

CONSERVATIVES ADOPT TRANS LANGUAGE

The AP Style Guide sets the tone for both print and electronic media, even conservative outlets are impacted. Consider what the AP Style Guide has to say on the matter of transgender ideology. It commands writers to only use preferred pronouns and makes allowance for the use of the singular “they.” The guide promotes the unscientific notions “sex assigned at birth” and “nonbinary/gender fluid” people. Indeed, the AP Style Guide appears to be ripped right out of the manifesto of the most militant trans activist.

While Fox News and the *New York Post* have reputations of representing right of center perspectives, in recent years both outlets have quietly embraced the woke left’s distortion of the English language and rejection of the laws of biology in the name of transgenderism. Both have used, and continue to use, the approved language of transgenderism in their reporting, making them virtually indistinguishable from their competitors in the mainstream media.

For instance, on January 13, 2026, both Fox News and the New York Post featured stories about the Supreme Court examining the ability of the states to protect girls’ sports from boys. Both outlets refer to the male athletes involved in the legal challenge with feminine pronouns.

In other instances, both outlets take pains to avoid pronouns altogether and continually refer to the individuals by their last names. While this at least solves the pronoun problem, the articles are inevitably framed around “transgender women” but never once is it acknowledged that this is a man who falsely claims to be a woman. This appears to be both outlets’ preferred strategy when dealing with high profile figures such as Congressman Sarah McBride (DE-D), the only member of

Congress that openly claims a transgender status. Although on August 2, 2025, *New York Post* used female pronouns to refer to McBride.

With that said, there have been some efforts to reflect biological realities and respect the rules of grammar. However, the only time either Fox News or the *New York Post* observes these is when reporting on individuals who claim a transgender status that have committed serious crimes. Though this appears to be a more recent development.

For instance, in 2022 both outlets covered the case of Demetrius “Demi” Minor, who killed his foster father stabbing him 27 times. Minor claimed to be a woman and was incarcerated in New Jersey’s only female prison. During his time in the women’s prison, Minor had sex with two female inmates who became pregnant.

Of course, if you read the article posted on Fox’s website on July 17, 2022, you may not have realized this was about a man in a women’s prison. The headline reads, “NJ transgender woman transferred from women’s only prison after impregnating 2 inmates, report says.” The sanity, not to mention the rules of the English language, rapidly deteriorates from there. When describing how Minor was moved to a new facility, the article reads that he “is the only woman” confined there.

The *New York Post* was not any better in its coverage. In an article that ran on August 5, 2022, this line appeared: “she had impregnated two other inmates.” This is a complete bastardization of English.

But, beginning in 2023, following the horrific attack on the Covenant Christian School in Nashville, in which a woman who falsely claimed to be a man killed six people including three young children, both outlets have used the correct pronouns for people who claim a transgender status involved in violent crimes. In the cases of Audrey Hale (Covenant Christian

School, March 27, 2023), Robert “Robin” Westman (Annunciation Catholic School, August 27, 2025), Jesse Van Rootselaar (Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia, February 10, 2026), and Robert “Roberta Esposito” Dorgan (Pawtucket, RI, February 16, 2026) both outlets accurately reflected biological reality in their coverage.

It would appear that the only time Fox News and the *New York Post* deviate from the transgender convictions of their counterparts in the mainstream media is when the subject has committed a truly gruesome act and no one in their right mind will rush to ensure you are using his preferred pronouns. This is hardly a principled stand in defense of reason and common sense.

POST OFFICE MISHAP?

A few months ago Bill Donohue wrote a letter to Kash Patel, the director of the FBI, about anti-Christian acts of violence. He copied Sen. Josh Hawley, Sen. Chuck Grassley and Rep. Jim Jordan. The letter was returned to our office, with a stamp that said it was refused. Really?

We have been in contact with the FBI a lot over the past few years. Under the Biden administration, the FBI was spying on Catholics, and we demanded answers. We have also been in contact with the FBI over reports of anti-Christian bigotry. We never had a problem mailing our correspondence, reports, etc. Until now.

