Bishop of Rome and Head of the Catholic Church. His face, when the two-thirds of the votes were counted as I was acting as a scrutineer proclaiming the votes, expressed intense emotion in his awareness of the gravity of the mission to which God was calling him. That was also the moment when all the Cardinals stood up and gave him a long and warm applause as a sign of common approval, fraternal affection and encouragement. Without apparently losing his serene calm, Leo XIV showed us his face: that of a man of God fully adhering to His will, a sign of a faith on which he has always leaned and which led him from his native Illinois (USA) to religious life among the Augustinians and then to the missions of the Apostolic Vicariates of Chulucanas, Iquitos and Apurímac; finally, to the guidance of the Diocese of Chiclayo (Peru), where Francis had destined him in 2014 before appointing him as Prefect of the Dicastery of Bishops in January 2023, and raising him to the dignity of Cardinal in the consistory of 30 September of the same year.

He is a spiritual son of St. Augustine, the great Bishop of Hippo who in his youth had wandered through the pagan-philosophical thought of his time (4th/5th century AD), to finally come to faith in Christ; Augustine was the greatest theologian of his era, who wanted to give a rule of life to those who followed him in prayer and religious life, which is still vital today.

Leo XIV said that he chose this name thinking in particular of two great Popes: Leo the Great (4th-5th cent.), a theologian, exegete and extraordinary pastor of souls, who gave prestige and authority to the Church of Rome, clearly affirming the primacy of the Pope in the Church as a whole, since - he said - “the character of the papal dignity is unique,” and taught that “all those who are reborn in Christ

achieve royal dignity by the sign of the cross”; moreover, he had not failed to defend faith against heresies and barbarian invasions; for Leo the Great, the Church was like a body in which Christ lived. Then Leo XIII (1810-1903), the great Pope of the “social question” of his century who wrote the first great encyclical (*Rerum Novarum*) on the social doctrine of the Church.

As I was in the Sistine Chapel next to the newly elected Pontiff, in a moment of pause, I pointed out to him that Leo XIII had introduced the presence of women in the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem - it was in 1888 - and he expressed his surprise, not being aware of that reform impulse given by that Pontiff to our Institution.

Leo XIV will be the Pope who, as he told me, will take up the social issue of work because, he added, we are in a critical time for work, since work enables the growth of the dignity of the individual and the family, threatened by the invasion of the so-called Artificial Intelligence, the exploitation of child labour and workers without protection for the benefit of those who place profit above all other considerations.

He will be a Pontiff who will have Christ at the centre, Christ without whom every action is destined to an ideal and spiritual poverty. Almost a new humanism, not only integral, but Christian.

His pontifical motto that we can read below his coat of arms - *In Illo Uno Unum* (“In Christ we are one”) - is already a programme; it is inspired by St. Augustine and the Gospel of John in which Jesus asks his disciples to maintain unity in Him.

The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, faithful to the Pope, expresses its best wishes for his pontificate.

**Fernando Cardinal Filoni**

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