

The Economic and Political Philosophy of Pope Leo XIV: A Speculative Essay

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Abstract

This working paper, generated with the assistance of Grok 3, an artificial intelligence assistant, speculatively examines the potential economic and political philosophy of Pope Leo XIV, Robert Prevost, elected on May 8, 2025. By comparing his possible views to Pope Leo XIII's teachings, particularly from Rerum Novarum, and considering Prevost's background and statements, the paper explores his alignment with social justice, workers' rights, and critiques of unregulated capitalism. It also assesses how his Latin American experiences and alignment with Pope Francis might shape his approach to climate change, migration, and moral issues. The analysis suggests that if Pope Leo XIV follows Leo XIII's legacy, his papacy could emphasize balancing economic liberalism with social responsibility, defending traditional Catholic morals, and engaging with global challenges through Catholic social teaching. The new pope's social media posts indicate he is a strong anti-Trumper.

Keywords: Pope Leo XIII, Robert Prevost, Pope Leo XIV, Economic Philosophy, Political Philosophy, Grok 3, Artificial Intelligence, Catholic Social Teaching, Social Justice, Rerum Novarum

1. Introduction

Today, May 8, 2025 (the 126th birthday of F.A. Hayek), the Catholic church elected a new pope. Robert Prevost, a 69-year-old Augustinian priest with dual U.S.-Peruvian citizenship, chose the name Leo XIV. There is speculation as to why he chose that name. The last Pope Leo (Leo XIII) was popular in some classical Liberal circles because of his relatively free market views. Will Leo XIV have similar views on economic and political issues? We decided to ask Grok 3, an artificial intelligence assistant.

1.1. The Study

We decided to start by asking Grok 3 what it knew about the new Pope's views on economic and political issues, and then compare those issues to the known views of Pope Leo XIII.

1.2. Instruction

Robert Prevost was just elected to be Pope Leo XIV, the new head of the Roman Catholic Church. What is known about his economic and political philosophy?

1.3. Grok 3 Reply

There is no record of a Robert Prevost being elected as Pope Leo XIV or serving as the head of the Roman Catholic Church. The current pope, as of May 8, 2025, is Pope Francis, who has been in office since March 13, 2013. Additionally, there is no evidence from available sources, including web searches or posts on X,

indicating a recent papal election or a figure named Robert Prevost in this context. However, there is a Robert Francis Prevost, who is an American prelate of the Catholic Church, currently serving as the Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops since April 12, 2023, and was elevated to the rank of cardinal on September 30, 2023. Since your question refers to a hypothetical scenario where Robert Prevost is elected as Pope Leo XIV, I will provide information based on what is known about Cardinal Robert Prevost's background and roles, focusing on any indications of his economic and political philosophy, while noting that such details are limited and speculative in the absence of explicit statements.

1.4. Background on Robert Prevost

- **Early Life and Career:** Born on September 14, 1955, in Chicago, Illinois, Prevost joined the Order of Saint Augustine in 1977 and was ordained a priest in 1982. He served in various roles, including as a missionary in Peru, prior general of the Augustinians (2001–2013), and bishop of Chiclayo, Peru (2014–2023). His work has spanned pastoral, administrative, and missionary activities, particularly in Latin America.
- **Current Role:** As Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops, Prevost oversees the selection of bishops worldwide, a role that involves significant influence over the Church's global leadership. His appointment by Pope Francis suggests alignment with Francis's vision for a more pastoral and inclusive Church.

1.5. Economic Philosophy

There are no direct public statements from Cardinal Prevost outlining a detailed economic philosophy. However, inferences can be drawn from his background and the broader context of his work:

- **Missionary Work in Peru:** Prevost's decades in Peru, a country with significant poverty, suggest a focus on social justice and support for the marginalized. His experience in Chiclayo, a region with economic challenges, likely exposed him to issues of inequality and underdevelopment. This aligns with the Catholic Church's social teaching, which emphasizes care for the poor and critiques excessive capitalism, as seen in Pope Francis's encyclicals like *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*.
- **Alignment with Pope Francis:** As a key figure appointed by Francis, Prevost likely shares or supports the pope's economic views, which critique neoliberalism, advocate for equitable wealth distribution, and prioritize environmental sustainability. Francis has called for an economy that serves human dignity over profit, and Prevost's role in implementing this vision through bishop appointments suggests at least tacit agreement.
- **Augustinian Influence:** As an Augustinian, Prevost's philosophy may be shaped by St. Augustine's emphasis on community and the common good, which could translate to skepticism of individualism in economic systems and support for cooperative or solidarity-based models.

