

MAY 2025

Edition 41



The CatholicPost



The UK's first Carbon Neutral Catholic Newspaper

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**Souvenir
Edition**




Rest in Peace Pope Francis

17 December 1936 - 21 April 2025



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The CatholicPost

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The Catholic Post is published by its owners CathCom Limited and is wholly independent of and separate from any previous newspaper.
The Catholic Post is published on the last Sunday of the month previous to publication date.

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PUBLISHED BY:
CathCom Ltd. N2 Blois Meadow Business Centre, Blois Road, Steeple Bumpstead, Haverhill, Suffolk CB9 7BN
01440 730399

ARTICLES TO:
The Catholic Post
email: editor@catholicpost.co.uk or davidl@cathcom.org
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Source information -
DW = Diocesan Website.
ICN = Independent Catholic News
Views expressed in The Catholic Post are not necessarily those of the editor
Last date for copy is the LAST DAY of the month prior to publication.



Pope Francis: A Life of Humility, Service, and Global Influence

Pope Francis, born Jorge Mario Bergoglio on December 17, 1936, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, rose from modest beginnings to become one of the most transformative and beloved leaders in the modern Catholic Church. As the first pope from the Americas, the first Jesuit pope, and the first non-European to hold the papacy in over 1,200 years, his life and legacy are marked by humility, compassion, and a fearless dedication to justice.

Humble Beginnings in Argentina
The son of Italian immigrants, Francis was raised in a working-class neighbourhood of Buenos Aires. His father worked on the railways, and his mother was a homemaker. Jorge grew up with four siblings, absorbing the values of hard work, faith, and modesty that would define his later life.

Before entering the priesthood, he studied chemistry and worked briefly as a chemical technician. His religious calling came in his early 20s, when he joined the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), a Catholic religious order known for intellectual discipline, education, and missionary outreach. He officially entered the Jesuits in 1958 and was ordained a priest in 1969.

A Quiet Force During Troubled Times
Bergoglio served as Provincial Superior of the Jesuits in Argentina from 1973 to 1979, a period that overlapped with the nation's brutal military dictatorship known as the Dirty War. This era saw widespread human rights abuses, including the forced disappearances of political dissidents. His role during this time has been both praised and questioned—while some critics accused him of not doing enough to

oppose the regime, others revealed that he secretly worked to protect and rescue those at risk, including hiding individuals from military forces.

His quiet resistance reflected a personal approach to leadership: low-profile but deeply committed to moral action.

Rising Through the Church Hierarchy
In 1992, Bergoglio was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Buenos Aires. He became Archbishop in 1998 and was named a cardinal by Pope John Paul II in 2001. As Archbishop, he gained a reputation for living simply—he shunned the luxurious bishop's residence in favour of a small apartment, cooked his own meals, and regularly used public transportation.

Bergoglio's focus on social justice, poverty, and community engagement made him a spiritual figure beloved by many Argentinians. He was known to walk the streets, listen to his flock, and work hands-on with the city's poorest residents.

The Papal Election and a Historic Choice

Following the unexpected resignation of Pope Benedict XVI in 2013, the papal conclave elected Cardinal Bergoglio as the 266th pope on March 13, 2013. He chose the name Francis, inspired by St. Francis of Assisi—a decision that signaled a papacy centred on humility, peace, and care for the poor and the planet.

Pope Francis immediately set himself apart from his predecessors. He declined many traditional papal luxuries, lived in the Vatican guesthouse instead of the papal palace, and chose simpler vestments. His down-to-earth demeanour, quick wit, and open-hearted approach captivated Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

Transforming the Church

Throughout his papacy, Pope Francis became a powerful voice on global issues. He advocated for urgent action on climate change in his groundbreaking encyclical *Laudato si'*, promoted interfaith dialogue, and emphasised the need for mercy in dealing with controversial topics such as divorce, homosexuality, and abortion.

His famous quote –“Who am I to judge?”– in response to a question about gay priests, symbolised a major shift in the Church's tone, moving away from condemnation toward compassion and inclusion.

Francis also prioritised reform within the Vatican, pushing for transparency, accountability, and a more decentralised Church structure. He met with victims of clergy sexual abuse, acknowledged institutional failures, and called for systemic change.

Final Years and Death

In his later years, Pope Francis faced health challenges but continued to travel, preach, and

engage in global diplomacy. He visited war zones, refugee camps, and conflict-ridden countries, always preaching unity, peace, and love for the marginalised.

On April 21, 2025, Pope Francis passed away at the age of 88. His death triggered a wave of mourning across the world. Leaders of all faiths and nations paid tribute to a pope who had transcended religious boundaries to become a global moral leader.

A Legacy That Lives On

Pope Francis left behind a Church more open, more humble, and more aligned with the struggles of everyday people. His legacy endures in his calls for compassion over condemnation, action over apathy, and simplicity over grandeur.

He was a shepherd of the people—a pope who walked with the poor, spoke for the voiceless, and lived out the Gospel in every step.

The Rosary for Our Times

When we pray, do we offer all to the perfect work of God, or do we write a contract into our prayer? Do we let God, or do we demand a certain course of action?

In praying the Rosary, we can lose ourselves in the lives of the Holy Family, stilling our own worries and fears. We begin to recognise the closeness and humanity of this little family, their problems and fears and the trust they put in God. We can offer our own problems and worries to God and then divert our thoughts, simply immersing ourselves in the decades and the rhythm of the Gospels. Even praying one decade a day, maybe reading the Gospel texts between each Hail Mary, is perfect. For it is not the number of decades prayed that is important, but in leaving our problems with God and in praying with a receptive and open heart.

Sr. Lucy of Fatima told us, “There is no problem, no matter how difficult it is, temporal or especially spiritual, in the personal life of each one of us, of our families, of the families of the world or of the religious communities, or even of the life of peoples and nations, that cannot be solved by the Rosary...”

When Our Lady appears on this Earth she asks us to change our ways and to pray the Rosary, this her medium of choice through which we can reach her, allowing her to mould us in the scriptures.

As any good mother would guide her children, she is no exception. God has allowed her intervention and encouragement throughout the ages, particularly when there is danger to us, her children.

She gives us courage. A loving mother, she calls her children back to safety in times of danger.

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The First Jesuit Pope

Pope Francis, the First Jesuit Pontiff, transformed the papacy with a missionary heart. When Jorge Mario Bergoglio was elected Pope in 2013, he made history as the first Latin American pontiff but he also broke new ground in another, less headline-grabbing way: he became the first Jesuit pope in the history of the Catholic Church.

For many, this detail held deep significance. As a member of the Society of Jesus – a Roman Catholic religious order founded in the 16th century by St. Ignatius of Loyola – Pope Francis brought a distinctive approach to leadership, rooted in humility, intellectual rigour, and a passionate concern for the world’s most vulnerable people.

The Jesuits, often called “God’s soldiers” or “the intellectual arm of the Church,” are known for their work in education, social justice, and missionary efforts. Unlike many traditional Church figures, Jesuits take a vow not to seek high office. So when Pope Francis accepted the papacy, he was stepping into uncharted territory – and he did so with a different vision of what the role could be.

