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Our Lady of Good Counsel School Celebrates Election of Pope Leo XIV

Augustinian and American Pontiff Inspires Pride and Reflection in Staten Island Community

STATEN ISLAND, NY — Excitement filled the halls of Our Lady of Good Counsel School as students and staff witnessed the historic moment Pope Leo XIV, an American and member of the Augustinian order, emerged on the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica. The news sparked celebration throughout the Staten Island Catholic school, where the connection to the new pontiff runs deep.

"Our students had been asking all week if the next pope might be an American," said Ms. Tara Hynes, principal of Our Lady of Good Counsel School. "When we saw him on the balcony and heard his name, the building erupted in cheers—not just because he's American, but because he's Augustinian. That connection runs deep here."

Though the Augustinian Academy, which once shared the school's campus, closed in the late 1960s, its influence endures. The former minor seminary produced nearly 250 friars, and its legacy is preserved in the Augustinian Hall of Fame that still graces the school's second floor.

The school continues to operate in the Augustinian tradition, guided by the values of *Veritas* (Truth), *Unitas* (Unity), and *Caritas* (Love). These principles are integrated into academic and spiritual life, fostering a holistic approach to education.

"These values are woven into everything we do," Ms. Hynes explained. "From academic excellence to acts of service like our math fundraiser for St. Jude's Children's Hospital, and food and coat drives for our in-house pantry, we teach our students to lead with heart and purpose."

Ms. Jann Amato, Regional Superintendent for the Staten Island Catholic School Region, noted the significance of the school's enduring connection to the Augustinian tradition. "It's deeply moving to see one of our schools so rooted in the same Augustinian tradition as our new Holy Father," she said. "It reaffirms our mission to nurture students not only in academic excellence but in faith, unity, and service."

Leadership at Our Lady of Good Counsel remains inspired by the community-driven spirit of the Augustinians. The school's current pastor, Fr. Louis Jerome, is himself a former student who vividly remembers the Augustinian priests who shaped his faith and vocation—including Fr. Robert Regan, OSA, who built the church, and Fr. James Galligan, OSA, who served as pastor during his time at Our Lady of Good Counsel. "The friars understood that community is everything. That's true of our school, too," Ms. Hynes added. "Pope Leo XIV spoke of building bridges. That's what we try to do here—bridging faith and academics, compassion and action, school and community."

To commemorate the papal election, the school is planning special recognitions at its upcoming Student Awards Ceremony in June. Judge Daniel Leddy, an alumnus of Augustinian Academy, will once again present the Augustinian Award to two seventh-grade students. This year, the honor takes on new significance.

The school also plans to invite alumni to share their stories with current students. Classes will revisit the Augustinian Alumni Hallway and explore the artifacts that showcase the school's rich heritage. "Last year, as part of our Centennial Anniversary, students uncovered photos and clippings about our Augustinian roots," Ms. Hynes said. "This year, we'll ask them to go deeper—to learn, reflect, and be inspired by a pope who once walked the path of the friars who helped build our school and parish."

As Pope Leo XIV begins leading the universal Church, the mission of Our Lady of Good Counsel School—*"to foster the formation of the whole child, instilling virtues and habits of heart and mind for service to others"*—resonates more profoundly than ever.

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Photo Captions:



Fr. Louis Jerome, pastor of Our Lady of Good Counsel School in Staten Island, joins students in watching the historic announcement of Pope Leo XIV's election on May 8, 2025