1.6. Political Philosophy

Similarly, Prevost has not publicly articulated a detailed political philosophy, but some insights can be inferred:

- **Church-State Relations:** As a high-ranking Vatican official, Prevost operates within the Church's tradition of neutrality in partisan politics while engaging with global issues. His role requires diplomacy, as seen in his oversight of bishop appointments in diverse political contexts, suggesting a pragmatic approach to navigating political systems without endorsing specific ideologies.
- **Support for Francis's Agenda:** Pope Francis has emphasized dialogue, peace, and human rights, often engaging with political leaders while critiquing nationalism and populism. Prevost's collaboration with Francis indicates he likely supports these priorities, favoring policies that promote inclusion, religious freedom, and global cooperation.
- **Latin American Context:** His long tenure in Peru, during periods of political instability, suggests familiarity with balancing pastoral work with complex political realities. This experience may incline him toward moderation and reconciliation rather than ideological extremes.

1.7. Limitations and Hypothetical Nature

Since Robert Prevost has not been elected pope, any discussion of his philosophy as Pope Leo XIV is speculative. His current roles and background provide only indirect clues, and Catholic prelates often prioritize theological and pastoral concerns over explicit economic or political platforms. If he were to become pope, his

philosophy would likely reflect the Church's social doctrine, adapted to his experiences in Peru and the Vatican, with a focus on poverty alleviation, environmental stewardship, and global unity. If you have specific details about this hypothetical scenario (e.g., a fictional context, recent events, or a source mentioning his election), I can tailor the response further. Alternatively, I can search for additional information about Prevost's views or analyze related content if you provide it. Would you like me to proceed with any of these options?

1.8. Author Comments

Grok 3 is at least a few hours behind the times, since Robert Prevost was elected Pope Leo XIV just a few hours ago. We decided to ask Grok 3 what to expect from the new pope if his views on economics and politics were similar to those of Pope Leo XIII, whose views are viewed favorably in some Classical Liberal circles.

1.9. Instruction

Actually, he was elected Pope a few hours ago. He chose the name Leo XIV, which has led to speculation that his views might be similar to those of Pope Leo XIII. If this speculation is correct (that his economic and political views are similar to those of Pope Leo XIII), what can we expect from him in terms of economic and political philosophy?

1.10. Grok 3 Reply

• Key Points

- ▶ It seems likely that Pope Leo XIV, if following Pope Leo XIII's views, would focus on social justice and workers' rights.
- ▶ Research suggests he might critique economic systems favoring profit over people, aligning with Catholic social teaching.
- ▶ The evidence leans toward defending traditional moral teachings on life and family issues.
- ▶ He may prioritize care for marginalized groups, including migrants, given his background.
- ▶ Global issues like climate change and inequality could see increased Church engagement.

1.11. Background and Context

Pope Leo XIII, serving from 1878 to 1903, is known for his encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), which addressed labor conditions and advocated for a balance between capitalism and socialism, emphasizing workers' rights and the role of the state in ensuring social justice. Given Robert Prevost's recent election as Pope Leo XIV, speculation about his alignment with Leo XIII's views is reasonable, especially due to the chosen papal name. However, as of 04:43 PM EDT on May 8, 2025, there is no official record of this election, making this a hypothetical scenario based on available information about Cardinal Prevost.

1.12. Economic Philosophy

If Pope Leo XIV's views mirror Leo XIII's, we can expect a focus on advocating for just wages, workers' rights, and the formation of unions, while also recognizing the importance of private property with social responsibilities. His potential critique of exploitative

economic systems, such as unbridled capitalism, aligns with Leo XIII's call for a humane economy. Given Prevost's statements on climate change, he might integrate environmental stewardship into economic teachings, emphasizing sustainable development.

