

ROBERT FRANCIS PREVOST IS THE FIRST US POPE

Picks the papal name Leo XIV; white smoke from Sistine Chapel billows into the sky on the cardinals' second day of voting to announce his election; bells of St Peter's Basilica and churches across Rome chime

AFP, VATICAN CITY: Robert Francis Prevost became the first pope from the United States on Thursday, picking the papal name Leo XIV after cardinals from around the world elected him leader of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics.

Tens of thousands of people packed in St Peter's Square cheered as Prevost appeared on the balcony of St Peter's Basilica, waving, smiling and bowing.

"Peace be with you," he told the crowds.

White smoke from the Sistine Chapel had billowed into the sky on the cardinals' second day of voting to announce his election in a secret conclave, while the bells of St Peter's Basilica and churches across Rome rang out.

Crowds of people rushed towards the square to watch the balcony of the basilica, which has been fitted out with red curtains for the first address to the world by the 267th pope.

The new pontiff, who succeeds Argentine reformer Pope Francis, was introduced in Latin with his



HABEMUS PAPAM: Newly-elected Pope Leo XIV, Robert Francis Prevost arrives on the main central loggia balcony of the St Peter's Basilica for the first time, after the cardinals ended the conclave, in The Vatican, on Thursday

CATHOLIC CHURCH'S NEW SPIRITUAL LEADER

Some 133 "Princes of the Church" from five continents - the largest and most international conclave ever - began voting on Wednesday

Sworn to secrecy, on pain of excommunication, their only means of communicating their progress to the outside world was by sending up smoke through the chimney of

chosen papal name.

"It's an amazing feeling," said an elated Joseph Brian, a 39-year-old chef from Bel-

the Sistine Chapel

On Wednesday evening and then again on Thursday lunchtime, the smoke was black, eliciting disappointed sighs from the tens of thousands watching

On Thursday just after 6 pm (1600 GMT) the smoke emitted was white, confirming that the Catholic Church has a new spiritual leader

fast in Northern Ireland, who came with his mother to Rome for the spectacle.

"I'm not an overly religious person but,

FROM MISSIONARY TO PONTIFF

A Chicago native and Peruvian citizen, Robert Francis Prevost served as a missionary and archbishop in Peru

Was twice elected prior general of the Augustinians

Pope Francis had appointed him as the archbishop of Chiclayo and later as the president of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America

Maintaining a low profile in Rome, Prevost was influential, notably overseeing the inclusion of women in the voting process for bishop nominations

being here with all these people just blew me away," he told AFP as people around him jumped up and down in excitement.

There were euphoric scenes as one priest sat on someone's shoulders waving a Brazilian flag and another lifted a heavy crucifix into the air in jubilation.

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