Curiously, the letter that was returned was seriously damaged, but it was not of the ordinary sort, e.g., a tear on the top or bottom that may have occurred as a mishap when going through a machine. No, this was a large hole in the middle of

the envelope, right where the name and address was printed. In other words, it was a cut-out, suggesting it was tampered with.

We also sent the letter electronically to the FBI, so they received it. But the problem remains. Our envelope lists our logo, name and address, so it's obvious who sent it. We suspect foul play but we can't prove it. Thought you'd like to know.

MEDIA BIAS MARKS STORY OF TRANS KILLERS

Major media outlets, with rare exception, are engaged in a massive cover-up of the identity of transgender shooters in Canada and Rhode Island. They don't want the public to conclude the obvious: those who falsely claim to be of the opposite sex are mentally impaired and a disproportionate number are increasingly violent. What happened in both venues is disturbing enough without lying about the identity of the killers.

On February 10, 2026 Jesse Van Rootselaar, an 18-year-old man who falsely claimed to be a woman, entered the Tumbler Ridge Secondary School in Tumbler Ridge, Canada and opened fire on students and teachers. The shooter killed seven people, including six students, injuring dozens more before committing suicide.

On February 16, Robert Dorgan, a 56-year-old man who falsely claimed to be a woman, opened fire at a high school hockey game in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. He shot and killed one of his sons, as well as the mother of his children, and critically

shot his other two sons and a family friend. He then fatally shot himself. It was later revealed that he went through gender reassignment surgery and was described as having a narcissistic-personality disorder.

If it were not for sexual identity politics, every media outlet would (a) identify the killers are transgender and (b) identify them as male. Not only did the media, overall, merit an "F" on these measures, many were inconsistent how they depicted the two incidents.

TV

ABC mentioned the Canadian shooter was transgender and referred to him as "she." It mentioned the Rhode Island shooter's name change and did not use any pronouns to describe him.

CBS said the Canadian shooter was transgender, and referred to him as "she." It also mentioned that the Rhode Island shooter was transgender but referred to him as "he."

NBC reported the Canadian shooter was transgender, and referred to him as "they." It mentioned the Rhode Island shooter name change and referred to him as a man.

PBS said the Canadian shooter was transgender, and referred to him as "she." It mentioned the Rhode Island shooter's name change, and referred to him as "he."

CNN reported the Canadian shooter was transgender, and referred to him as "she." It mentioned the Rhode Island shooter was transgender, and referred to him as "he."

MSNOW did not mention the Canadian shooter was transgender, and did not use any pronouns to describe the Rhode Island shooter.

Fox News mentioned the Canadian shooter was transgender, and referred to the Rhode Island shooter as "he."

Newspapers

New York Times mentioned the Canadian shooter was transgender, and did not use a pronoun to refer to the Rhode Island shooter.

Washington Post did not mention the Canadian shooter was transgender, and referred to him as "she." It mentioned the Rhode Island shooter was transgender, and did not use pronouns to refer to him.

Los Angeles Times did not mention Canadian shooter was transgender, and referred to him as "she." It said the Rhode Island shooter was transgender, and did not use pronouns to refer to him.

USA Today mentioned the Canadian shooter was transgender, and referred to him as "she." It mentioned the Rhode Island shooter was transgender, and referred to him as "he."

Chicago Tribune did not mention the Canadian shooter was transgender, and referred to him as "she." It mentioned the Rhode Island shooter was transgender, and did not use pronouns to refer to him.

Associated Press did not mention the Canadian shooter was transgender, and referred to him as "she." It mentioned the Rhode Island shooter was transgender, and did not use pronouns to refer to him.

Here are some observations to ponder.

NBC is so illiterate, and ideologically bankrupt, that they falsely referred to a man as "they"? To top it off, NBC actually apologized for calling a Swedish skier who is a biological woman but falsely claims to be a man as "she." But she is a "she"!

