



John Prevost, brother of new Pope Leo XIV, holds a portrait of the three Prevost brothers from 1958 while answering reporters' questions outside his home Thursday, May 8, 2025, in New Lenox, Ill. (AP/Chicago Tribune/John J. Kim)

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NEW LENOX, Ill. — May 9, 2025

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When white smoke poured out of the Sistine Chapel revealing that a new pope had been chosen, John Prevost turned on his television in Illinois, called his niece and they watched in awe as his [brother's name was announced](#).

"She started screaming because it was her uncle and I was in the moment of disbelief that this cannot be possible because it's too far from what we thought would happen," Prevost said Thursday in an interview with The Associated Press from his home in New Lenox, Illinois.

Next, he said he felt an intense sense of pride that his brother, [Cardinal Robert Prevost](#), had become the [267th pontiff](#) to lead the Catholic Church, making the [Chicago-born](#) missionary the first U.S. pope.

"It's quite an honor; it's quite a once in a lifetime," he said. "But I think it's quite a responsibility and I think it's going to lead to bigger and better things, but I think people are going to watch him very closely to see what he's doing."

Robert Prevost, a 69-year-old member of the [Augustinian religious order](#) who spent his career ministering in Peru, took the name Leo XIV.

John Prevost described his brother as being very [concerned for the poor](#) and those who don't have a voice. He said he expects him to be a "second Pope Francis."

"He's not going to be real far left and he's not going to be real far right," he added. "Kind of right down the middle."

At one point during the interview, John Prevost realized he had missed several calls from his brother, so he gave the new pope a call back.

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Leo told him he wasn't interested in being part of the interview and after a brief message of congratulations and discussion in which they talked like any two

brothers about travel arrangements, they hung up.

The new pope grew up the youngest of three boys. John Prevost, who was only a year older than him, said he remembers Robert Prevost being very good in school as a kid and enjoying playing tag, Monopoly and Risk.

From a young age, he said he knew his brother was going to be a priest. Although he didn't expect him to become pope, he recalled a neighbor predicting that very thing when Robert Prevost was only a first grader.

"She sensed that at 6 years old," he said. "How she did that, who knows. It took this long, but here he is, first American pope."

When Robert Prevost graduated eighth grade, he left for seminary school, his brother said.

"There's a whole period there where we didn't really grow up together," he said. "It was just on vacations that we had contact together."

These days, the brothers talk on the phone every day, John Prevost said. Robert Prevost will call him and they'll discuss everything from politics to religion and even play the day's Wordle.

John Prevost said he's not sure how much time his brother will have to talk as the new pope and how they'll handle staying in touch in the future.

"It's already strange not having someone to talk to," he said.

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This story appears in the **Pope Leo XIV** feature series. [View the full series](#).