

Visit: New pope’s focus is to bring good news, love to those suffering

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a decade younger than Baby Boomer Leo. Given the relatively younger age of the new pope, David Lantigua, the co-director of the Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism at the University of Notre Dame, said he would be surprised if Leo wouldn’t make at least a U.S. trip at some point.

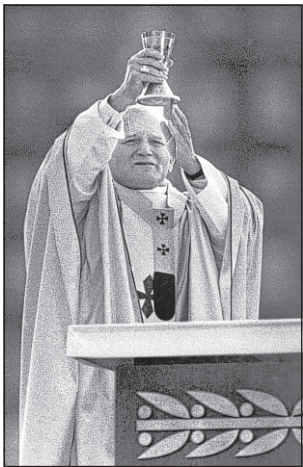
“It’d be hard to see Chicago not in that picture, just given its historic importance, too, with Catholicism in the U.S.,” he said.

Like the sheep

From the loggia of St. Peter’s Basilica, in his opening address to the world, Leo spoke to the diocese in Peru where he served as a bishop. The late Pope Francis appointed him to the role.

“This is where I see so much of Francis. He thanked his community,” Lantigua said. “Francis, when he was elected, he said, ‘You went to the ends of the earth and found a pope.’ And similarly, Prevost says to his flock in Peru, thank you for accompanying me as your bishop.

“And I just find that to be very telling of the way that he sees the role of the pastor as being one who



DAILY HERALD FILE PHOTO/Dave Tonge
Pope John Paul II celebrates mass during his visit to Chicago in October 1979.

is close and in proximity and even to use Francis’s language, ‘smells like the sheep,’ right?”

One of his key points in that address was “to say the church as a mission is meant to go out into the world and to bring good news and to bring love to those who are suffering, to give them hope,” Lantigua said.

“He’s just very much formed and shaped by the church in Latin America that has shaped Pope Francis ... that to me is actually what’s not so shocking about his election,” Lantigua said, “is that he knows exactly what Francis means



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Father Andy Matijevic, now associate pastor of Chicago’s Holy Name Cathedral, with newly elected Pope Leo XIV in 2016.

by reform and by being a missionary church coming from that Latin American experience, and yet he’s going to communicate that in, I think, in a distinctive way.”

Father Andy Matijevic, associate pastor of Holy Name Cathedral and a Palatine native, recognized that “missionary heart” in the new Bishop of Rome. Matijevic served at an ordination Mass with Prevost for the Augustinians in 2016 at St. Rita of Cascia Parish on Chicago’s South Side.

“It’s just a very humbling thing to know who walked out, but also joy that the chair of St. Peter is now filled again,” Matijevic said, calling the new pontiff a “very humble man.”

For Chicago Catholics, the papal excitement level is “over the roof,” Matijevic said.

“Nobody really thought an American would be a pope, and much less from Chicago,” he said.

What’s the significance of his chosen papal name? Leo in Latin means lion, Matijevic notes. The last pontiff with the name, Pope Leo XIII, called for social reform in the 19th century.

“I think choosing the name Leo is a unique nod to social justice and social outreach, but also to being a lion in the world, of saying this is what we believe and why we believe that,” Matijevic said.

‘Thrill of a lifetime’

At Holy Name Cathedral, there’s a plaque in the narthex area commemorating John Paul II’s visit, Matijevic said.

Brencic’s family gathered on his grandparents’ front

porch when the pope’s motorcade drove past their home.

“He blessed their house right as he passed,” Brenic said. For his grandparents, “that was like the thrill of a lifetime for them, because they were very, very devout Catholics, and they put a picture of him by like a little shrine in their house, after that day as a special memory.”

The son of Poland’s visit lasted only 40 hours, according to the Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Archives and Records Center, but it resonated not just with devout Catholics.

“The residents of Chicago just took pride that the pope chose Chicago to come visit,” Brenic said.

People were reaching out and shaking his hand, said former Daily Herald photographer Dave Tonge,

who captured the pope on a “beautiful day” in Chicago.

“He bonded with people, and he had, the word that is probably overused, but he had such charisma,” said Gorski, who has lived in Arlington Heights with his wife Laura since being married in 1982 and raising their three daughters there.

He got a ticket to attend the Five Holy Martyrs Mass through his mentor, the late Rev. Matt Bednarz, a friend of Pope John Paul II.

“It was like yesterday. Everybody was smiling. Everybody cared about everybody,” Gorski said.

Ask Brenic if he could imagine Leo having a similar reception back home in Chicago, and it’s hard to say. But, “I think people would certainly love to see a hometown boy,” he said with a laugh.



AP FILE PHOTO
Chicago Archbishop Cardinal Cody directs Pope John Paul II en route to the altar at Chicago’s Grant Park on Oct. 5, 1979.

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