Notice the way the same media outlets that falsely referred to the Canadian shooter as "she," invariably referred to the

Rhode Island shooter—correctly—as “he.”

Which begs the question: Are the Canadian people so far gone that the media dare not accurately tell them that a man who identifies as a female is in fact a male?

Just as bad, have the media no uniform standards, inventing different ways to describe the same phenomenon?

Are they that corrupt?

DOJ ACKNOWLEDGES REPORT

In the last edition of *Catalyst*, we said we contacted the Department of Justice, urging it to prosecute those who invaded Cities Church in St. Paul, Minnesota in January. We received word from the Civil Rights Division of the DOJ that our report “will receive appropriate consideration.”

While it is important to know we are taken seriously, it also matters to the DOJ that organizations like the Catholic League are there to help.

“DEVOUT CATHOLIC”

Ed Martin is an attorney and a Trump appointee who has done some very good work over the years, but he got himself into a pickle with Georgetown University after he raised questions about its diversity and inclusion policies. The school went after him for allegedly overstepping his boundaries. This is

interesting, but it is not the reason we are mentioning it.

There was a news story by CBS News that struck us as pure Catholic-baiting. Here is the tweet that Bill Donohue did on this issue.

CBS News reports today that attorney Ed Martin, a Trump appointee, is the subject of an ethics investigation concerning his handling of an incident at Georgetown University. It was noted by reporter Sarah N. Lynch that Martin is “a devout Catholic.” We don’t recall CBS talking about “devout Methodists,” “devout Jews,” or “devout Muslims.” Nor does CBS talk about “devout secularists.” Just “devout Catholics.” So telling.

We would also like to know how CBS measures devoutness!

ST. PAT’S NYC PARADE STILL BANS PRO-LIFERS

Eleven years after the first gay group marched in New York City’s St. Patrick’s Day Parade, pro-life Catholics are still not allowed to march. The elites who run the parade are once again showing how little respect they have for the parade’s origins, which are rooted in Catholicism.

From 1762 to today, no homosexuals were ever barred from marching in the St. Patrick’s Day Parade. Beginning in the early 1990s, it was gays who *falsely claimed victim status* because they were not allowed to march *under their own banner*. Neither were any other demographic or ideological group, including pro-life Catholics. This explains why from the mid-1990s to the mid-2010s, Bill Donohue went on radio and TV

saying the parade was no more anti-gay than it was anti-pro-life (he had been asked by parade officials to be the their unofficial spokesman). That all changed in 2015.

In the late summer of 2014, Donohue was asked by parade organizers if he would object if a gay group were allowed to march under its own banner in 2015. It was their parade, he said, but he had his integrity to protect: If gays can march under their own banner, then pro-life Catholics must be treated the same way. Donohue was told by John Fitzsimons, a lawyer whom he considered to be a friend, not to worry—they would be included as well.

Fitzsimons lied. In short order, John Lahey, president of Quinnipiac University and vice chairman of the parade committee, announced that OUT@NBCUniversal, a group of gay NBC employees, would be marching (the chairman of the parade, John Dunleavy, a retired transit worker, was pushed aside by the elite sharks on the committee).

Lahey said other gay groups could also apply. More important, he said that no pro-life groups would be marching. Having been double-crossed, Donohue pulled the Catholic League contingent from marching; we had been doing so for two decades.

So how did OUT@NBCUniversal get a monopoly on marching, when other gay groups wanted in? The NBC group never had to apply—it was selected. All the others were denied. The NBC group was chosen because another member of the parade ruling class, Francis X. Comerford, was the chief revenue officer at NBC and NBC televised the parade; he was also a former grand marshal of the parade. He made sure he got his boys to march, and no one else.

Why, after all these years, are pro-life Catholics not allowed to march under their own banner? John Aidan Byrne is the head of Irish Pro-Life USA. For the last decade he has petitioned the organizers of the St. Patrick's Day Parade in New York

City to allow his group to march under their own banner, but he has been summarily denied. He did so again recently. One parade organizer told him, "Ask City Hall."

