



AUGUST NEWSLETTER



ON LOCATION

WELCOME!

ETERNAL CITY TIP-OFF NEWSLETTER | AUGUST EDITION

Your Cats will tip-off in Rome in just three short months! As we approach game day, we're excited to share information about Pope Leo XIV's unique connection to sports, along with some important reminders as you plan your trip.

POPE LEO XIV & SPORTS

As a native Chicagoan, Pope Leo grew up a big White Sox fan. There's even **a video of him** at Game 1 of the 2005 World Series cheering on the Sox.

Leo's sports fandom didn't stop when he became His Holiness. For example, in June 2026, former White Sox catcher A.J. Pierzynski, who was behind the plate at that Game 1, gave Leo the ball that was the last out of the game he attended over 20 years ago.

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CONFERENCE WITH SPORTS FIGURES

Also in June 2026, Pope Leo and the Vatican organized a two-day conference over a variety of topics with about 80 high-level sports figures. They gathered to discuss the importance of sports in their lives and its ability to impact the world.

You can read Scott Soshnick's Sportico article about his experience at this conference and Pope Leo's commitment to sports starting on the next page.



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POPE LEO ON SPORTS: INSIGHTS FROM A PERSONAL MEETING

BY SCOTT SOSHINICK
JUNE 22, 2026

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(<https://www.sportico.com/business/sports/2026/pope-leo-sports-discussion-1234936587/>)

ROME—I had a chat with the Pope the other day. I left The Vatican believing that **sports** has never been more important.

My exchange with **Pope Leo** was the culmination of two-plus days of discussions, organized by the Vatican, on topics deemed critically important to the leader of the Catholic Church—things such as artificial intelligence and humanity, which was a central theme of Leo’s encyclical, **Magnifica Humanitas**, comprised of some 42,300 words.

Being a native New Yorker, of course I brought up Magnifica Basketballitas™ when talking about the Knicks, who galvanized the city like never before. The team’s run to the NBA title made an **entire city** downright giddy—hadn’t seen that before. Also, I saw Jim Dolan beaming.

The entire affair was off the record, so I can’t completely share who was there or what they said. I can say this: The 80-or-so people who participated in the retreat at Borgo Laudato Si, the Pope’s retreat outside of Rome, really, really like sports.

There were former professional athletes, including household names with championship rings. There were too many Olympians to count. There was even a diplomat who witnessed ping-pong diplomacy 55 years ago. I lost count of how many people came up to me, sharing a favorite sports moment and how it made them feel. They all saw sports as a conduit to a better world.

The Pope in his prayer intention for the month of June invited people to pray for the values of sports.

“May those who play, train or cheer discover in sport a universal language that brings cultures together, unites peoples and sows respect, solidarity and personal growth,” he said.



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Some of the participants, such as AC Milan owner Gerry Cardinale and basketball Hall of Famer Grant Hill, approved of my sharing their names and thoughts on the gathering.

Cardinale joined me for a discussion on the power and influence of sports. The **RedBird Capital** founder credited the Vatican for its willingness to explore collaborations with the private sector in ways that can be synergistic with its agenda.

“Sports by definition is a form of public-private partnership, which comes with an implicit civic duty and responsibilities to the communities in which they play,” he said.

A product of Chicago’s South Side, Leo fancies the White Sox, who—checks standings— are doing fairly well this season.

I brought the Pope a gift, a book written in part by a friend, **Baseball as a Road to God**.

Turns out lots of folks bring gifts. Leo graciously accepts them, turns to his left and passes whatever it is to an assistant, who in turn stacks them for safe keeping. The sports haul would make even Michael Rubin jealous.

During our visit, Hill gifted the Pope a trio of jerseys from the team of which he’s an investor, including the Atlanta Hawks. Someone whispered to me that earlier in the week the ambassadors from Canada, Mexico and the U.S., which are collectively hosting the World Cup right now, showed up and brought Leo a soccer ball.

“The Pope is a well-known sports fan, and he recognizes the importance of values and cultural identity to the sports ecosystem,” Cardinale said. “I’m intrigued about a potential collaboration with the Vatican for RedBird’s sports teams and projects.”

I can see it already: Coming soon to Paramount+: The Pontiff & The Rock!

The assembled guests also discussed things such as courageous leadership and aging with dignity. I’m biased, of course, but sports won the day; it elicited emotions and memories and smiles. What became clear, and what Leo knows, is that athletes and team owners have outsized influence, and he wants them to use it.



