Pope Leo XIV and Mercy



Sisters of Mercy joined Catholics around the world rejoicing at the news of a new pontiff, and even more so when they learned who it was. Pope Leo XIV has many ties to Mercy through his family and his ministries.

Born on the southside of Chicago in the former Mercy Hospital and Medical Center at the corner of South Prairie Avenue and 34th Street, he is from the same city as our Institute President Sister Susan Sanders, a city with a strong Mercy presence.

But he had Mercy influence in the family as well: His mother's sister was a Sister of Mercy known as Sister Mary Sulpice Martinez who was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1903. She graduated from St. Xavier Academy in Chicago, Illinois – today known at Mother McAuley Liberal Arts High School, and entered the Sisters of Mercy at the age of 19. She earned a bachelor's degree in French from St. Xavier University in Chicago, Illinois, a college sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy. She also held a master's degree in theology from Dominican College of St Thomas Aquinas. Sister Mary Sulpice taught at Catholic elementary and high schools for over 38 years

in the Archdiocese of Chicago, including briefly teaching at her alma mater St. Xavier Academy as her last teaching ministry.

Pope Leo next encountered the Sisters of Mercy in Chulucanas, Peru, where he served as a missionary from 1985 to 1986 and from 1988 to 1998. The Sisters of Mercy have a long history of working in Peru, particularly in rural and impoverished areas, serving in various roles like educators, healthcare providers, and social justice advocates. The Sisters of Mercy from the United States, sponsored by the Chicago Province, arrived in Sicuani, Peru, in 1961, responding to the call for missionaries in Latin America.

Sister Sheila Murphy, who served in Peru for 13 years, met Father Prevost several times. “As Sisters of Mercy we have shared ministry with the Augustinian community in Chulucanas, Peru. We also share similar values such as community, charity, service and hospitality. As Pope Leo brings these gifts to a world hungering for world peace, we feel blessed to know these will be Leo’s guiding lights,” said Sister Sheila.

Sister Patricia Mulderick also met the man she knew as “Padre Roberto” in Chulucanas during his first mission trip in Peru and described him as a “positive person” who was “low-key and humble … but not at all low in caring and compassion.”

He was always interested in their discussions over dinner over the plight of the poor, she said. “He was always attentive and interested.”

In the statement Sister Susan Sanders, president of the leadership team of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, said: “It is my hope that in his pastoral approach, our new Pope speaks truth to the powerful and, in his of style of living, models the lifestyle and concerns of the powerless.”

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