From the beginning of his papacy, Francis signaled a change in tone and style. He declined to live in the luxurious Apostolic Palace, choosing instead the modest Vatican guesthouse. He refused the red papal shoes, opted for simpler vestments, and often rode in a small Fiat instead of a limousine. These gestures, though symbolic, reflected his core

belief: that the Church should serve the people, especially those on the margins.

This spirit of service echoed the Jesuit ideal of being “men for others”. Pope Francis emphasised the Church’s mission to reach out to the poor, the displaced, and the forgotten. He repeatedly called for compassion toward migrants, attention to climate change, and a renewed commitment to peace and justice – particularly in war-torn regions like Gaza, where he maintained nightly phone calls with a Catholic parish until the final days of his life.

His Jesuit background also shaped his intellectual and spiritual leadership. Grounded in the Ignatian tradition of discernment, Francis approached complex moral and theological issues with both courage and caution. Whether addressing topics like divorce, same-sex relationships, or interfaith dialogue, he encouraged listening, dialogue, and mercy – a sharp contrast to more rigid interpretations of Church doctrine.

Above all, Pope Francis exemplified the Jesuit commitment to a global Church. Born in Argentina to Italian immigrants, he embodied the cross-cultural sensibility of the Society of Jesus. Under his leadership, the Vatican gave more voice to bishops and communities from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, decentralising decision-making and moving away from a Eurocentric model.

As the Church now prepares to elect a new pope, many are reflecting on the unique mark Francis left behind – a papacy shaped not only by his nationality, but by his Jesuit identity. He reimagined the papal office not as a throne of

power, but as a platform for mission, service, and radical compassion.

In doing so, Pope Francis not only made history – he made the Church feel closer to the people it serves.

Pope Francis (1936 - 2025)

Loving God, today, we grieve for our beloved Pope Francis. We know you join us in our grief, that you too weep at the death of your dear friend and companion as Jesus did at the tomb of Lazarus.

Welcome our beloved Pope Francis into your waiting arms. Envelope him in your eternal love. And comfort us in our mourning as we strive to continue to follow his Gospel example to encounter Christ in all people and in all places.

We thank you for the gift of Pope Francis. Through his life and teaching, you showed us how to love and serve one another, how to hear the cries of the poor and the cries of the earth and respond in compassionate love.

Pope Francis, pray for us. Mary, Mother of Sorrows, comfort us. Amen.



Pope Francis' nightly call to Gaza

In the final stretch of his life, Pope Francis forged a deeply personal and spiritual bond with the beleaguered Christian community in the Gaza Strip. For the last 18 months of his life, he made nightly phone calls to the Holy Family Catholic Church in Gaza City – the only Catholic parish in the entire territory. These calls were not simply symbolic; they were a consistent gesture of care, compassion, and pastoral support for a small and vulnerable population caught in the crossfire of war.

Each evening around 7 p.m., the Pope would reach out directly, often speaking with Father Gabriel Romanelli, the parish priest, or with members of the community themselves. His words were simple, comforting, and full of empathy. He prayed with them, asked about their needs, and expressed his love and concern. For the roughly 600 people sheltering inside the church compound – including Christians and Muslims alike – these calls became a lifeline, both spiritually and emotionally. Amid the chaos, bombardment, and humanitarian crisis, the Pope’s voice became a steady source of peace and presence.

Even when hospitalised, Pope Francis made a point of continuing the calls, underscoring how central this connection had become to him. His final call to the community came the night before Easter Sunday, just hours before his death. It was a poignant and powerful goodbye – a moment that many in Gaza now describe as saintly and sacred. Father Romanelli, deeply moved, said the Pope was “a father who didn’t abandon his children,” and that the people of Gaza had lost not only a religious leader, but a true friend and advocate.

Pope Francis’ engagement with Gaza extended far beyond personal communication. Throughout the Israel-Hamas war and its devastating impact on civilians, he remained one of the most prominent global voices calling for peace. From the very beginning of the conflict, he called for immediate ceasefires, the safe release of hostages, and urgent humanitarian aid for the people of Gaza. His pleas were firm but always rooted in his core Christian values – the dignity of every human life, compassion for the suffering, and the moral responsibility of leaders to protect the innocent.



In what would become his final Easter address, delivered just days before his passing, Pope Francis referred to the war in Gaza as “cruel” and “shameful.” He decried the suffering of children, the destruction of homes, and the international community’s failure to stop the bloodshed. It was a stirring message that encapsulated the essence of his papacy – a leader deeply attuned to the pain of the world and unafraid to speak uncomfortable truths.

Today, the Christians of Gaza – a community numbering only about 1,000 people – continue to shelter in the Holy Family Church, still

reeling from the loss of the Pope who walked with them through fire. Many speak of him not just as a spiritual leader, but as a symbol of solidarity in their darkest hour. His nightly calls, simple yet profound, brought the global Church to Gaza in a very real way.

There is now a growing hope among both Gazans and the global Catholic community that whoever succeeds Pope Francis will carry forward his legacy – one rooted in compassion, bold advocacy for peace, and deep connection with the marginalised.

Why 'Francis'?

Upon his election in 2013, Jorge Mario Bergoglio chose the name Francis in honour of St. Francis of Assisi, the 13th-century Italian friar known for:

Radical poverty and simplicity
Love for the poor and marginalised
Deep care for nature and animals
Peacebuilding and humility

In March 2023, during his first audience with journalists, Pope Francis was asked why he had chosen this name.

This was his reply: “Some people wanted to know why the Bishop of Rome wished to be called Francis. Some thought of Francis Xavier, Francis de Sales, and also Francis of Assisi. I will tell you the story. During the election, I was seated next to the Archbishop Emeritus of São Paulo, Cardinal Cláudio Hummes, a good friend. When things were looking dangerous,

he encouraged me. And when the votes reached the two-thirds, there was the usual applause, because the pope had been elected. And he gave me a hug and a kiss and said, ‘Don’t forget the poor.’ And those words came to me: the poor, the poor. Then, right away, thinking of the poor, I thought of Francis of Assisi.

... For me, he is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation... How I would like a church that is poor and for the poor!”

Why Had No Pope Chosen the Name “Francis” Before?

Despite St. Francis of Assisi’s massive influence on Christianity, no pope had ever taken his name before, and there are a few reasons why:

Tradition of Papal Names:

Popes typically chose names of past popes or biblical figures to align themselves with specific legacies (e.g., John, Paul, Benedict, Pius). Francis was a break from this tradition—St. Francis wasn’t a pope, bishop, or cardinal.

St. Francis as a Radical Outsider:

He was seen as a figure who challenged Church authority and wealth. Choosing his name could be interpreted as a critique of Church opulence and hierarchy—something popes may have been hesitant to embrace openly.

The Power of the First:

Taking a unique name carries great symbolic weight. Bergoglio was making a bold statement: he wasn’t following anyone else’s legacy—he was forging his own.



Key Moments from the Papacy of Pope Francis

The papacy of Pope Francis, was a period marked by humility, courage, and sweeping change. As the first Latin American, Jesuit, and non-European pope in over 1,200 years, Francis quickly became known for breaking traditions and embracing a Church rooted in mercy, inclusion, and social justice.

