CATHOLIC HEALTH CARE LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE

CHRIST CENTERED CARE

May 2025 Newsletter

President's Column

Habemus Papam!!!

Dear Friends in Christ,

The words "Habemus Papam" rang out from the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica across the square, across Rome, and then throughout the world on May 8 upon the election of Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost as the 267th successor of St Peter and Vicar of Christ on earth. Over two millennia, the keys of the kingdom given by Jesus Christ to the apostle St. Peter, upon whom He built His Church and to whom He gave the authority to bind and loose (Mt 16:18-19), have been successfully handed on with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. For this great gift, we join the whole Church in celebrating with great joy and thanksgiving the election of Pope Leo XIV.

As I watched the televised event unfold, I re-experienced the tremendous excitement and overwhelming enthusiasm of the crowds flooding into St. Peter's Square on April 19, 2005, when, by God's gracious providence, my wife and I were standing in the square. During our trip to Rome, planned a year before, we found ourselves sitting in St. Peter's Square enjoying a gelato after a tour of the Vatican Museum while the world awaited the decision of the conclave following the death of Pope St. John Paul II. Suddenly, excitement arose among the few gathered in the square and the words "white smoke" rang out. Then the white smoke could be clearly seen displayed on the jumbotrons, indicating a new Pope had been elected. It

seemed that within only minutes, a sea of people converged upon the square, stretching back along the Via della Conciliazione all the way to the Tiber River.

By the sheer grace of God, we were front and center when those words "Habemus Papam" were announced in 2005 and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger appeared on the loggia as newly elected Pope Benedict XVI. It was an unforgettable moment, one whose joy and excitement flooded my memory when Pope Leo appeared. Moments like this help us to realize how very blessed we are to be Catholic.

Pope Leo's first words to the world give us cause for great joy as well, calling to mind the first words of our Lord to his disciples after His Resurrection, "Peace be with you" (Luke 24:36).

He continued, "Dear brothers and sisters, these are the first words spoken by the risen Christ, the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for God's flock. I would like this greeting of peace to resound in your hearts, in your families, among all people, wherever they may be, in every nation and throughout the world. Peace be with you!"

And then, just as Christ reassured His disciples, who were overcome with joy but also fearful given the circumstances of recent events, Pope Leo reassured each of us, confirming our mission. "All of us are in God's hands. So, let us move forward, without fear, together, hand in hand with God and with one another! We are followers of Christ. Christ goes before us. The world needs his light. Humanity needs him as the bridge that can lead us to God and his love. Help us, one and all, to build bridges through dialogue and encounter, joining together as one people, always at peace."

In subsequent addresses, Pope Leo's emphasis gives us renewed hope in Christ's promise to send the Holy Spirit, who will guide us into all truth (Jn 16:13). "It is the Risen Lord, present among us, who protects and guides the Church, and continues to fill her with hope through the 'love poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.' It is up to us to be docile listeners and faithful ministers to his plan of salvation."

Finally, the Pope's own comments regarding his choice of the name "Leo" give us insight into at least one focus of his papacy. In his first formal address to the College of Cardinals, he said:

> I would like us to renew together today our complete commitment to the path the universal church has now followed for decades in the

> wake of the Second Vatican Council… Sensing myself called in this same path, I chose to take the name Leo XIV. There are different reasons for this, but mainly because Pope Leo XIII, in his historic encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, addressed the social question in the context of the first great Industrial Revolution. In our own day, the Church offers to everyone the treasury of her social teaching in response to another industrial revolution and to developments in the field of artificial intelligence that pose new challenges for defense of human dignity, justice and labor.

This new "industrial revolution" to which he refers will certainly impact the field of health care. The CHCLA is committed to using Catholic social teaching and its principles of social justice as a framework for our work in reforming and renewing the Catholic health care ministry.

So let us remain united in prayer for and with our new Holy Father, who has been entrusted by God with the keys of the kingdom. United as the Mystical Body of Christ, let us respond to the call to missionary discipleship in the ministry of health care in defense of justice and human dignity for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

God Bless,
Steven White, M.D.
President, CHCLA