This is a deceitful dodge. City Hall does not run the parade. As the Supreme Court said in 1995, in a unanimous decision, this is a private parade and the organizers set their own rules. End of story. Or at least it should be. The only reason it is not the end of the story is because parade elites see no PR bounce from letting pro-life Catholics march. But they will lay down with gays, and in doing so they get what they really want—the applause of secular elites, whom they emulate.

In other words, although the parade celebrates its Irish Catholic origins, the potentates who run it want to neuter its Catholic roots. This explains why they don't want pro-life groups to march, but are fine with gay groups. They know, as well as everyone else, that no religion has stood more consistently for the rights of the unborn than Catholicism. That's why they distance themselves from pro-life Catholics—it invites secular elites to think they are like them. And that is not something they can stomach.

MAMDANI RIPS OFF ST. PATRICK'S DAY

New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani made an 11th-hour decision to march in the St. Patrick's Day Parade, an event he previously eschewed for political reasons. But he couldn't resist bringing his politics to bear at a breakfast he hosted at Gracie Mansion, kicking off the St. Patrick's Day festivities.

Mamdani's obsession with demonizing Israel was on full display. He whined about the "deafening silence from so many" about the "genocide" in Palestine. Thus did he hijack St. Patrick's Day celebrations by turning them into a radical Muslim rant.

He fooled no one by inviting the former president of Ireland, Mary Robinson, to be there. She is a hard-core leftist who not only sides with the enemies of Israel, she sides with the enemies of the Catholic Church on matters sexual.

Mamdani is a master of the politics of victimization. He delighted his left-wing Irish friends by saying, "The story of the Irish, both in Ireland and in New York City, is at one time a story of oppression, of subjugation, and of discrimination."

This is the mentality of the Left—they see oppression everywhere. But this is *our* day, not his, and it is a joyful one. His interest in exploiting our day for his own political capital is sickening.

CHICAGO LAW FIRM SHOWS ITS BIGOTED COLORS

[Bill Donohue](#)

We have previously noted that Rhode Island Attorney General Peter Neronha has decided to conduct an investigation *only* of sexual misconduct by priests, allowing the clergy of every other religion a pass. Worse, he is giving a free pass to the public schools, where the problem—unlike that in the Catholic Church—is ongoing.

Neronha is conducting a witch hunt: none of the accused in his report are in active ministry. Just as unethical are the lawyers at Pintas & Mullins, a big law firm in Chicago. They are the ones who are fielding clergy abuse claims from alleged victims of priests in Rhode Island.

On the law firm's website, it has a section, "Rhode Island Clergy Abuse Claims." It only applies to the Catholic Church. Ministers, rabbis and imams who rape kids are of no interest to these guys. Just priests.

In a section titled, "Sexual Assault Lawyers Fighting for You," it says, "It should be underscored that these abuses extend to every faith and type of religious institution, including Islam, Judaism, Mormonism, and various denominations of Christianity, as well as in schools connected with these religions." This is a subterfuge. They say they are ready to hold these offenders accountable, yet there is no hot line for them—only for Catholic victims.

On April 21, I called the hot line (800-798-8155) and asked if they would accept cases from victims of ministers, rabbis, imams and public school teachers. The woman stumbled, and in a roundabout way said they would. I then asked why they don't have a hot line for these people. She got nervous and tried to worm her way out of it. I then asked if she were aware that all 75 priests in Rhode Island whom they have an interest in are either dead or have been kicked out of ministry. Sheepishly, she said she knew that. I told her that they were guilty of religious profiling and that they would be hearing from us.

About a month ago, on March 25, I wrote a letter to William Pintas at the law firm. I explained why I was writing and then asked three questions.

- Do you have other websites advertising your law firm's services for victims abused by other religious groups?

- How many victims abused by other religious groups has your law firm represented?
- Is there a similar website for victims who were abused in Rhode Island's public schools?