Here are some of the most defining moments from his 12-year papacy:

2013: Elected Pope Francis

On March 13, 2013, Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina was elected as the 266th pope of the Roman Catholic Church. He took the name Francis after St. Francis of Assisi, reflecting a mission rooted in poverty, peace, and care for creation.

2013: “Who am I to judge?”

Just months into his papacy, during a press conference on a return flight from Brazil, Francis responded to a question about gay priests by saying:

“If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?” This marked a significant tonal shift in how the Church addressed LGBTQ+ individuals, setting the stage for a more pastoral and compassionate approach.

2015: Environmental Encyclical Laudato Si’

In June 2015, Pope Francis released Laudato Si’, an encyclical calling for urgent action on climate change and environmental degradation. The document emphasised the interconnectedness of people, the planet, and social justice, urging care for “our common home.”

2015–2016: Jubilee Year of Mercy

Francis declared an Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, encouraging Catholics to practice forgiveness, compassion, and inclusion. He emphasised that the Church should be “a field hospital after battle,” offering healing rather than judgment.

2013–2025: Vatican Reform

Throughout his papacy, Francis led a broad reform of the Roman Curia, the Vatican’s administrative body. He streamlined departments, tackled corruption, and promoted transparency. His focus was on servant leadership and bringing the Vatican closer to the people.

2018–2023: Response to Abuse Scandals

Francis faced growing pressure over the Church’s handling of sexual abuse by clergy. After initial criticism, he took decisive action, including removing bishops, meeting with survivors, and enacting new laws for accountability within the Church hierarchy.

2019: Document on Human Fraternity

During a historic trip to the United Arab Emirates, Pope Francis co-signed the Document on Human Fraternity with Grand Imam Ahmed el-Tayeb. This landmark moment marked a bold step toward Christian-Muslim interfaith dialogue and global peace efforts.

2020: Fratelli Tutti Encyclical

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Francis released Fratelli Tutti, a sweeping vision of universal fraternity and social friendship. He urged nations to reject nationalism, build bridges, and embrace the dignity of every human life.

2020: Support for Civil Unions

In a 2020 documentary, Francis expressed support for same-sex civil unions—a first for any pope. He stated:

“Homosexual people have the right to be in a family. What we have to create is a civil union law.”

Though not doctrinal, the statement was hugely influential.

2021: Papal Visit to Iraq

In March 2021, Pope Francis became the first pope to visit Iraq, meeting with religious leaders and visiting communities devastated by war and ISIS occupation. It was a courageous act of diplomacy and peacebuilding in a region long plagued by violence.

2023–2025: Final Years and Global Mourning

Despite declining health, Pope Francis remained active in global and pastoral matters. He continued to push for reform, inclusion, and peace until his death on April 21, 2025. The

world mourned a pope who led not with grandeur, but with authenticity and love.

Legacy

Pope Francis leaves behind a Church more outward-facing, merciful, and connected to the struggles of everyday people. He’ll be remembered as a reformer, a bridge-builder, and a shepherd who walked with the flock—especially the forgotten.



Pope Francis' Unprecedented Act of Humility: Kissing the Feet of South Sudan's Leaders

In April 2019, Pope Francis made a gesture that would reverberate globally as a symbol of radical humility and peacebuilding. During a two-day spiritual retreat at the Vatican, the Pope knelt before South Sudan's rival leaders—President Salva Kiir and opposition leader Riek Machar—and kissed their feet, pleading, “Stay in peace.” This act, distinct from his traditional Holy Thursday foot-washing rituals, became a defining moment in his papacy, underscoring his commitment to reconciliation in one of the world's most fractured nations.

South Sudan, the world's youngest country, gained independence from Sudan in 2011 but descended into civil war by 2013. Ethnic and political divisions between Kiir's Dinka and Machar's Nuer factions led to widespread violence, displacing millions and killing nearly 400,000 people. A 2018 peace agreement offered fragile hope, but deadlines for forming a unity government were repeatedly missed, and distrust persisted. Against this backdrop, Pope Francis invited the leaders—along with three vice presidents—to the Vatican for a retreat aimed at “spiritual reflection and dialogue.” The Pope's goal was clear: to break the cycle of violence through a gesture as profound as the crisis itself.

At the retreat's conclusion, Francis did something unprecedented. Instead of washing the leaders' feet—a ritual he performs annually on Holy Thursday—he knelt and kissed them, a sign of reverence typically reserved for sacred objects or individuals in religious contexts. The act left the room in stunned silence. “As a brother, I ask you to stay in peace,” he implored. “I ask you from the heart. Let us move forward. There will be many problems, but do not be afraid.” The moment was laden with symbolism. By kneeling before political figures, Francis inverted traditional power dynamics, modeling the humility he demanded of them. Vice President Rebecca Nyandeng Garang, a prominent peace advocate, later described the scene as transformative: “I cried. I never thought a pope could do this. He showed us what true leadership looks like.”

This act of humility mattered for a number of reasons:

A Break from Tradition: Francis' foot-washing rituals typically involve marginalised groups—prisoners, refugees, or the sick—to emphasise service. Kissing the feet of politicians, however, was a calculated departure. The Vatican clarified it was a “one-time gesture” to shock leaders into action, blending spiritual urgency with political pragmatism.

A Plea for Unity: South Sudan's leaders had repeatedly failed to prioritise peace. Francis' act was a visceral reminder that their decisions affected millions. By physically lowering himself, he elevated the stakes, framing peace as a moral imperative rather than a political negotiation.

Global Resonance: The image of a pope kneeling before African leaders challenged stereotypes of religious authority and postcolonial power structures. It also highlighted Francis' belief that peace requires vulnerability, a theme he later reinforced by hosting global comedians to “heal through humour” in 2024.

While the South Sudan gesture was unique, it echoed Francis' broader use of physical humility as a tool for connection:

2013: He washed the feet of young inmates at a Rome prison, including women and Muslims—a first for a pope.

2016: At a refugee center, he knelt before Muslim, Hindu, and Orthodox migrants, emphasising solidarity with displaced people.

2020: During the COVID-19 pandemic, he prayed alone in a rain-soaked St. Peter's Square, a globally televised moment of empathy.

These acts, like the South Sudan plea, reject performative piety. Instead, they embody Francis' vision of a Church that “gets its hands dirty” in the service of justice.

The retreat temporarily eased tensions. Kiir and Machar formed a unity government in 2020, though implementation remained uneven and in March of this year, tensions reemerged with the arrest of Machar. Critics argue that systemic corruption and arms proliferation still threaten stability. However, Francis' gesture planted seeds of moral accountability. As Nyandeng noted, “When you see the Pope kneel, you cannot forget. It stays in your heart.”

Francis' actions reflect his Jesuit roots, particularly the concept of *cura personalis*—care for the whole person. By meeting leaders not with lectures but with vulnerability, he modelled a diplomacy of empathy. His 2020 encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* expanded this idea, calling humility the antidote to a world “suffering from amnesia” about human dignity.

The South Sudan moment also drew parallels to Jesus washing the disciples' feet in John 13:1–



The Pope bent down to kiss the men's feet

Image: IPA/WENN.com

17, a passage Francis often cites. Yet the Pope's adaptation—kissing feet instead of washing them—suggested a deepening crisis. As theologian Austen Ivereigh noted, “He wasn't just serving; he was begging. That's how dire things were.”

