

POPE LEO XIV IS NOT FRANCIS II

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Lots of people are wondering whether Pope Leo XIV is a reformer in the same vein as Pope Francis, or more of a traditionalist like Francis' two predecessors. It depends on the issue, but to those who think he is a clone of Francis, they are wrong.

No sooner had Cardinal Robert Prevost been elected when some so-called progressives started celebrating what they claimed was a "woke" pope. Ironically, some right-wing firebrands were bemoaning that he is one. Neither was right—all the alarms that went off were false.

An article published on Alternet started cheering "Our New Woke Pope." Why? Because our new pope had criticized Vice President J.D. Vance for saying love should begin with loving your family, and then spread outwards to others.

Then Cardinal Prevost said on X that "J.D. Vance is wrong: Jesus doesn't ask us to rank our love for others."

It is absurd to conclude from this that the new pontiff is a "woke" pope. Vance was saying love must be set in proper order. Some Catholic theologians agree with him, and others do not. No matter, theological disputes are common in all religious circles, but standing alone they do not make anyone "woke." This is simply a childish way to politicize matters.

Then we have far-right commentator Laura Loomer. She branded our new pope "woke" and a "Marxist." She is badly educated.

To show how crazy those on the extreme left and right are, consider what *The Nation* said. It is a left-wing publication

that championed Stalin, the genocidal maniac. They began raising the flag for Pope Leo XIV because they saw in him what Pope Leo XIII stood for during his pontificate.

The Nation was right to say our new pope identifies with Leo XIII, but they were wrong to say that the late nineteenth and early twentieth century pope was a social justice warrior in the left-wing tradition. They heralded him for his “sharp critiques of capitalism.” Maybe if they actually read the 1891 encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, they wouldn’t have sounded so silly.

Pope Leo XIII wrote this encyclical eight years after Marx’s death in 1883. He foresaw the horrors that Marx’s ideology would deliver. He said that “ideal equality about which they entertain pleasant dreams would be in reality the leveling down of all to a like condition of misery and degradation.” He also made the case for private property, which is hardly an expression of socialism.

Orthodox Catholics will be happy to learn that Pope Leo XIV is strongly pro-life. He is opposed to abortion, euthanasia and assisted suicide. He is also pro-marriage and the family, properly understood.

He has criticized in no uncertain terms the “homosexual lifestyle” and “alternative families comprised of same-sex partners and their adopted children.” This is great news for practicing Catholics—the ones in the pews who actually pay the bills—but not for dissidents. He has also condemned gender ideology being taught in the schools of Peru. As such, he opposes the exploitation of sexually confused young people.

On immigration, Leo is much more in the liberal camp. He is opposed to the Trump policies and has even criticized the president of El Salvador for his crackdown on illegal immigration. How the heads of state are supposed to deal with those who are crashing their borders, causing misery for its

citizens, is something he may have to address.

Is Pope Leo XIV a Republican, a Democrat or an independent? He's a Republican. A registered Republican in Illinois, he pulled the GOP lever in the 2012, 2014 and 2016 elections. But apparently he did not vote in the 2016 general election and chose to vote by absentee ballot in 2024. It appears he is more of a Bush Republican than a Trump Republican. But he is certainly not a "woke" or "Marxist" activist.

Stylistically, Pope XIV is more measured and more traditional than Pope Francis. He is nowhere near as prolific a writer as Pope Benedict XVI, nor does he have the charisma of Saint John Paul II. But he is a thoughtful man who commands the respect of virtually everyone who has come to know him, and his missionary experience makes him a very special man. He is definitely not an ideologue.

Pope Leo XIV has expressed his gratitude to Pope Francis and will no doubt mimic parts of his legacy. But he is not going to be a rubber stamp for either progressives or traditionalists. He will carve his own legacy.

No one thought that an American cardinal would be elected the next pope. From everything we have learned, he did not lobby for this post. Maybe that's the way the Holy Spirit works.

It looks like practicing Catholics will have in Pope Leo XIV someone they can rally around. As for the dissidents, they are by nature an unhappy bunch, so now they can look forward to more days of glum. That's their natural step.

Congratulations to Pope Leo XIV.