As to be expected, he did not reply. What was he going to say?

Religious profiling is no less invidious than any other type of profiling. The Rhode Island Attorney General and Pintas & Mullins are wearing their anti-Catholicism on their sleeve. To single out the Catholic Church for a probe of sexual misconduct is just as bigoted as singling out African Americans for street crime.

Contact Pintas & Mullins: questions@pintas.com

ELITES ARE ON DEFENSE

[Bill Donohue](#)

For over a decade, the Catholic League has been fighting diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) policies in the workforce and in schools. They not only discriminate on the basis of race—effectively legalizing racial discrimination against white people—they create unnecessary racial divisions.

We have also been fighting transgenderism, the invidious idea that the sexes are interchangeable. We have not been alone in doing so, but among lay religious advocacy organizations, we have been out in front on this issue from the beginning—when others were too intimidated to speak out.

The good news is that we are winning. We are on offense; our adversaries are on defense. Both DEI and transgenderism have hit a brick wall and are in decline.

Perhaps the most egregious example of how DEI has corrupted America can be found in the nation's medical schools. When patients undergo the knife, they expect that the surgeon has spent his training knowing how to excel. But for the past several years, reports have surfaced showing how much time medical students are spending learning how racist white people are and how rotten our country is.

Here's the good news. The Liaison Committee on Medical Education, the body that accredits medical schools, has removed the DEI requirement from its protocols. Thus, doctors will now spend more time learning how to be doctors, not social activists.

Corporate America is leading the way retreating from DEI programs. Thousands of diversity jobs have been cut, and mention of DEI in quarterly earning reports has declined dramatically. Changes have also taken place in higher education. After the Supreme Court ruled against affirmative action in 2023, colleges and universities moved away from racist admissions policies.

A decision was recently reached by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to bar men from competing in women's sports, thus relegating transgenderism a mighty blow. Henceforth, all participants will submit to a one-time genetic test; screening via saliva, a cheek swab or a blood sample will be required. Kirsty Coventry, the head of the IOC, said the new policy "is based on science and has been led by medical experts."

Put differently, pro-transgender activists are anti-science. One institution that does not have to change course is the Catholic Church: its teachings on sexuality are in accord with science.

The American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) is leading the way against transmania. The American Psychiatric Association is beginning to pull back, agreeing with the ASPS that sex-

reassignment surgery for those under 19 will not be performed. It was reported by the *New York Times* that the American Medical Association was also on board, but the organization disputes that story.

The U.S. still trails the Brits in stopping these pernicious operations. On December 11, the country's National Health Service banned the use of puberty blockers for young people. We still have some catching up to do.

The U.S. Supreme Court will issue a decision this spring on whether males can compete against females in sports. It should follow the lead of Supreme Court of London which ruled last year that "sex is binary, a person is either a woman or a man." Finally, common sense and science triumph!

The decline, if not the demise, of DEI and transgenderism proves that there is no iron law of history. People make history, not some mysterious materialistic force. The Catholic League is proud of all the media opportunities we have had sounding the alarms over these cruel policies. Cultures change. It is up to us to steer it in the right direction.

Calling the Pope "Liberal"

The following was written by Paul Kengor, the editor-in-chief of the American Spectator and a member of the Catholic League advisory board. This article was originally published in the [American Spectator](#).

Donald Trump's Truth Social post against Pope Leo is unprecedented in the history of the presidency and papacy. No president has ever made such a statement, even as previous popes urged peace during wartime and opposed specific U.S.

interventions. Our Aubrey Harris noted examples going back to Pope Benedict XV and World War I. Others are detailing examples from throughout the 20th century. They've continued into this century.

In recent times, President George W. Bush felt no compulsion to publicly denounce Pope John Paul II when the sainted pontiff opposed the U.S. war in Iraq – a war that Donald Trump opposed. The Bush administration insisted that Saddam Hussein was on the cusp of a nuclear weapon. Donald Trump insists that Bush lied. Today, Trump insists Iran is on the cusp of a nuclear weapon.

