

Goan priests welcome Pope Leo XIV with hope and joy

Praise 'historic,' 'significant' election, call decision from conclave 'a powerful moment for the Catholic church'

KARSTEN MIRANDA

MARGAO: The election of Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost as Pope Leo XIV has prompted thoughtful reflections across the Catholic community in Goa, with priests sharing their perspectives with *O Herald* on what this new pontificate might mean for the Church and the world.

Fr Aleixo Menezes, Parish Priest of St John the Baptist Church in Benaullim, expressed surprise at the selection but shared his enthusiasm. "Let me humbly acknowledge that I did not expect that His Eminence, Robert Francis Cardinal Prevost would be chosen as the Pope. However, I am extremely happy that he is our Pope for three reasons: Firstly, the name Leo XIV, after Leo XIII, who was Missionary Pope who said *Filii tui India, administri tibi salutis* and who gave the bold Social Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. Secondly, the first greeting as Pope Leo XIV was Peace be with you all, calling for peace in the world. Thirdly, remembering Pope Francis and a Synodal Church, Pope Leo XIV seems to convey that he wants to carry forward what Pope Francis began: Church of the Second Vatican Council and Synodality."

Fr Bolmax Pereira, Parish Priest of St Francis Xavier Church in Chicalim, the election brought to mind biblical wisdom. "The new Pope, His Holiness Pope Leo XIV arrived carrying so many surprises. I am happy to know that he is expected to carry forward the legacy of progressive reforms and efforts by Pope Francis. In Pope Leo XIV, I wish to see a Shepherd with Strength of a Lion to lead the Church and world through the current crisis, ecological zeal to keep reforming and renewing and a champion of Social Justice in the world. This election made it more clear to me the understanding of 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways' as God says in Isaiah 55: 8-9."

Catholic Association of Goa hails Pope Leo XIV as 'Pope of the Commoners'

MARGAO: The Catholic Association of Goa (CAG) has welcomed the election of Pope Leo XIV with joy and hope, praying that his leadership will usher in a renewed era of transformation for the Church and the world. In a statement issued on Friday, the CAG said it views the new pontificate as one rooted in humility, social justice, and service to the poor.

Pope Leo XIV, born Robert Francis Prevost in Chicago on September 14, 1955, has spent much of his priestly life ministering to the marginalised in Peru. The CAG said it rejoices in the fact that the 69-year-old brings with him the perspective of the subalterns and hoped he would continue in the footsteps of Pope Francis, "as a Pope of the Commoners".

"We pray that his pontificate, as his adopted name suggests, will be inspired by Pope Leo XIII—called the Pope of Catholic Social Teaching—and will promote the values of truth, justice, peace, equality and dignity of every human being, irrespective of creed, caste or class," said Adv. Nick Colaco, President of the Catholic Association of Goa.

Senior citizens face Aadhar correction hurdles in Margao

MARGAO: Senior citizens in Margao are being forced to navigate an expensive and convoluted process to correct errors in their Aadhar cards—mistakes many claim were made by data entry staff during registration.

Citizens now face a bill of nearly Rs 2,800 for even minor corrections, such as spelling mistakes.

The process involves submitting a legal affidavit and publishing a notice in the official gazette.

On Friday, a group of disgruntled citizens queuing outside an Aadhar correction centre voiced their anger. "We submitted all valid documents showing the correct name," said Jeron Colaco of Arlem-Raia, who was assisting an 83-year-old.

"But due to an error by the staff, we're now being told to produce an affidavit costing Rs 700 and pay Rs 2,100 for a gazette notification."

Colaco described the procedure as a "lootmar" (daylight robbery) and called on the government to intervene. "This places an unfair burden on the elderly, many of whom already face health and mobility issues."

The situation has raised concerns over the lack of accountability and accessible grievance redressal in the Aadhar correction system. Citizens are demanding urgent reforms to make the process simpler, cheaper, and more transparent, especially for those reliant on Aadhar for essential services.



Pope Leo XIV's Indian visits, marked by humility, prayer, and pastoral care, continue to inspire those who met him and bear testimony to the deeply spiritual nature of his leadership



Fr Nelson Sequeira, Director of Good Shepherd Institute of Theology in Rachol, noted the significance of the papal name. "The moment I heard that Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost had taken the name Leo XIV, it was clear to me that his Papacy will be focused on social justice. Justice and Peace was what Christ proclaimed through love. The first speech of the New Pontiff was in those lines, He is a messenger of Peace. I foresee that with his background of working in the missions, and as Prior of the Augustinians his papacy will be marked with contemplation and action. He aims to build relationships and hence reached out to the Church of Rome, remembering his faithful of Chiclayo in Peru and the Church all over. Pope Leo XIV will surely carry on the legacy of Pope Francis of reaching out to the marginalised. I thank God for the choice of such a shepherd for the Church in these modern times."