Some questioned whether the gesture risked politicising the papacy or oversimplifying complex conflicts. Others wondered if such acts, while powerful, could effect systemic change. Francis, however, seems undeterred. In 2023, he became the first pope to visit South

Sudan, standing alongside Former Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby to reiterate his call for peace.

Pope Francis' decision to kiss the feet of South Sudan's leaders transcended ritual. It was a theatrical, deeply human plea for peace in a world increasingly defined by division. While geopolitical solutions remain fraught, the Pope's act reminds us that leadership is not about power but about the courage to kneel—and the wisdom to lift others up.

Pope Francis appoints Bishop John Sherrington as new Archbishop of Liverpool

liverpoolcatholic.org.uk

The Installation as the tenth archbishop will take place in the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King on Tuesday, 27 May at 12 noon

In one of his last tasks as pope, Pope Francis appointed Bishop John Sherrington as Archbishop of Liverpool. Ordained as a priest for the Diocese of Nottingham on 13 June 1987, Bishop Sherrington has been an Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster and Titular Bishop of Hiltia since 14 September 2011.

Archbishop-elect Sherrington will become the tenth Archbishop of Liverpool in succession to Archbishop Malcolm McMahon OP, who has been Archbishop of Liverpool since 2014.

The Installation as the tenth archbishop will take place in the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King on Tuesday, 27 May at 12 noon.

Archbishop Malcolm McMahon OP said: "I am grateful to God and to the Holy Father, Pope Francis, for appointing a bishop to serve this local church, the archdiocese of Liverpool. We are receiving a new Archbishop with considerable gifts, talents and skills, but most of all we are receiving a man of deep prayer who loves the Lord Jesus and who loves His Church. I have had the pleasure to serve with Archbishop-elect Sherrington in the Diocese of Nottingham and in the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and I am delighted to welcome him today."

On hearing of his appointment, Archbishop-elect Sherrington said: "I look forward to serving as shepherd of the historic and faith-filled Church in the Archdiocese of Liverpool which is rich in its heritage of the English martyrs, Irish immigration, and now looks to the future."

"Archbishop Malcolm McMahon OP has served Liverpool Archdiocese with love and generosity, and I am honoured to succeed him... I look forward to building on the foundations already laid in the synodal



Archbishop Malcolm McMahon OP with Archbishop-elect John Sherrington

pastoral plan 'Together on the Road' to serve the Church and bring the hope and joy of Jesus Christ to all people.

"In this Jubilee Year, we are a people living the hope of Christ who has loved us, saved us and walks with us. We share this hope with other Christians and people of all faiths and good will. I welcome meeting and building friendships with leaders, both Christian and of other faiths, which has always been a strong dimension of the Church here.

May we receive the fire of the Holy Spirit into our hearts to bring Christ to others."

Cardinal Vincent Nichols, said about the appointment: "I am so pleased that Bishop John Sherrington is to be Archbishop of Liverpool. It is my home diocese and I am delighted that it is to be led by Bishop John. In Westminster we know his gifts, dedication and utter generosity only too well. We will miss him greatly. Archbishop Malcolm will welcome him with great joy as, I'm sure, will everyone across the extensive Archdiocese of Liverpool."

"Today we offer our profound thanks to Bishop John for all that he has given to us over these last fourteen years, and we assure him, wholeheartedly, of our prayers and constant support.

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Pope Francis in and in the wo



Pope Francis felt that above all, a pope had to be a good communicator. Many of his quotes stay with those who heard them, here are a few on the issues that mattered most to him:

On the Church

“I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security,” 2013

“The hypocrisy of those consecrated men and women who profess vows of poverty, yet live like the rich, wounds the souls of the faithful and harms the church,” 2014

On the Environment

“The Earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth ... The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet’s capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes.” 2015

“The world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point... Despite all attempts to deny, conceal, gloss over or relativise the issue, the signs of climate change are here and increasingly evident.” 2023

On Immigration

“It’s hypocrisy to call yourself a Christian and chase away a refugee or someone seeking help, someone who is hungry or thirsty, toss out someone who is in need of my help,” 2016

“If we are in a position of privilege, it’s better to build a longer table than a higher fence”

“It is violence to build walls and barriers to stop those who look for a place of peace,” 2015

On War

“Hostility, extremism and violence are not born of a religious heart: they are betrayals of religion,” 2021

“There can be no peace without freedom of religion, freedom of thought, freedom of expression.” 2025

On Capitalism

“It is increasingly intolerable that financial markets are shaping the destiny of people rather than serving their needs, or that the few derive immense wealth from financial speculation while the many are deeply burdened by the consequences,” 2014

On Gay Rights

“If a person is gay and seeks God and has good will, who am I to judge him?” 2013

“Homosexual people have a right to be in a family. They are children of God and have a right to a family. Nobody should be thrown out or be made miserable over it,” 2020

On Women

“The struggle for women’s rights is a continuing struggle. We have to continue struggling for this because women are a gift. God did not create man and then give him a lapdog to play with. He created both equal, man and woman. .. A society that is not capable of (allowing women to have greater roles) does not move forward... I have noticed that every time a woman is given a position (of responsibility) in the Vatican, things improve” 2022

On Historic Injustices

“I am sorry. I ask forgiveness, in particular, for the ways in which many members of the church and of religious communities cooperated, not least through their indifference, in projects of cultural destruction and forced assimilation promoted by the governments of that time, which culminated in the system of residential schools.” 2022

“With shame and repentance, we acknowledge as an ecclesial community that we were not where we should have been, that we did not act in a timely manner, realising the magnitude and the gravity of the damage done to so many lives...We showed no care for the little ones; we abandoned them.” 2018

his own words ords of others



There has been an outpouring of tributes – from those you’d expect and also from those you wouldn’t. Here are a selection:

“Pope Francis was a transcendent voice for peace, human dignity and social justice. He leaves behind a legacy of faith, service and compassion for all – especially those left on the margins of life or trapped by the horrors of conflict... “he was a man of faith for all faiths – working with people of all beliefs and backgrounds to light a path forward.”

General Antonio Guterres - UN Secretary

The pope “dedicated himself to the service of others, consistently revealing by his own actions how to live a simple, but meaningful, life.”

“The best tribute we can pay to him is to be a warmhearted person, serving others wherever and in whatever way we can.”

Dalai Lama

“He inspired millions, far beyond the Catholic Church, with his humility and love so pure for the less fortunate... May they find solace in the idea that Pope Francis’ legacy will continue to guide us all toward a more just, peaceful and compassionate world.”

Ursula von der Leyen –
President of the European Commission

“The Pope and I had a more active relationship than was apparent. It went well beyond our respective institutional roles. We’ve met many times, even just to exchange opinions. He was able to give comfort in very difficult moments, I have many memories of the Pope... with whom you could talk about everything ... a person who made you feel good, feel at ease. You could speak to him in a simple way, as if he were a parish priest.”

Giorgia Meloni – Italian Prime Minister

It was a moment marked not just by the solemnity of protocol or the gravity of his

title, but by something far more moving – his undeniable presence, humility and the quiet power he wielded by simply being among the people.