Putting aside the basis for those claims, one marvels at the recklessness of Trump's post, including his repeated assertion there and elsewhere that Pope Leo "thinks it's OK for Iran to have a Nuclear Weapon." The pope never said any such thing, just as John Paul II opposed the Iraq war but certainly didn't think it would be okay if Saddam had nukes.

In his Truth Social post, Trump smacked Pope Leo with a litany of blistering charges, most of them distortions and exaggerations (his anger and suspicions of David Axelrod meeting with Leo were more understandable), such as his self-absorbed assertion that "If I wasn't in the White House, Leo wouldn't be in the Vatican." As someone who just published a 400-plus page biography of the American pontiff, I can say emphatically that that's ridiculous.

The cardinal electors in the conclave did not pick Robert Francis Prevost as pope because of Donald Trump.

That said, the one Trump assertion where I feel I can be helpful – given my lifelong study not only of popes and presidents and Catholicism but of conservatism – are the loud claims by Trump and his supporters that Pope Leo is a liberal, a leftist, a person who (in Trump's words) "should get his act together as Pope, use Common Sense, stop catering to the

Radical Left.”

“I’m not a big fan of Pope Leo,” states Trump. “He’s a very liberal person.”

That assertion from Trump is utterly untrue.

Robert Francis Prevost: Conservative Republican

Pope Leo XIV, formerly Robert Francis Prevost, is a conservative. Moreover, he’s a Republican. He has been a conservative and a Republican surely longer than Donald Trump. During his 11- month papacy thus far, that has continued to be the case. And Prevost most certainly has long been a committed Christian longer than Trump. Given Trump’s unhinged Easter Sunday message, as well as other actions (including a blasphemous image), some are arguing that he isn’t a Christian at all, or at least not acting like a very good one. As someone who wrote a piece last year titled, “God and Donald Trump,” I’m not questioning his belief in God.

But for the record, principled Christian convictions are fundamental to a principled conservatism, as I’ll note below.

I don’t have tens of thousands of words here (as I did in my book) to lay out the beliefs of Robert Francis Prevost in this already lengthy piece, but I’ll offer a few examples.

Way back in the late 1970s, when Donald Trump was a libertine playboy who supported abortion, Prevost was walking in the first Marches for Life in Washington, DC. At Villanova University, he started the pro-life club. Those pro-life convictions never wavered. He has been consistently conservative on moral-cultural issues his entire life, and has spoken up throughout his papacy.

Jumping ahead to modern times and the decade before he was elected pope, Prevost in an October 2012 talk at Pope Benedict’s synod on the New Evangelization lamented how the

secular Western mass media was promoting “anti-Christian lifestyle choices,” including “abortion, homosexual lifestyle, euthanasia” as well as the “redefinition of marriage” and “alternative families comprised of same-sex partners and their adopted children.” Prevost had stated:

Western mass media is extraordinarily effective in fostering within the general public enormous sympathy for beliefs and practices that are at odds with the Gospel. For example, abortion, the homosexual lifestyle, euthanasia....

The sympathy for anti-Christian lifestyle choices that mass media fosters is so brilliantly and artfully ingrained in the viewing public, that when people hear the Christian message, it often inevitably seems ideological and emotionally cruel, by contrast to the ostensible humaneness of the anti-Christian perspective. Catholic pastors who preach against the legalization of abortion or the redefinition of marriage, are portrayed as being ideologically driven, severe, and uncaring, not because of anything they say or do, but because their audiences contrast their message with the sympathetic, caring tones of media-produced images of human beings who, because they are caught in morally complex life situations, opt for choices that are made to appear as healthful and good.

Note, for example, how alternative families comprised of same-sex partners and their adopted children are so benignly and sympathetically portrayed in television programs and cinema today.

Needless to say, Donald Trump has never said anything like that. Trump wouldn't because he doesn't believe it.