ON LOCATION

Some in attendance at the Dialogues—a collaboration with The Vatican’s Laudato Si Higher Education Center, Handshake Strategies, the University of Notre Dame and Deloitte Switzerland—had been ***watching the World Cup on TV***.

More than one said they felt the Tartan Army’s joy halfway around the world.

Hill, not surprisingly, was popular. The audience really seemed to enjoy his memories of passing the ball to Christian Laettner.

“With sport as a main theme of the event, it illustrates the true power it has for change,” Hill said. “There’s such a need in this moment for its example to foster global community and diplomacy. The fact that the Pope recognizes its importance says it all.”

I can just picture Leo, as a Windy City kid, skipping school to watch Hoyt Wilhelm or Minnie Minoso. For what it’s worth, I can’t picture Leo calling it Rate Field, instead of Comiskey Park.

Because of his fandom and appreciation of history, it’s unlikely the Pope took offense when sports consultant Marc Ganis, another participant, shared his view of who Chicagoans put atop their list of favorite sons. “I told him he was second to Michael Jordan,” Ganis said.

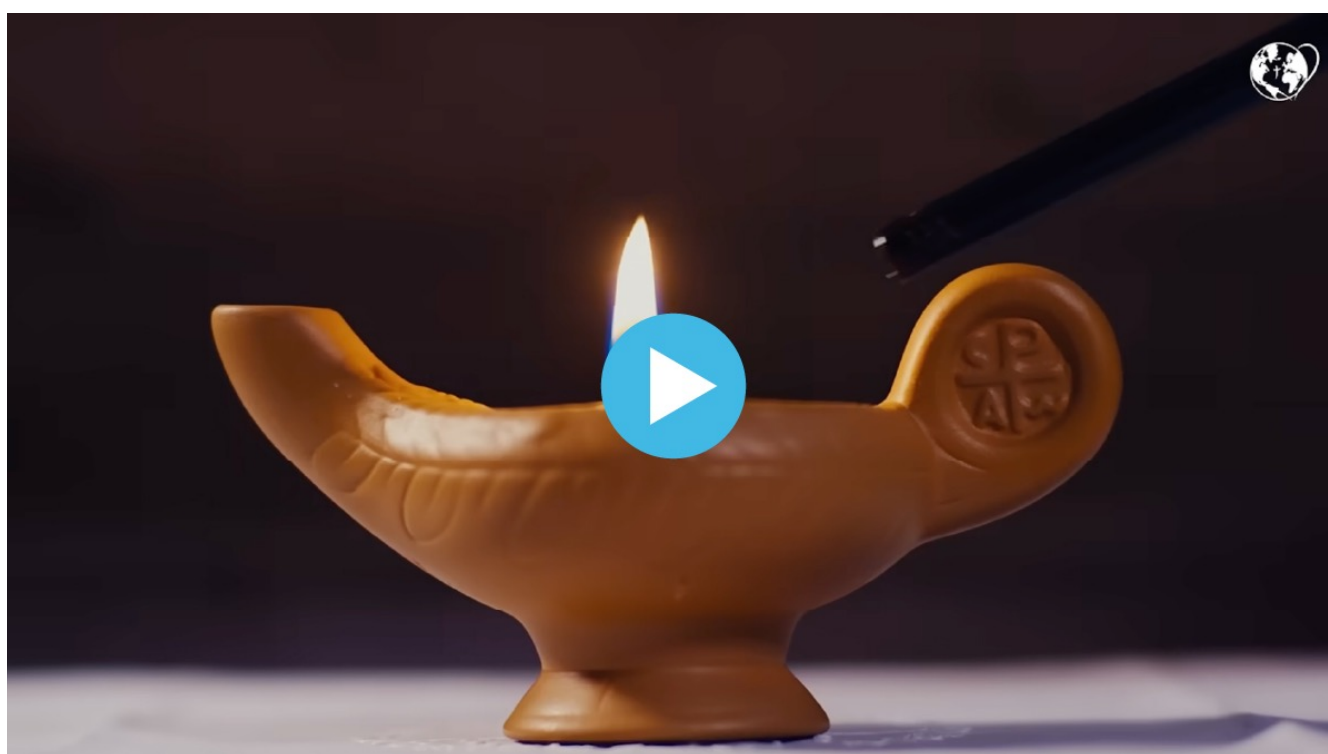
Having been briefed by Ganis on what he planned to say, I watched closely for the Pope’s reaction. He smiled.