Fr Albano Fernandes, Director of Diocesan Family Service Centre, emphasized the spiritual dimension of the papal election. "The announcement of the new Pope in the person of Leo XIV is joyful news for the Church. It may appear to be a surprise to many but I personally believe that since the whole process of election is guided by the Holy Spirit, it's the choice that determines God's Will. I read that though he was born in Chicago, he lived most of his Priestly Life as a missionary in Peru. Though I don't know him, that's what connected me with him. In his first speech, he brought the peace of the Risen Lord to the hearts of the people and families. He expressed his desire to build bridges of unity and peace. He recited the Hail Mary at the end which was impressive. I am confident that he will carry forward the good things Pope Francis began and take the Church to the level of the true kingdom of God."

Fr Victor Ferrao, Parish Priest of St Francis Xavier Church in Borim, reflected on the symbolism of the papal name choice. "Pope Leo XIV's mission heralds continuity, bearing Pope Francis' synodality and love for the poor. The name that the Holy Father took recalls Pope Leo XIII, who embodies solidarity with workers, steering clear of shades of communism signals again continuity with Pope Francis' rejection of hardcore crass capitalism. We in Goa, welcome the new Holy Father and open ourselves to God who will inaugurate a new era through the Papacy of Pope Leo XIV."

Fr Agnelo Pinheiro, Convenor of the Apostolate of Inter-Religious Dialogue, highlighted the new Pope's diverse background. "Pope Leo XIV is a man with multifaceted experience given to his upbringing in Chicago, Illinois, his priestly formation as a religious among the Augustinians, his missionary service in Peru, his guidance as Prior General of the Augustinians and finally prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops. Hence, he is blessed with a mind to understand all and a heart to reach out to everyone. His simple, calm and humble demeanour when he made his first appearance as Pope on the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica bears witness to a Good Shepherd who is warm hearted, welcoming, approachable and compassionate. May God bless our new Holy Father!"

As the Church in Goa and around the world adjusts to this new chapter in Catholic leadership, these reflections from local priests offer a window into the hopes, expectations, and prayers accompanying the beginning of Pope Leo XIV's pontificate.

INDIAN BISHOPS WELCOME POPE LEO XIV, PLEDGE SUPPORT AND PRAYERS

MARGAO: The Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI) and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) have extended their heartfelt congratulations and deep gratitude following the announcement of Pope Leo XIV's election as the 267th successor of Saint Peter and the new Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church.

The CCBI's President, Cardinal Filipe Neri Ferrão, who also serves as the Archbishop of Goa and Daman, was among the cardinals who participated in the conclave that led to the election of the new Pope. Offering prayers and thanksgiving, Archbishop of Bangalore and CCBI Vice-President Peter Machado, on behalf of the Latin Church in India, welcomed the new Pontiff with reverence and hope.

"With faith and filial love, we welcome Pope Leo XIV, rejoicing in his election and entrusting his pontificate to the providence of God," stated Archbishop Machado.

The CCBI also expressed gratitude to the College of Cardinals for their prayerful discernment during the conclave, stating that the Holy Spirit had clearly guided the process.

In a message of solidarity and spiritual support, the CCBI added that the Latin Church in India

would offer constant prayers for Pope Leo XIV, invoking divine blessings as he begins his papal ministry.

"May his pontificate be marked by grace, courage, and deep love. We invite all the faithful in India and all people of goodwill to join us in praying for Pope Leo XIV as he leads the Universal Church," Archbishop Machado said.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI), which represents the Latin, Syro-Malabar, and Syro-Malankara Churches, echoed the sentiment in a separate statement, voicing joy and reverence on behalf of the Church in India.

Assuring the new Pope of its unwavering support, CBCI Secretary General and Archbishop of Delhi Anil Couto declared: "The Church in India pledges its total loyalty and allegiance to the new Pope Leo XIV, and assures His Holiness of our fervent prayers that the Holy Spirit who inspired the Cardinal-electors to choose Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost as the successor of St Peter may continue to guide and strengthen His Holiness in the discharge of the duties of the Petrine Ministry for the good of the Catholic Church and for the well-being of the entire humanity."