When these words (accompanied by video) from Prevost were published by Francis X. Rocca in a May 10, 2025 piece for National Catholic Register just two days after Prevost's election as pope, they went viral. Secular leftists roared that the new pope was “homophobic,” “intolerant,” and a

“hater.”

But regardless of the uproar, Prevost had made clear his position. Since he became pope, he has continued to speak out on these issues – certainly more so in the last year than Trump. In fact, pro-lifers and cultural conservatives have been complaining that Trump (in their view) has abandoned them on issues like abortion since the 2024 presidential campaign.

Since becoming pope, Leo has spoken out more against same-sex marriage and abortion and gender than Trump. Those are defining issues that make one’s conservatism (or lack thereof) clear.

The Pope Is a Republican

Obviously, these cultural-social-sexual views of Prevost accord with American conservative Republicans and directly oppose American liberal Democrats. As noted by Prevost’s brother Lou (in an interview with Piers Morgan), the pope is not “woke.” (Lou is a MAGA Trump supporter, which is why Trump says he “likes” Lou: “I like [the pope’s] brother Louis much better than I like him, because Louis is all MAGA.”)

Prevost spent over two decades in Peru. When he came back home to Illinois, he voted consistently in the state Republican primaries: in 2012, 2014, and 2016. He voted in the general elections in 2012, 2014, 2018, and 2024 (apparently skipping the 2020 election). He voted in the 2024 presidential election via absentee ballot, given that he was a cardinal in Rome that year.

To repeat, when he voted in primaries, he voted not in the Democratic primaries, but Republican.

The True Meaning of Conservatism

Trump and his most devoted followers protest that Pope Leo isn’t with the president on the war and immigration. We could

walk through the nuances of those issues. I've written here repeatedly on the pope and the war. This particular pope is an expert on Saint Augustine. He describes himself a "son of Augustine." He headed the international Augustinian order. Anyone with common sense ought to figure that this pope knows a thing or too about, say, Augustinian Just War doctrine, and should concede that he has thought much longer and more carefully about questions of the morality of war more than Donald Trump has.

As for immigration, I could do a separate piece on Leo on immigration, and would there need to make lots of distinctions between him and obnoxious liberal American bishops who are not the measured, careful thinker that the pope is.

But either way, conservatism – as we've long understood it – has never been defined by positions on immigration or even foreign policy, nor a particular military intervention abroad. There has long been a battle between isolationist and interventionist Republicans. A conservative like Pat Buchanan is restrictive on immigration and non-interventionist abroad. Trump himself had that stance in his first term, but not in the second.

Classic conservatism is understood as an attitude, a belief in what T.S. Eliot called the "permanent things." It is based on tradition, on what Russell Kirk called "an enduring moral order," on what Edmund Burke referred to as an "eternal contract" between the living, the dead, and those yet to be born.

Kirk said that conservatives believe "in the existence of certain abiding truths which govern the conduct of human society." Said Kirk: "Men and nations are governed by moral laws; and those laws have their origin in a wisdom that is more than human – in divine justice. At heart, political problems are moral and religious problems. The wise statesman tries to apprehend the moral law and govern his conduct

accordingly.”

Think about that.

Russell Kirk went further: “We have a moral debt to our ancestors, who bestowed upon us our civilization, and a moral obligation to the generations who will come after us. This debt is ordained of God. We have no right, therefore, to tamper impudently with human nature or with the delicate fabric of our civil social order.” Thus, the conservative opposes something like “gay marriage” or “gender transitioning.”

Quoting Edmund Burke, Kirk observed that, “The past is a great storehouse of wisdom; as Burke said, ‘The individual is foolish, but the species is wise.’ The conservative believes that we need to guide ourselves by the moral traditions, the social experience, and the whole complex body of knowledge bequeathed to us by our ancestors.”

