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LEO XIV CELEBRATES ONE YEAR OF LEADING THE CHURCH

Michigan Catholics value Pope's opinion



Pope Leo XIV arrives for the weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on May 6. He is marking one year as leader of the Catholic Church but has found himself in a dispute with President Donald Trump over immigration policy and the war in Iran. YARA NARDI/REUTERS

They side with him, not Trump, in comments on war

Niraj Warikoo

Detroit Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

As Pope Leo XIV marks one year as the leader of the world's largest religious group, the first pontiff from the United States increasingly finds himself under attack from the political leader of the country he's from. President Donald Trump has repeatedly attacked the pope this year for his views on immigration and the Iran war, claiming he supports criminals and is endangering Catholics by allowing Iran to have nuclear weapons.

While Trump has a base of support among some conservative Catholics, the views of the faithful inside a Catholic church in Oak Park on a recent weekend interviewed by the Free Press were quite different from Trump's attacks. Since Pope Leo XIV was elected by cardinals to lead the Catholic Church on May 8, 2025, his words have been closely followed by many Catholics in Michigan who say his message resonates with them, especially at a time of growing concern about extremism and authoritarianism.

"I don't think that President Trump's com-

ments necessarily have an impact on how Catholics see things politically," Rick Joseph, of Royal Oak, said inside Our Lady of Fatima Church in Oak Park. "I support Pope Leo's comments. He is the leader of the Catholic Church and so he espouses the gospel and the good news of Jesus Christ, which is, of course, to welcome the immigrant, to welcome the stranger, to extend hospitality to those in need. ... It's a human value that we all share."

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Judge releases purported Epstein suicide note found by ex-cellmate

Michael Loria
USA TODAY

A federal judge on May 6 unsealed Jeffrey Epstein's purported suicide note, a terse handwritten document in which the letter writer celebrated going out on his own terms.

"It is a treat to be able to choose one's time to say goodbye," the note says. "Watcha want me to do - Bust out cryin!! NO FUN-NOT WORTH IT!!"

According to the letter, which has not been authenticated, Epstein said that the case against him was thin.

"They investigated me for months - FOUND

NOTHING!!!" the note says, adding the charges date back many years.

The release of the note comes about seven years after the disgraced financier was found dead by apparent suicide in a Manhattan jail where he was awaiting sex trafficking charges. The document was under seal for years in connection with the case of Epstein's onetime cellmate, Nicholas Tartaglione, a former police officer who was later sentenced to life in prison in connection with orchestrating a quadruple murder.

Judge Kenneth M. Karas of the Southern District of

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MICHIGAN FISCAL SITUATION

State debt increased \$1.1B under Whitmer

Records dispute the governor's claims that it has been paid down

Paul Egan
Detroit Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

LANSING — State government debt has increased under Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, records show, despite her claims that she has paid down more than \$28 billion in debt since she took office.

"Our fiscal house is in order," Whitmer said at the Capitol on Feb. 25, during her eighth and final State of the State address.

By the end of her second term, Whitmer said, Michigan "will pay off \$28 billion of debt."

Whitmer, a Democrat who took office in January 2019, has cited similar, but steadily growing, figures in annual budget presentations and State of the State addresses, touting her successes in prioritizing fiscal responsibility.

But state of Michigan debt — as commonly defined by financial experts, including the State Budget Office — has increased under Whitmer, state financial records show.

State debt — the sum of general obligation bonds, revenue bonds, and short-term debt known as

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Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan is in a contract dispute with Michigan Medicine. KIRTHMON F. DOZIE/DFP

Michigan Medicine 'relieved' after Blue Cross OKs initially denied transplant

Kristen Jordan Shamus
Detroit Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan said Tuesday, May 5, it has approved treatment for a member who needs a kidney transplant and sought care at Michigan Medicine, but initially was denied in-network coverage.

Blue Cross reversed its decision after the Detroit Free Press published a story about the denial, which was tied to dates of service and a contract dispute that has the state's largest health insurance provider and the Ann Arbor-based academic medical center of the University of Michigan at odds.

If negotiations don't result in a new contract by June 30, about 250,000 people with commercial Blue

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