POPE LEO'S JUNE PRAYER INTENTION

THE VALUES OF SPORTS

In June's prayer, Pope Leo invited those to pray "for the values of sports". The values of sports can bring people together through respect, teamwork, and collaboration. His Holiness urges us to lean into these aspects of sports and not focus on the spirit of "empty rivalry" that is often highlighted.

Please click below to view Pope Leo XIV's June prayer for the values of sports.



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POPE LEO XIV'S BIOGRAPHY FROM THE *AUGUSTINIAN COMPANION*

A native of Chicago, Pope Leo was born Robert Francis Prevost on September 14, 1955.

He attended the Minor Seminary of the Augustinians in Holland, Mich., and in 1977 earned a degree in mathematics from Villanova University. That same year, he entered the novitiate of the Order of St. Augustine in St. Louis, in the Province of Our Mother of Good Counsel headquartered in Chicago.

He professed his first vows in 1978 and made his solemn vows in 1981. He completed a master of divinity degree at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and was ordained a priest in 1982 at the Augustinian College of St. Monica in Rome.



Following his return to the Americas, he began over a decade of ministry in Peru.

In 1999, he was elected prior provincial of the Midwest Augustinian Province of Our Mother of Good Counsel, and in 2001, prior general of the worldwide Augustinian Order—a role to which he was re-elected in 2007.

After completing his second term as prior general, he returned to Chicago in 2013, serving in leadership and formation. In 2014, Pope Francis named him apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Chiclayo, Peru, and Prevost was ordained a bishop at the Cathedral of St. Mary in Chiclayo that December on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

He served as bishop of Chiclayo from 2015 to 2023, while also leading and advising within the Peruvian Episcopal Conference. In 2019, he was appointed to the Congregation for the Clergy, and a year later to the Congregation for Bishops.



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In January 2023, then-Bishop Robert Prevost, OSA, returned to Rome and was named prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops and president of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America. He was created cardinal on September 30, 2023, receiving the Deaconry of Santa Monica (a fitting choice for an Augustinian), and in February 2024 was elevated to the Order of Bishops and assigned the Suburbicarian Church of Albano.

Shortly afterward on May 8, 2025, he was elected pope. “I announce to you a great joy; we have a pope!,” said Cardinal Protodeacon Dominique Mamberti, in Latin. “The most eminent and most reverend lord, Lord Robert Francis Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church Prevost, who has taken the name Leo XIV.”

“To see him emerge on that balcony, it was like seeing a family member—our brother!” remembers Prior Provincial Fr. Robert P. Hagan, OSA, “We were speechless: so proud and yet so humbled at the same time. Pope Leo is an unassuming man. He is incredibly gifted and spent his whole life in the service of God’s people. He has devoted his ministry to serving the poor, building bridges, and bringing people together. He consistently keeps in mind those living on the margins. I am excited to watch him continue this important work as our Holy Father.”



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IMPORTANT EU ENTRY INFORMATION

ENTRY/EXIT SYSTEM

We want to remind you of some requirements necessary for your entry into the European Union.

The European Union now requires all non-EU travelers to submit their biometric information at its borders via the Entry/Exit System (EES). This system will collect your fingerprints and face-scan to streamline the process upon the entry and exit of the EU.

The personal information collected by the EES will be kept by the EU to verify visitor movement and ensure travelers are not overstaying the 90-day grace period. Please click below to review more information regarding this new Entry/Exit System.

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PLANNING FOR YOUR TRIP

IN NEED OF ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE?

If you or any of your guests need any additional assistance or wheelchair accessibility while on your visit to Italy, please click the button below and complete the form so we can better assist you.

[ADA FORM](#)

CHECK YOUR PASSPORT

Please be sure to check the expiration date on your passport to confirm it is not out of date or that it expires within six months of your trip. This is something that is commonly overlooked and can create a great deal of stress. Airlines will not allow you to board a flight to Italy if your passport is expired, so we highly recommend you start the renewal process now, as this process takes the same amount of time as a new application.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel insurance can assist with the unexpected: natural disasters, medical issues, flight cancellations, even lost luggage. Because travel packages are fully non-refundable, On Location highly recommends purchasing travel insurance through Allianz. No one plans for unexpected challenges to arise, so we recommend you protect the investment you have made in your trip.

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