What astounded me most during that meeting was not the solemn beauty of the Vatican’s architecture that surrounded him, but the reverence that he commanded well beyond the boundaries of his own faith. In the waiting lines were not just Catholics eager for a blessing or a handshake. There were Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and even the non-religious like me queuing patiently, for a brief moment with His Holiness. It was startling and inspiring to witness the hold that he had, not through coercion or command, but through sincerity, compassion, and a deep understanding of the human spirit.

Amanda Huan – a personal reflection

Upon this morning’s sorrowful news, I reflected on the words of Pope Francis from five years ago. All alone in Peter’s Square, the rain falling upon him in the time of the pandemic, he spoke to the empty city of Rome: “We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented...all of us now together”. A camera at that time filmed a nearby crucifix, focusing on a wet nail hammered in Christ’s palm as a flying creature lifted its wings. The call of the gull broke through. Today let us be still, all of us together in the boat, as the call of the gull breaks through.

Maureen O’Brien – a personal reflection

Pope Francis was a voice of moral clarity, spiritual courage and boundless compassion. He was in many respect the world’s conscience, never hesitating to challenge the powerful on behalf of the vulnerable

Mark Carney – Canadian Prime Minister

“There is so much that can be said about the significance of Pope Francis and everything he meant to the world, to the church, to the papacy. I will leave that to others. He was, in every way, a remarkable human being. He acknowledged his own failings. He radiated wisdom. He radiated goodness. He had an ironclad commitment to the good. He knew in his soul that ignorance was a terrible plague on humanity. So he never stopped learning. And he never stopped enlightening. And, he embraced, preached and practiced forgiveness. Universal and constant forgiveness.”

Martin Scorsese – Director

“He was unlike any who came before him. Pope Francis will be remembered as one of the most consequential leaders of our time and I am better for having known him, for decades, he served the most vulnerable across Argentina and his mission of serving the poor never ceased. As Pope, he was a loving pastor and challenging teacher who reached out to different faiths. He commanded us to fight for peace and protect our planet from a climate crisis. He advocated for the voiceless and powerless. He made all feel welcome and seen by the Church. He promoted equity and an end to poverty and suffering across the globe. And above all, he was a Pope for everyone. He was the People’s Pope – a light of faith, hope and love.”

Joe Biden – Former President of America

“A distinguished Argentinian Pope. Thank you for making the world a better place; we will miss you”

Lionel Messi – Footballer



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Pope's Urbi et Orbi message calls for world peace

vaticannews.va

In his final Easter message, Pope Francis called for peace worldwide, for global disarmament and for the release of prisoners

In his final Easter Urbi et Orbi message, Pope Francis dedicated it to peace worldwide, for global disarmament and for the release of prisoners.

The Holy Father, briefly greeted the crowds in St Peter's Square from the loggia of St Peter's Basilica. He then passed on his text to be read by Archbishop Diego Ravelli, the Master of Pontifical Liturgical Celebrations, and the Pope's words rang out proclaiming: "Christ is risen."

"Christ, my hope, has risen," Pope Francis announced, calling on the faithful to turn their gaze to the empty tomb. He spoke of the resurrection not as an abstract idea but as a living force - one that challenges, heals, and empowers.

"Today too, he takes upon himself all the evil that oppresses us and transfigures it."

"Love has triumphed over hatred, light over darkness, and truth over falsehood. Forgiveness has triumphed over revenge... Evil has not disappeared from history; it will remain until the end, but it no longer has the upper hand; it no longer has power over those who accept the grace of this day."

After this proclamation of faith, Pope Francis spoke about the suffering in the world today. He focussed first on the Holy Land, "wounded by conflict", and home to an "endless outburst of violence". He extended his closeness, in particular, to the people of Gaza and to the Christian community in Gaza where "the terrible conflict continues to cause death and destruction and to create a dramatic and deplorable humanitarian situation."

"I appeal once again," he said, "for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, for the release of the hostages... and for access to humanitarian aid."

He urged the international community to act and "come to the aid of a starving people that aspires to a future of peace."

The Pope's prayers then extended to the Christian communities in Lebanon and in Syria, "presently experiencing a delicate transition in its history," and urged the whole Church "to keep the Christians of the beloved Middle East in its thoughts and prayers."



Turning to Yemen, "experiencing one of the world's most serious and prolonged humanitarian crises because of war," Pope Francis invited all those involved to find a solution "through a constructive dialogue."

For Ukraine, "devastated by war," he invoked the Risen Christ's gift of peace. May all involved, he said, continue efforts toward a "just and lasting peace."

He spoke, too, of the South Caucasus, where long-standing tensions call for urgent reconciliation. In particular, he prayed for a final peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and for healing in the region.

In the Western Balkans, Pope Francis prayed that the Easter light inspire leaders to calm tensions and reject destabilising actions choosing instead a path of harmony, together with their neighbours.

Pope Francis then called for peace in Africa. He appealed for the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for those of Sudan and South Sudan, and for those caught in the violence of the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and the Great Lakes region. "In the face of the cruelty of conflicts that involve defenceless civilians and attack schools, hospitals and humanitarian workers, we cannot allow ourselves to forget that it is not targets that are struck, but persons, each possessed of a soul and human dignity".

He prayed, especially, for Christians unable to live their faith freely across the continent. "There can be no peace without freedom of religion, freedom of thought, freedom of expression, and respect for the views of others," he said. And no peace, he added, without true disarmament.

"The light of Easter impels us to break down the barriers that divide us," Pope Francis said. These barriers are not only physical, but political, economic, and spiritual. He called on nations to use their resources not for rearmament, but to combat hunger, invest in development, and "care for one another."

The Pope appealed to all those who hold positions of political responsibility in our world not to yield to the logic of fear but to use our resources to help those in need, "to fight hunger and encourage initiatives that promote development." "These," the Pope said, "are the 'weapons' of peace: weapons that build the future, instead of sowing seeds of death!"

Pope Francis then spoke of people of Myanmar, who continue to suffer the effects of conflict and, most recently, the devastating earthquake in Sagaing. He expressed deep sorrow for the thousands who have died, for orphans, and for the elderly who remain. But he also remembered the hope that is emerging from the strife-ridden land: "The announcement of a ceasefire", he said, "is a sign of hope for the whole of Myanmar".

His final thought was that, in this Jubilee year, Easter may also be a fitting occasion for the liberation of prisoners of war and political prisoners.

"What a great thirst for death, for killing, we witness each day" decried the Pope, before praying: "May the principle of humanity never fail to be the hallmark of our daily actions."

Finally, the Pope emphasised that this Easter, the Risen Christ "fills us with the certainty that we too are called to share in the life that knows no end, when the clash of arms and the rumble of death will be heard no more".



Pope greeted a child on Saturday after the Urbi et Orbi blessing.

Image: Vatican Media

Remembering Pope Francis' final hours

vaticannews.va

Among the final words of the late Pope Francis was a “thank you” to his personal nurse, Massimiliano Strappetti, for encouraging him to take one last ride in the popemobile on Sunday after the Urbi et Orbi.

He rested in the afternoon, had a quiet dinner, and then at dawn suddenly fell ill and died, Salvatore Cernuzio writes for Vatican Media.

Massimiliano Strappetti was the nurse who, according to the Pope himself, once saved his life by suggesting colon surgery, and whom the Holy Father later appointed in 2022 as his personal healthcare assistant.

