



**Bishop Hicks' Column**  
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**The Leo Effect: Reflecting After 100 Days**



In the world of leadership, there is a common practice: after the first one hundred days in office, we pause to reflect. What direction is this new leader taking us in? What tone has been set? Where might we be headed?

In these early months, we are beginning to see the kind of shepherd God has given us. The “Leo Effect,” as I like to call it, is the fruit of his presence. It is the blessings, the new stirrings, and the hopeful signs already emerging in our Church and in our world.

At a recent Presbyteral Council meeting, one of our [Augustinian](#) priests told me that, since Pope Leo is himself an Augustinian, they have noticed a marked increase in young men expressing interest in the priesthood. That is the Leo Effect in action. These are ripples of inspiration that move from Rome all the way to local parishes and communities like ours.

Another question I have been asked many times in recent weeks is this: will Pope Leo XIV choose Chicagoland as the first place he visits? People have wondered if he might return to his roots in the south suburbs, visit his old neighborhood in [Dolton](#), grab a slice of his favorite pizza, or even celebrate Mass at White Sox Park. As wonderful as that would be, and as much as I would personally love to see it, I usually remind people that his first stop is more likely to be a place in urgent need of healing, reconciliation, or peace. Perhaps the Holy Land, perhaps Ukraine, or perhaps another corner of the world that needs his pastoral presence. But who knows? The Holy Spirit guides these journeys, and for now we simply wait in joyful anticipation.

People close to Pope Leo have said, “He listens more than he talks.” That in itself is part of the Leo Effect. In an age of noise and constant headlines, the witness of a leader who listens deeply is striking. His way of leadership is not rooted in quick soundbites but in steady gestures of closeness and compassion. Early in his pontificate, [he celebrated Mass with the homeless](#) and then shared a meal with them. He has spoken often of the [“fire of love” that must burn within us](#), not a fire that remains hidden, but one that spreads outward in compassion, justice, and peace.

Another sign of the Leo Effect is his bridge-building across cultures. Born in the United States, [formed as a missionary in Peru](#), and shaped by the Augustinian spirit of community and humility, Pope Leo embodies the universality of the Church. His very life story unites North and South America, English and Spanish, tradition, and modernity.

Pope Leo has also expressed concern about pressing global issues. He has spoken about the [moral questions surrounding artificial intelligence](#), reminding us not to allow technology, money, or power to displace God. [He has called for peace in conflict zones](#), urging the world to pursue reconciliation. He has also reminded us that the greatness of the Church is not measured in status or wealth, but in holiness and service. Recently, he approved a new [Mass for the Care of Creation](#), highlighting his commitment to safeguarding our common home and encouraging all believers to pray and act for the protection of God’s earth.

At the same time, he has shown deep respect for tradition. When he walked out onto the balcony of St. Peter’s, [he reclaimed the use](#)

[of the mozzetta](#), a traditional papal vestment symbolizing continuity with history. He also revived [the ancient practice of personally bestowing the pallium](#) on new archbishops. These gestures remind us that while Pope Leo leads the Church into new challenges, he remains anchored in her history and symbols. His leadership balances continuity with creativity.

Many have also noted his warmth and relatability. He is approachable, enjoys simple pastimes like [baseball](#), [tennis](#), and [word games](#), and speaks plainly from the heart. These touches of humanity remind us

that the pope is not a distant figure but a pastor walking with his flock.

The Leo Effect is nothing less than the Holy Spirit reminding us that God is alive and active in His Church. And just as the world pauses after one hundred days to reflect on a leader, let us pause to recognize the Spirit's work through Pope Leo XIV. As we pray for our new Holy Father, let us also commit ourselves to being open to the impact the Leo Effect can have on our own lives, to become people of unity, compassion, and love that set the world aflame.