1.13. Political Philosophy

Politically, we might see a continuation of defending traditional Catholic teachings on life issues like abortion and euthanasia, and family structures, as seen in Prevost's opposition to gender ideology in schools. His engagement with social justice, such as caring for Venezuelan refugees and critiquing immigration policies, suggests a focus on protecting marginalized groups and advocating for humane policies, consistent with Leo XIII's emphasis on the common good.

Survey Note: Detailed Analysis of Pope Leo XIV's Potential Economic and Political Philosophy

This section provides a comprehensive analysis of what we might expect from Pope Leo XIV, Robert Prevost, in terms of economic and political philosophy, assuming his views align with those of Pope Leo XIII, as speculated due to his chosen papal name. The analysis is based on historical teachings of Leo XIII, Prevost's known background, and recent statements, acknowledging the hypothetical nature of his election as of 04:43 PM EDT on May 8, 2025.

1.14. Historical Context: Pope Leo XIII's Philosophy

Pope Leo XIII, reigning from 1878 to 1903, is renowned for his encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (On the Condition of the Working Classes), published in 1891. This document laid foundational principles for Catholic social teaching, addressing the industrial age's challenges. Key aspects include:

- **Economic Philosophy:** Leo XIII critiqued both socialism, which he saw as undermining individual freedom and family life, and unregulated capitalism, which exploited workers. He advocated for:

- The right to private property, but with social obligations.
- Just wages and the right of workers to form unions.
- The state's role in regulating the economy to prevent exploitation and ensure social justice.

- **Political Philosophy:** He emphasized the Church's role in public life, advocating for cooperation with secular authorities while maintaining independence. He opposed ideologies threatening family and moral order, such as secularism, and supported policies promoting the common good. This framework provides a benchmark for speculating on Prevost's potential direction as Pope Leo XIV.

1.15. Robert Prevost's Background and Known Positions

Cardinal Robert Prevost, born September 14, 1955, in Chicago, Illinois, has a significant background in the Catholic Church, particularly in Latin America. His roles include:

- **Missionary and Bishop in Peru:** Serving as bishop of Chiclayo from 2015 to 2023, and earlier as a missionary, he worked in regions with economic disparities, likely shaping his views on poverty and social justice.

- **Vatican Role:** Appointed Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops in 2023 by Pope Francis, and elevated to cardinal on September 30, 2023, Prevost holds a key position in bishop selection, suggesting alignment with Francis's vision, which emphasizes social justice and care for the poor.

- **Recent Statements:** Available information includes:

- ▶ Advocacy for action against climate change, stating in a November 2024 seminar that "Dominion over nature" should not be "tyrannical".

- ▶ Opposition to euthanasia and abortion, and critique of gender ideology in schools in Peru, indicating a stance on moral and educational policy

- ▶ Social media activity criticizing abortion, contraceptives, and the death penalty, expressing sympathy for George Floyd, and critiquing U.S. immigration policies under Trump and Vance.

- ▶ Noted for caring for Venezuelan refugees in Peru, reflecting a commitment to migrants.

- ▶ These details suggest Prevost's focus on social justice, environmental concerns, and traditional moral teachings, which could align with Leo XIII's principles if he follows that legacy.

- **Expected Economic Philosophy:** If Prevost's views mirror Leo XIII's, we can anticipate:

- **Workers' Rights and Just Wages:** Emphasis on fair treatment of workers, including the right to unionize and receive wages that support a dignified life, echoing *Rerum Novarum*. Given his Latin American experience, this might focus on addressing poverty and inequality in developing regions.

- **Critique of Economic Systems:** A critique of neoliberalism and exploitative capitalism, advocating for economic systems that prioritize human dignity over profit. His environmental stance suggests integrating sustainability, potentially addressing modern issues like climate change and global economic disparities.

- **Role of the State:** Support for government intervention to regulate economies, ensuring social justice and protecting workers, consistent with Leo XIII's view of the state's responsibility for the common good.

- **Augustinian Influence:** As an Augustinian, Prevost's philosophy may emphasize community and the common good, potentially favoring cooperative economic models over individualistic ones.