By his side during all 38 days of hospitalisation at Rome’s Gemelli Hospital and round-the-clock during his recovery at the Casa Santa Marta, Mr Strappetti was with the Pope on Easter Sunday, during the Urbi et Orbi blessing.

The day before, they had gone together to St Peter’s to review the “route” he would take the following day when he was to appear on the Central Loggia of St Peter’s Basilica.

After that moment, on Sunday morning, on the balcony at the heart of St Peter’s Basilica façade, when the initial 35,000 faithful had already grown to 50,000, the Pope asked if he could go into St Peter’s Square for a surprise ride in the popemobile.

He did have a touch of hesitation. “Do you think I can manage it?” he asked Mr Strappetti, who reassured him.

From there came the embrace of the crowd, especially of the children: his first ride since being discharged from Gemelli, and the last of his life.

Tired but content, the Pope thanked his personal healthcare assistant, saying: “Thank you for bringing me back to the Square.”

These heartfelt words reveal the deep need the Argentine Pontiff, who had made human connection a hallmark of his papacy, felt, to once more be among the people.

The Pope then rested in the afternoon and had a peaceful dinner.

Around 5.30am, the first signs of illness appeared, prompting an immediate response from those keeping watch over him.

Over an hour later, after making a gesture of farewell with his hand to Strappetti, lying in bed in his second-floor apartment at Casa Santa Marta, the Pope fell into a coma.

According to those who were with him in his final moments, he did not suffer. It all happened quickly.

It was a discreet death, almost sudden, without long suffering or public alarm, for a Pope who

had always been very reserved about his health.

A passing that came the day after Easter, the day after blessing the city and the world, the day after, once again after so long, embracing the people.

The people with whom, from the very first moments of his election on March 13, 2013, he had promised to walk “together.”




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Public viewing began on Wednesday 23 April, in St. Peter's Basilica, where thousands of mourners lined up to pay their respects. The funeral Mass, scheduled for Saturday 26 April, will be held in St. Peter's Square and presided over by Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, Dean of the College of Cardinals. Breaking with recent tradition, Francis requested burial in St. Mary Major Basilica rather than St. Peter's, a site deeply personal to him. He often prayed there before the *Salus Populi Romani* icon, a 5th-century image of Mary venerated for centuries.

The process to elect Francis' successor will begin soon and the process itself hasn't materially changed in 800 years. The name Conclave comes from Latin **cum clave** meaning 'with key' because of the closed process of papal elections. First there will be nine days of mourning known as the **Novemdiales**. These are nine days of prayer

Before Conclave begins, the 252 cardinals will gather in meetings known as general congregations to discuss the future of the Church. When the time comes for the Conclave to begin, the shout of **‘extra omnes’** goes out (meaning ‘everyone out’) at which point only the remaining 135 cardinals-electors will remain. The doors of the Sistine Chapel will be locked and they will remain there until a pope is chosen.



After that point, the successful candidate will be asked whether they accept and if so, which name they will choose to be known by. He will then be dressed in white and will be introduced to the faithful and the world's media gathered in the square, by the dean of the cardinals on the main balcony of St Peter's Basilica with the words '**Habemus papam**' - 'We have a Pope!'

As I sense the approaching twilight of my earthly life, and with firm hope in eternal life, I wish to set out my final wishes solely regarding the place of my burial.

Throughout my life, and during my ministry as a priest and bishop, I have always entrusted myself to the Mother of Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary.

For this reason, I ask that my mortal remains rest - awaiting the day of the Resurrection - in the Papal Basilica of Saint Mary Major.

I wish my final earthly journey to end precisely in this ancient Marian sanctuary, where I would always stop to pray at the beginning and end of every Apostolic Journey, confidently entrusting my intentions to the Immaculate Mother, and giving thanks for her gentle and maternal care.

I ask that my tomb be prepared in the burial niche in the side aisle between the Pauline Chapel (Chapel of the Salus Populi Romani) and the Sforza Chapel of the Basilica, as shown in the attached plan.

The tomb should be in the ground; simple, without particular ornamentation, bearing only the inscription: Franciscus.

The cost of preparing the burial will be covered by a sum provided by a benefactor, which I have arranged to be transferred to the Papal Basilica of Saint Mary Major.

I have given the necessary instructions regarding this to Cardinal Rolandas Makrickas, Extraordinary Commissioner of the Liberian Basilica.

May the Lord grant a fitting reward to all those who have loved me and who continue to pray for me. The suffering that has marked the final part of my life, I offer to the Lord, for peace in the world and for fraternity among peoples.

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World Council of Churches mourns Pope Francis 'ecumenical prophet of mercy'

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Rev Prof Dr Jerry Pillay, general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC) said: "Pope Francis's passing will be mourned around the world, not least among his many allies and admirers in the ecumenical movement and in the worldwide fellowship of the WCC. His papacy has been a great gift to the ecumenical movement, and he has been a dedicated collaborator in our efforts toward Christian unity and reconciliation and a prophetic voice for peace, the environment, and justice everywhere."

The Argentine Jesuit, elected in 2013, leaves deep marks on the Catholic church and Christians worldwide from the chief initiatives and hallmarks of his pontificate: an open-armed embrace of all persons in a "church of the poor, for the poor" that is a "field hospital" for the healing of the sick and vulnerable, a strong and distinctive support of Christian mission as accompaniment of the marginalized, and a ministry of "mercy" or compassion to all.

Francis most notably championed a bold and unrelenting advocacy for addressing climate change and the injustices it spawns, alongside a trenchant critique of global capitalism and economic inequality. Internationally he voiced zealous support of migrants and refugees and trafficked humans, robust communication and collaboration with especially Muslim-Christian fraternal initiatives, and a bold opposition to war, calling all forms of war "a crime against humanity." Within the Vatican he pursued reform of the Roman curia and Vatican finances, appointment and elevation of bishops from marginalized countries, and appointment of women to the highest tier of Vatican departments

A dedicated ecumenist

Francis also proved a champion of ecumenical collaboration. He advocated the missional "mandate" of sharing the Gospel ecumenically. He solidified strong working partnerships of the WCC's chief programmes with their corresponding dicasteries in the Vatican, thus ensuring deep ecumenical collaboration on such issues as ecumenical dialogue, climate justice, interreligious dialogue and cooperation, and advocacy for and service of migrants.

"The ministry and leadership of Pope Francis have been marked by an ecumenical openness and eager cooperation from the start," said Bishop Dr Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, moderator of the WCC central committee. "At their heart stand the gospel, the presence of Christ and the Spirit in the church, and the imperative of compassion and mercy toward all our sisters and brothers. He understood his mission not as a guardian of abstract truth claims but as an enabler and opener of relationship. In this he himself radiated the love of Jesus Christ that he preached. In my many encounters with him I always felt the 'ecumenism of the heart' of which the WCC

assembly in Karlsruhe 2022 spoke in its unity document. In his strong commitment to refugees and other vulnerable groups, he was a true witness of this love of Christ. We share that deep faith, we are inspired by his witness, and in his memory we pledge to continue our work of faith active in justice, reconciliation, and unity."