Ronald Reagan believed that as well. In a speech at CPAC in February 1977, Reagan put it this way: “Conservative wisdom and principles are derived from willingness to learn, not just from what is going on now, but from what has happened before. The principles of conservatism are sound because they are based on what men and women have discovered through experience in not just one generation or a dozen, but in all the combined experience of mankind.” Reagan there was echoing a quote from G. K. Chesterton.

The likes of Reagan, Kirk, Burke, Chesterton, and William F. Buckley, Jr., noted that a religious foundation is essential to conservatism. They conceded that not all religious people are conservatives and not all conservatives are religious people. And yet, there could be no conservatism without a religious foundation.

Conservatives believe in time-tested values and ideals – the ones that rightly endure. This enduring moral order is based

on natural law and divine law. As for natural law, Cicero said: "True law is right reason in agreement with nature; it is of universal application, unchanging and everlasting." Saint Augustine referred to it as "the law written in the human heart ... the light we call the truth." As Saint Thomas Aquinas put it, natural law allows us to "know what we must do and what we must avoid. God has given this light or law at the creation." All of which bears on this crucial point and theme of this article: This is what Pope Leo believes. Robert Francis Prevost comes to this thinking from a well-formed and well-read Catholic tradition instilled in him over many decades. He had decades of Augustinian education. He did his doctoral work in Canon Law in Rome at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas, also known as the Angelicum.

The pope is the inheritor of two thousand years of such tradition. He upholds the Magisterial teachings of the Church. This pope gave an excellent speech early in his papacy (on May 17 to the Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice Foundation) clarifying the primacy of doctrine over indoctrination. His beliefs are anchored in centuries of carefully constructed doctrinal teachings.

This Is Not Donald Trump

You will notice, of course, that nothing I've laid out here should have a damned thing to do with whether one supports Donald Trump's current war policy or his position on, say, deportations or ICE. Matters like that do not determine whether you're a conservative.

It's highly debatable whether Donald Trump is a conscious conservative at all. I say that not to demean him, nor even to argue against his policies or voting for him. Trump is an altogether different politician. As for how his policy preferences align with conservative beliefs, I wrote a piece for The American Spectator noting that Trump (at least after

his first term) could check most of the boxes to qualify as a “Reagan conservative.” Trump expresses less of a classic, principled conservatism than a patriotic populism-nationalism. He believes in lower taxes and largely in free markets and smaller government. His restrained actions abroad in the first term contrast markedly with the first year of his second term, so much so that his supporters are debating whether this America First isolationist has morphed into a foreign interventionist, following less a paleoconservative bent than something more reflective of a neoconservatism that Trump’s most vociferous supporters once excoriated.

Donald Trump himself would surely concede that he has no intellectual or deep philosophical understanding of conservatism. He isn’t well read in that subject. You wouldn’t look to him for an informed contrast between paleoconservatives versus neoconservatives. And that’s fine. That’s not who he is. And yet, he and his supporters – despite his lack of philosophical-ideological underpinnings – are willing to issue full-throated denunciations of the current pope as “very liberal.” How would Donald Trump even know that? Unlike, say, real estate or the stock market, this just isn’t his area of expertise or even knowledge.

So, to repeat: how can Trump claim to know and insist and scream and shout that the pope is a liberal/leftist? The answer is as simple as it is silly: because Pope Leo isn’t with Donald Trump on Iran and maybe another issue or two. That’s astoundingly shallow, but that’s why Leo is getting rung up by Trump. If Leo was in his corner, Trump wouldn’t be calling him names. He would “like him,” just as he “likes” the pope’s brother.

Sure, some might argue that Trump’s current policies on, say, Iran and immigration are preferable to whatever “policy” the pope might have on those matters. But they shouldn’t take the leap – or follow the lead – of Trump in insisting that this makes Leo a liberal. As Pope Leo noted in his response to

Trump, he's not a politician. He's a pope.

Pope Leo is not liberal. He never has been. And he has always been more conservative than Donald Trump. And as the pope said, he is not afraid of the Trump administration and the accusations, nor should he be.