High Court faults PWD for incomplete sewerage lines

Puts show cause notices on hold, warns MMC not to act until connections are provided

Team Herald

MARGAO: The High Court (HC) of Bombay at Goa has directed the Margao Municipal Council (MMC) to keep show cause notices against residents without sewage connections in abeyance, stating that the Public Works Department (PWD) has not yet completed the sewer network in the affected areas.

The division bench of Justices Bharati Dangle and Nivedita P Mehta said the civic body must not dispose of any such showcause notices merely based on tentative timelines given by the PWD or Sewerage and Infrastructural Development Corporation of Goa Limited (SIDCGL) for sewerage connection rollout. "The showcause notices should be kept pending till the actual connections are made available to the residents," the court said.

The direction came during a hearing on a public interest litigation (PIL)

regarding pollution in the Salpem Lake and River Sal. The PIL was filed by Professor Antonio Alvares, with senior advocate Gauravardhan Nadkarni serving as Amicus Curiae. The court reviewed progress made by the authorities and took on record the minutes of a

THAT'S AN ORDER

Core Committee meeting held on May 2, chaired by the MMC Chief Officer. The document, which was also signed by the Municipal Engineer Grade I, was marked 'X' for identification.

Among the issues raised during the hearing, the Amicus Curiae sought a specific direction for the Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB) to inspect the septic tanks installed by the South Goa Planning and Development Authority (SGPDA) at the Margao market before the start of the monsoon. Government advocate Manish Salkar,

representing both the GSPCB and SGPDA, assured the court that compliance would be ensured within four weeks.

The bench agreed with Nadkarni's concern that decisions on showcause notices should not rely solely on when the PWD says it expects to release connections, reiterating that residents can only be held accountable once actual access is provided.

Further, the court directed that a copy of the PWD's sewerage status report and updated map be furnished to the Amicus Curiae in advance. The matter will now be taken up again on June 24.

The High Court's directions are part of a broader effort to ensure that civic action over sewage discharge is accompanied by functional infrastructure, especially in low-lying parts of Margao still lacking network access despite long-standing complaints of pollution.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

ANASTASIO MENDES



A flock of cranes line up to catch prey as a tractor ploughs a waterlogged field in Siolim

Margao Council goes digital with launch of official website

Team Herald

MARGAO: In a bid to enhance governance and streamline service delivery, the Margao Municipal Council (MMC) on Friday launched its official website, enabling residents to access civic services online.

The digital initiative aims to reduce footfall at the municipal office while promoting transparency and efficiency in public service.

At the launch, Margao MLA Digambar Kamat praised the council's adoption of technology and urged officials to address public grievances within 24 hours. "There should be constructive criticism, and the council must take responsibility and respond swiftly," he said, highlighting India's growing digital strength.

The website will offer services such as online document applications, bill payments, and a platform for grievance redressal.

MMC Chairperson Damodar Shirodkar said the launch marks the first step in a broader effort to digitally empower citizens. "This website will help deliver better services. Eventually, all benefits will be available without needing to visit the office," he said.

The initiative places Margao alongside other Goan urban bodies embracing digital governance in line with the Smart City and Digital India missions.

Goa set to open second govt medical college at ESIC Hospital, Margao

Team Herald

MARGAO: In a major boost to South Goa's healthcare and medical education landscape, the state is set to open its second government medical college at the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) Hospital in Margao.

Admissions for the medical college will begin in the current academic year. We are making every effort to start the college this year itself

— Pramod Sawant, Chief Minister

The new institution, expected to commence operations in the 2025-26 academic year, aims to reduce the need for patients to travel long distances to Goa Medical College (GMC) in Bambolim. Notably, 50% of seats will be reserved for Goan students.

The Union government has approved Goa's proposal to convert the existing ESIC Hospital into a full-fledged medical college, marking a significant milestone in the state's push to expand healthcare infrastructure.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant confirmed, "Admissions for the medical college will begin in the current academic year. We are making every effort to start the college this year itself."

Social activist and Margao resident Prabhav Naik welcomed the development, recalling that plans for a medical college in South Goa had first been announced in 2009 by then Union Labour Minister Oscar Fernandes. Those plans stalled due to delays in land allocation.

Naik now urged the government to focus on upgrading ESIC Hospital's facilities in tandem with the college's launch. "The government must improve infrastructure, increase medical staff, and expand services to ensure adequate healthcare, especially for our labour force," he said.

MAX. TEMP 35.5 °C
MIN. TEMP 27.1 °C

idharudhar



We didn't destroy it, that's just an ongoing Smart City project