

From the Pastor's Desk

Well, my dear friends, the wait is finally over. This past Tuesday I underwent successful cataract surgery and as of this writing I am seeing very clearly (the doctor said that it would take about a week for my vision to clear up completely). As always, I am grateful to God for this “little victory” in my life. As I have always said, place your faith and hope in God and he will never disappoint you. God’s time may not be our time; however, God’s time is always *kronotic*, that is, a moment of great opportunity. The opportunity for me is to once again freely be about my work of serving you and doing theology without ocular hindrance, which is God’s will for me and I am honored to serve God in this way. Thank you all for your prayerful support. I could never have made it without you.

I also wanted to take this opportunity to inform you of a special event that will take place during the first weekend of Advent. **On Saturday, November 29, 2025, Bishop Mark Bartchak will be making a pastoral visit to Visitation Parish. Bishop Mark will celebrate the 4:00 PM Mass and will gather with us for a dinner reception following the liturgy.** This is the official visitation of the Bishop to our parish that is supposed to take place every 5 years according to Canon Law. Bishop Mark has not been to our parish for 8 years now, due to the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic unfortunately disrupted his parish visitation schedule.

I want to underscore how important it is for the bishop to visit his parish communities. He is indeed our spiritual father. He is not coming to “Check up” on us. Rather, he is coming to be present to the faith community that he has entrusted to my care. I personally have a very good relationship with him, and I would like the same to be true of our parish. He will be more than willing to listen to all of us if we engage him in conversations rooted in mutual respect. I am asking that as many of you come to Mass on the evening of November 29th and attend the reception that follows. I promise you that the liturgy will be beautiful and the reception will be 5-star as we are accustomed to. Please sign up in the main vestibule either today or next week to indicate your intentions to join us for the reception.

The Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father Leo XIV, “Dilexi Te” (I have Loved you) to all Christians on the Love of the Poor

A Commentary and Review – Part I

Since people are always asking me what kind of pope I think that Leo XIV is going to be, I thought that I would allow you to discover that yourself by getting a sense of the first official document of his papacy. I am reading the document with our priest reading group, so I thought that I might provide you with something of a commentary and review so that you can understand what I feel will be one of the foremost efforts of his papacy, i.e., **preferential option for the poor.*

“I often wonder, even though the teaching of Sacred Scripture is so clear about the poor, why many people continue to think that they can safely disregard the poor,” Pope Leo XIV states in his first magisterial document, known by its Latin title, “Dilexi Te” (“I have loved you”), released October 9, 2025 by the Vatican. The document confirms his continuity with his Argentine predecessor, Pope Francis, on this fundamentally important subject.

“For Christians, the problem of the poor leads to the very heart of our faith,” Pope Leo says, because “the poor are not a sociological category, but the very ‘flesh’ of Christ.” He adds, “No Christian can regard the poor simply as a societal problem; they are part of our ‘family.’ They are ‘one of us.’”

He describes “love for the poor—whatever the form their poverty may take” as “the evangelical hallmark of a Church faithful to the heart of God. Indeed, one of the priorities of every movement of renewal within the Church has always been a preferential concern for the poor.”

In what is perhaps one of the most striking sections of the text, the first American pope quotes from Francis’ 2013 apostolic exhortation “The Joy of the Gospel,” saying, “We must continue, then, to denounce the ‘dictatorship of an economy that kills,’ and to recognize that ‘while the

earnings of a minority are growing exponentially, so too is the gap separating the majority from the prosperity enjoyed by those happy few.”

He attributes this imbalance to “ideologies that defend the absolute autonomy of the marketplace and financial speculation. Consequently, they reject the right of states, charged with vigilance for the common good, to exercise any form of control.” As a result of all this, he says, a “new tyranny is being born, invisible and often virtual, which unilaterally and relentlessly imposes its own laws and rules.”

Leo observes that “[t]here is no shortage of theories attempting to justify the present state of affairs or to explain that economic thinking requires us to wait for invisible market forces to resolve everything.” Nevertheless, he insists, “the dignity of every human person must be respected today, not tomorrow, and the extreme poverty of all those to whom this dignity is denied should constantly weigh upon our consciences.”

He recalls how Pope Francis, in his fourth and last encyclical, “Dilexit Nos” (“He loved us”), reminded us “that social sin consolidates a ‘structure of sin’ within society, and is frequently ‘part of a dominant mindset that considers normal or reasonable what is merely selfishness and indifference. This then gives rise to social alienation.’ It then becomes normal to ignore the poor and live as if they do not exist.”

This missionary pope—who spent half of his priestly life among the poor in Peru—insists that addressing poverty and its structural causes is a pressing need. Quoting Pope Francis and others, he says that addressing these causes “cannot be delayed, not only for the pragmatic reason of its urgency for the good order of society, but because society needs to be cured of a sickness which is weakening and frustrating it, and which can only lead to new crises. Welfare projects, which meet certain urgent needs, should be considered merely provisional responses.’ I can only state once more that inequality ‘is the root of social ills.’ Indeed, ‘it frequently becomes clear that, in practice, human rights are not equal for all.’”

Today’s economic model, “with its emphasis on success and self-reliance,” raises several questions, Pope Leo says:

Does this mean that the less gifted are not human beings? Or that the weak do not have the same dignity as ourselves? Are those born with fewer opportunities of lesser value as human beings? Should they limit themselves merely to surviving? The worth of our societies, and our own future, depends on the answers we give to these questions. Either we regain our moral and spiritual dignity or we fall into a cesspool.

Pope Leo reminds “all the members of the People of God” that they “have a duty to make their voices heard, albeit in different ways, in order to point out and denounce such structural issues, even at the cost of appearing foolish or naïve.”

He says, “Unjust structures need to be recognized and eradicated by the force of good, by changing mindsets but also, with the help of science and technology, by developing effective policies for societal change.” He reminds believers that “the Gospel message has to do not only with an individual’s personal relationship with the Lord, but also with something greater: ‘the Kingdom of God (cf. Lk 4:43); it is about loving God who reigns in our world.’”

Aware that this requires political decisions, Pope Leo expresses the hope “that we will see more and more ‘politicians capable of sincere and effective dialogue aimed at healing the deepest roots—and not simply the appearances—of the evils in our world.’ For ‘it is a matter of hearing the cry of entire peoples, the poorest peoples of the earth.’”