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MISSION MESSAGE

Pope Leo XIV: A Missionary Pope for a Missionary Church

By Shannon Kowalski
Diocesan Director,
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grow by maintenance. It grows by mission. And not just mission “over there,” but right here. In our parishes, in our schools, in our homes, and in our streets. Pope Leo XIV reminds us that mission is not a diocesan department or a feel-good project. It’s the identity of the Church.

The Pontifical Mission Societies were founded precisely to support this vision: a Church that gives, that goes, and that grows by sharing. Under Pope Leo XIV, that call takes on new urgency and new energy. His words already reflect it — challenging comfort, calling for proximity to the poor, and insisting that evangelization must be driven by witness more than words.

In his first address to the world as the 267th successor to Saint Peter, he said, “*We want to be a synodal Church, a Church that moves forward, a Church that always seeks peace, that always seeks charity, that always seeks to be close above all to those who are suffering.*” That’s the voice of someone who’s done it.

From Scranton to Chiclayo, from our mission appeals to the missions themselves, this is a moment of renewal. As a missionary Catholic, I see Pope Leo XIV’s papacy as both challenge and encouragement. He challenges us to stop talking about mission like it’s someone else’s job. And he encourages us to get to work, not because we have all the answers, but because we know Who does.

May God bless Pope Leo XIV and may his papacy awaken in us a more profound love for the Gospel, and a renewed commitment to proclaim it — here

Long before he wore white, Leo XIV — then Father Robert Francis Prevost — was an Augustinian missionary in the prelature of Chulucanas in the remote highlands of Peru. He didn’t step into those mountains as a visitor. He lived there and worked alongside the people he was sent to serve. He celebrated Mass under corrugated metal roofs and learned the native Peruvian Quechua language from abuelas who taught him words between Rosary beads. His formation was not only theological, but pastoral, grounded in the grit of human suffering and solidarity.



Now as Pope, Leo XIV brings that same spirit into the heart of the universal Church.

By choosing the name Leo, our new Holy Father gives a nod to another pivotal moment in Church history. In the wake of the Industrial Revolution, Pope Leo XIII spoke up for exploited workers and reshaped Catholic social teaching with the Church’s first social encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*. Leo XIV seems to be carrying that legacy forward with his words *and* his actions. One of my favorite images of Pope Leo XIV that has surfaced in the media is of him as Bishop of Chiclayo, wearing muck boots, standing in knee-high flood water, accompanying his people after a devastating flood (photo above). The shepherd among his flock

For those of us in dioceses like Scranton, his election is more than symbolic. It’s a wake-up call — a reminder that the Church doesn’t



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