Aspect	Pope Leo XIII	Potential Pope Leo XIV (Prevost)
Workers' Rights	Advocated just wages, unions	Likely to emphasize, given Latin American focus
Economic Critique	Opposed unregulated capitalism	May critique neoliberalism, focus on sustainability
State Role	Supported regulation for justice	Expected to advocate for state intervention
Environmental Concerns	Not addressed	Likely to integrate, given recent statements

Table 1: Comparison of Economic Philosophies

- Expected Political Philosophy: Politically, if aligned with Leo XIII, Prevost as Pope Leo XIV might:
- Church-State Relations: Advocate for the Church's independence while engaging with secular authorities on moral issues, similar to Leo XIII's approach. His role in bishop appointments suggests a diplomatic approach to global political contexts.
- Moral and Family Issues: Defend traditional teachings on life (opposing abortion, euthanasia) and family, as seen in his opposition to gender ideology in schools. This aligns with Leo XIII's emphasis on family as a societal foundation.
- Social Justice and Migration: Given his work with Venezuelan refugees and critiques of immigration policies, he may prioritize policies supporting migrants and addressing global inequality, reflecting Leo XIII's concern for the marginalized.
- Global Engagement: Address international issues like climate change, inequality, and human rights, potentially issuing teachings that update *Rerum Novarum* for contemporary challenges, such as globalization and environmental crises.

Aspect	Pope Leo XIII	Potential Pope Leo XIV (Prevost)
Church-State Relations	Advocated cooperation, independence	Likely diplomatic, given Vatican role
Moral Issues	Opposed threats to family, life	Expected to defend traditional teachings
Social Justice	Focused on poor, common good	Likely to prioritize migrants, marginalized
Global Issues	Engaged with industrial age	May address climate, globalization

Table 2: Comparison of Political Philosophies

1.16. Limitations and Speculation

The analysis is speculative, as Prevost's election as Pope Leo XIV is unconfirmed as of May 8, 2025, and detailed statements on his philosophy are limited. His alignment with Pope Francis and experiences in Peru suggest continuity with Catholic social teaching, but his specific approach may reflect unique American and Latin American perspectives, emphasizing migration and environmental justice.

2. Conclusion

If Pope Leo XIV follows Pope Leo XIII's legacy, his papacy may focus on social justice, workers' rights, critiques of exploitative economics, defense of traditional morals, care for the marginalized, and engagement with global issues. This speculative essay provides a foundation for understanding his potential impact, acknowledging the need for further evidence to confirm his philosophy [1-6].

Author Comments

Judging from the citations given by Grok 3, the press is a few hours ahead of Grok 3. The early press articles seem to indicate that the new pope is an anti-Trumper, which can be either good news or bad news, depending on your perspective. The Rolling Stone article quotes Laura Loomer, a Trump fan, as saying, the new pope

was "just another Marxist puppet in the Vatican ... Catholics don't have anything good to look forward to." It also quotes other Trump supporters, all of whom agreed with Loomer's basic position that the new Pope's views on economic and political philosophy are much different than those held by the average Trump supporter. Ferguson (2025) points out that the new pope has a long history of criticizing Trump on his X account. The McElwee (2025) article indicates that the new pope supported the views of Pope Francis.

Robert W. McGee is a professor at the Broadwell College of Business and Economics, Fayetteville State University, USA and Adjunct Research Fellow at the American Institute for Economic Research. He has 23 academic degrees, including 13 doctorates from universities in the USA and four European countries, and has completed post-doctoral studies at the Harvard Medical School, the Stanford Medical School and the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He has published more than 60 books, including several novels, and more than 1000 articles, book chapters, conference papers and working papers. Various studies have ranked him #1 in the world for accounting ethics and business ethics scholarship. He has also been ranked #1 in the world for tax evasion research for the 47-year period 1975-2022 and for the 70-year period 1952-2022 and is ranked among the Top 10 economists in the world for research impact. He is an attorney and CPA (retired) and has worked or lectured in more than 30 countries. He drafted the accounting

law for Armenia and Bosnia and reviewed the accounting law for Mozambique. He was in charge of assisting the Finance Ministries of Armenia and Bosnia convert their countries to International Financial Reporting Standards. One of his doctoral dissertations was used as the basis for FASB Statement #86, Accounting for the Costs of Computer Software to be Sold, Leased, or Otherwise Marketed. He is also a world champion in taekwondo, karate, kung fu and tai chi and has won more than 1000 gold medals.

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