In 2016, Pope Francis visited Lund, Sweden, to participate in a Catholic-Lutheran commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. This was the first time a Roman Catholic leader had met with representatives of the Lutheran World Federation to mark the Reformation.

Francis's commitment to ecumenical collaboration and mission were further highlighted by his extraordinary and joyful pilgrimage to the WCC, the Ecumenical Centre, and the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey in 2018. Celebrating the WCC's 70th anniversary and its ecumenical charism, the pope said there, "We are heirs to the faith, charity and hope of all those who, by the nonviolent power of the Gospel, found the courage to change the course of history, a history that had led us to mutual distrust and estrangement, and thus contributed to the infernal spiral of continual fragmentation. Thanks to the Holy Spirit, who inspires and guides the journey of ecumenism, the direction has changed and a path both old and new has been irrevocably paved: the path of a reconciled communion aimed at the visible manifestation of the fraternity that even now unites believers."

Collaborative ministries and diaconal service were Francis's chosen form of ecumenism, uniting churches as agents of reconciliation in the world. As he said in his presentation to the WCC in 2018, "So let us ask ourselves: What can we do together? If a particular form of service is possible, why not plan and carry it out together, and thus start to experience a more intense fraternity in the exercise of concrete charity?"

Francis the lightning rod

Though immensely popular in many countries around the world, Pope Francis also sparked controversies with his practical pastoral approach to such issues as welcoming gay and lesbian people- "Who am I to judge?"-welcoming divorced Catholics back to church, restricting celebration of the Latin Mass, and opening the top tier of Vatican posts to women.

A small but very vocal minority, especially in the United States, bitterly criticised Francis over what they saw as compromises or even betrayals of traditional Catholic teaching, and they found some allies in the hierarchy. They compared him unfavourably to his predecessors, John Paul II and Benedict XVI, and their more conservative approach to matters of polity and pastoral care.



21 June 2018, in Geneva, Switzerland Pope Francis visited WCC for ecumenical prayers

Yet, despite expectations of many, Pope Francis very much held the line on doctrine and on such distinctive yet controverted Catholic teaching on abortion and contraception, ordination of women to the priesthood and the diaconate, and opposition to "gender theory."

"His words and actions on some matters may have frustrated and alarmed some people, but his courage and leadership are certainly appreciated," said Pillay. "His ability to speak truth to power and speak out on political issues may have raised some eyebrows, but prophetic witness is a gift in ecumenical circles."

The Francis legacy

Born Jorge Mario Bergoglio in Buenos Aires on 17 December 1936, he was the son of Italian immigrants. He joined the Jesuit order in 1958 and was ordained in 1969. He later taught college, served six years as Jesuit provincial leader, and worked in academic and ecclesial administration. On 20 May 1992, Pope John Paul II appointed him titular Bishop of Auca and Auxiliary of Buenos Aires. In 1998 he became Archbishop of Buenos Aires and Primate of Argentina.

"My people are poor and I am one of them," Francis said more than once, explaining his decision to live in an apartment and cook his own supper. He was deeply influenced by Vatican II and the "preferential option for the poor" of liberation theology. His ascetic lifestyle, commuting on public transportation, and close identification with the poor marked his ministry in Argentina and later informed his pontificate, after he was elected pope on 13 March 2013.

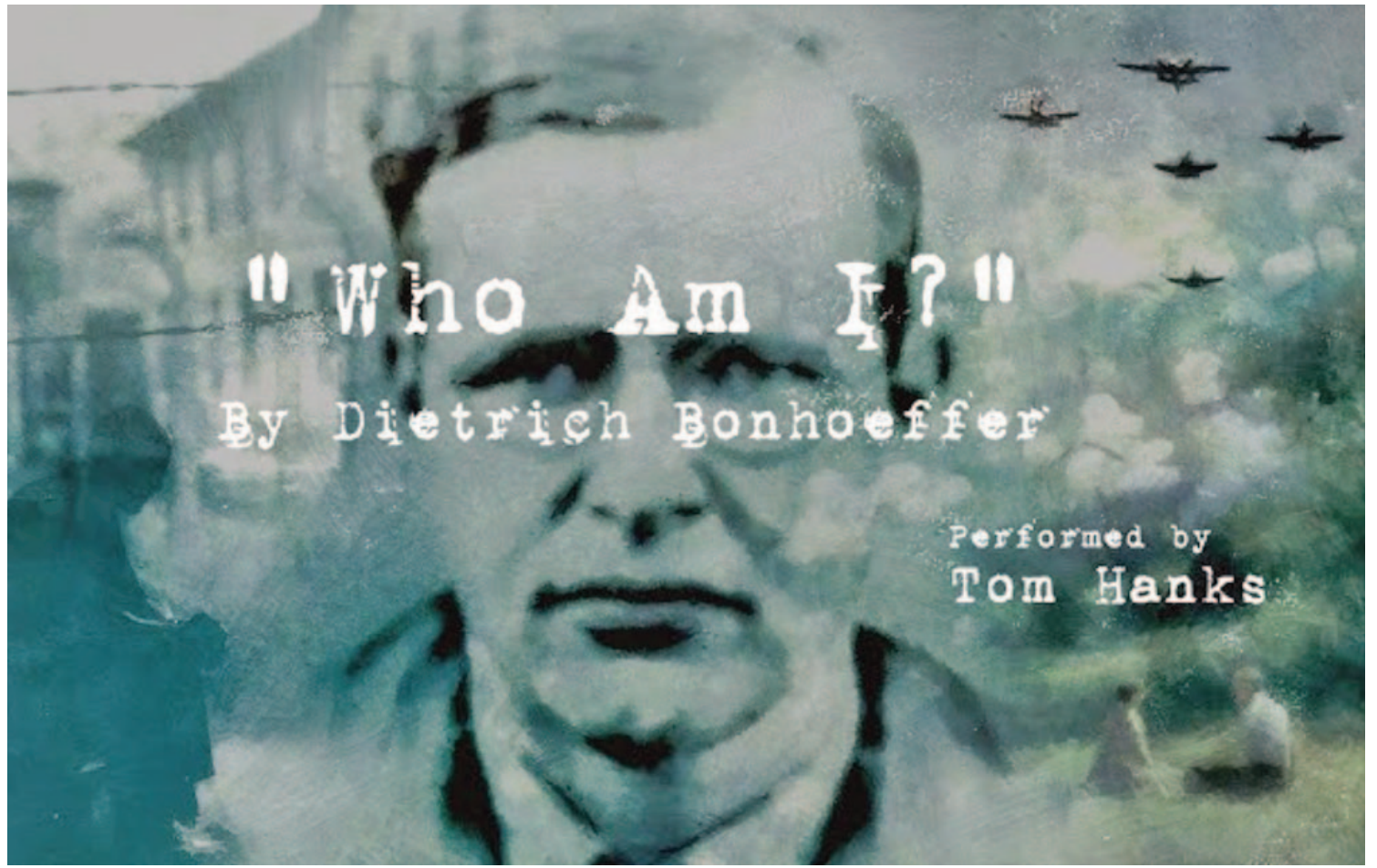
Over the years, the WCC general secretary met with Francis four times. "In one of my personal

meetings with him," remembered Pillay, "we talked about Christian unity. I said to him that the WCC appreciated his words to us in 2018, when he visited us at Bossey, that we must keep 'walking, praying, and working together.' I said to him that these are good words, but 'Don't you think the time has come for us to hold hands while we are walking, so that we can demonstrate visible Christian unity?' He smiled and said, wagging his finger, 'I like that, I like that.' What I remember most were his final words with a handshake on every occasion I met him: 'Please pray for me.'"

