



**ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA
OFFICE FOR COMMUNICATIONS**

222 North Seventeenth Street • Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103-1299
Telephone (215) 587-3747 • commof@archphila.org • www.archphila.org

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Contact: Kenneth A. Gavin
Chief Communications Officer
215-587-3747 (office)

**REMARKS OF ARCHBISHOP NELSON J. PÉREZ AT NEWS
CONFERENCE ANNOUNCING THAT
POPE LEO XIV WILL RECEIVE THE 2026 LIBERTY MEDAL FROM
THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER**

At a news conference today, the National Constitution Center announced that Pope Leo XIV will be honored with the 2026 Liberty Medal.

Archbishop Nelson J. Pérez offered the following reflections.

Along with the entire Catholic Church in the Philadelphia region, I am deeply grateful and joyful to learn that Pope Leo XIV will be the recipient of the Liberty Medal as we celebrate our nation's 250th birthday!

It is a fitting recognition of the Holy Father's long dedication and fidelity to advancing liberty for all people throughout the world. In many ways, his tireless work as a priest, bishop, Cardinal, and now Shepherd of the Universal Church has focused on lifting up the dignity of all people and building pathways to peace.

I know we have a lot of local pride to have the first pope from the United States of America and a graduate of Villanova University.

Pope Leo's influence, however, extends far beyond Philly. While shepherd of 1 billion Catholics globally, he is also a leader on the world stage and all people can benefit from his wisdom. I have had the pleasure of working and conversing with the Holy Father on a number of initiatives over the years. I can tell you from personal experience that he is a wonderful, gentle, humble, and spiritual man of God who is a true gift to everyone.

He is a pastor not just for Catholics, but for every person of good will. He is a man of deep faith and extraordinary intellectual ability who understands the rich diversity of the global community. He is also a problem solver who comprehends the complex challenges our world faces.

His papacy, only about a year old, has already been a time marked by desire for genuine encounter with all people and filled with the compassionate love of Jesus Christ. That love is a pure one. It unconditionally embraces the stranger, the immigrant, the poor, the unhoused, the sick, those struggling with addiction, and all those in need. It does so without discrimination.

That's more than a beautiful ideal. It's a mission to which we are all called. When we fulfill it, we lift barriers preventing our brothers and sisters from experiencing the fruits of freedom and liberty.

I commend the National Constitution Center for its ongoing work to promote the importance of the Constitution's ideals for the benefit of all those who call America home.

I thank the Center's leadership for conferring the Liberty Medal upon Pope Leo XIV. May we take this opportunity to follow his example and work to bring peace to our families, our communities, and our world at a time when many experience anxiety and uncertainty. Thank you.

Most Reverend Nelson J. Pérez, D.D.
Archbishop of Philadelphia

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