"Perhaps," Pillay observed, "Pope Francis's signal insights are best captured in the themes of his chief encyclicals and exhortations: the joy of the Gospel, the joy of love in families, the light of faith in Christ, the need to care for our common home the earth, and the indispensability of mercy and peace. These are precisely what we as Christians have to offer a hurting world to kindle personal and social transformation and nurture the reign of God among us. We have been abundantly blessed by Francis's ecumenical and pastoral leadership, and we have nothing but gratitude to God for his life and ministry. May he rest in God's embrace as we continue to be inspired by him in our work."

We give thanks to God for this wonderful and courageous servant-leader and pray God's peace and comfort over the Roman Catholic Church and all concerned during this time of bereavement and loss. Further, we pray God's wisdom and guidance over them as they embark on the processes of electing a new Pope.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." (Matthew 5:4)





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Pope Francis





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Bear Grylls tells Flame 2025: 'You guys are unstoppable!'



CAPOD/CREW/IGN

Flame 2025 united over 10,400 young people in faith, hope, and inspiration at Wembley Arena

Flame 2025 saw more than 10,400 young people from every part of England and Wales as well as a group from Gibraltar, and the Ukrainian national Chaplaincy join chaplains, teachers, priests, bishops, and youth leaders, in selling out the OVO Arena Wembley in a huge explosion of faith and hope. This was the largest ever Flame gathering.

Inspirational speakers included adventure and television presenter Bear Grylls, who spoke about his book *The Greatest Story Ever Told* based on the Gospel - every attendee received a copy.

In conversation with Catholic speaker David Wells, Mr Grylls shed light on his Christian faith. "Faith is in your heart, faith is in relationships, faith is a constant connection to the Almighty. I have many struggles, many doubts, I really don't have it all together, but I know that I am loved and held, and the light shines.

"Faith is part of the adventure, faith is the adventure. It's a journey. It's a backbone, a link of steel, the presence of Jesus besides us in the highs and the lows, it's fire and life and water, all in one. It's a journey."

To a packed out and loud crowd, he added: "I hope you have an amazing rest of Flame. You guys are unstoppable!"

Flame's theme of 'Unstoppable' and the 'Flame of hope' echoed what Pope Francis calls us to be in this year of Jubilee: 'Pilgrims of Hope'.

Fr Rev David Oakley, Bishop of Northampton, who is Chair of the Department for Discipleship and Evangelisation for the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales, read a message from Cardinal Parolin on behalf of Pope Francis, who encouraged the young people saying: "In a time of hope that is truly 'unstoppable' for Christ itself is its living source."

Bryan Enright, a founding team member of the Hallow prayer app, spoke as well as Isaac Harvey HBE, an inspiring disability advocate. Isaac Harvey said: "It's about having faith, having hope, and at the end of the day having fun. Going with the flow, having fun, and taking opportunities as they come."

Fr Dominic Howard, a priest of Brentwood Diocese who co-chairs the planning team for Flame 2025, read a message from the

Apostolic Nuncio in Great Britain, HE Archbishop Miguel Henry Bañales, who encouraged the young people with these words: "Let your faith shine brightly in the world, and know that you are not alone on this journey."

The message from St Vincent de Paul Society was: "You are loved, you are lovable, and you are loved by God."

CAPOD partner, Brian Maeba, a young farmer from Kenya, spoke about the global debt crisis, where some of the world's poorest countries make huge repayments on high-interest loans to wealthy banks, institutions, and governments, leaving them unable to fund essential services.

Brian encouraged the audience to support CAPOD's debt cancellation campaign by shouting out "Cancel debt and choose hope!"

Rapper Guma B, and singer-songwriter Adenise Adewale, the World Youth Dance

Crew. Lily Jo, were much appreciated for their lively and participatory worship style. There were moving testimonies from disability advocates Isaac Harvey and Co-Leader Brother Chris Piatino from San Francisco. Students from St Thomas More's School, Wood Green gave a powerful theatrical performance.

Among the VIP guests in the audience was Declan Donnelly of Ant & Dec fame, brother of Fr Dermot Donnelly who died in 2022, one of the founders of Flame, who was loved for his ministry with young people. Dec told ICN: "We just come here today to honour my brother."

Flame 2025 concluded with a moving moment of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, led by Cardinal Vincent Nichols, coping a day of spiritual renewal, encouraging young people to return to their parishes and schools as ambassadors of hope.

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Pope Francis: "A sense of humour ... is a human attribute, but it is the closest to God's grace."

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Known for his sense of fun, Pope Francis wrote an essay for the New York Times on the importance of fostering a sense of humour, of quelling narcissism through "appropriate doses of self-irony," and of avoiding "wallowing in melancholy at all costs."

"The Gospel, which urges us to become like little children for our own salvation (Matthew 18:3), reminds us to regain their ability to smile," Pope Francis wrote in an essay adapted from his new book, "Hope: The Autobiography," which was published earlier this year.

The pontiff called the many children he meets, as well as the elderly, "examples of spontaneity, of humanity."

"They remind us that those who give up their own humanity give up everything, and that when it becomes hard to cry seriously or to laugh passionately, then we really are on the downhill slope. We become anesthetised, and anesthetised adults do nothing good for themselves, nor for society, nor for the Church," he wrote.

"Irony is a medicine, not only to lift and brighten others but also ourselves, because self-mockery is a powerful instrument in overcoming the temptation toward narcissism," the pope continued.

"Narcissists are continually looking into the mirror, painting themselves, gazing at themselves, but the best advice in front of a mirror is to laugh at ourselves. It is good for us. It will prove the truth of that old proverb that says that there are only two kinds of perfect people: the dead and those yet to be born."

Pope Francis has spoken about humour several times throughout his papacy; in June of this year, he hosted and entertained a group of over 100 comics, stand-up comedians, and humourists in the largest – and possibly only – gathering of comedians in the Vatican since Pope Pius V eliminated the role of the papal jester in the 1500s.

During a recent visit with French President Emmanuel Macron in Corsica, Pope Francis recommended that Macron read his apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et Exultate*, drawing attention to a passage referencing St. Thomas More's prayer for a sense of humour.

"Lord, give me a sense of humour. Grant me the grace to understand a joke, to discover in life a bit of joy, and to be able to share it with others," reads the prayer, which Pope Francis has previously described as "very beautiful" and recites daily.



Pope Francis laughs with some religious sisters at his general audience in the Vatican's Paul VI Hall on Aug. 30, 2023.

Credit: Vatican Media

The pope in his essay offered examples of good humour shown by his fellow popes St. John XXIII and St. John Paul II.

St. John XXIII, for example, was said to have showcased his self-deprecating wit when he joked that he often resolved to speak with the pope about serious problems before remembering "that the pope is me."

Relaying an anecdote about St. John Paul II's playful resistance to rigid expectations of clerical conduct, Francis wrote that the saint was once, while still a cardinal, rebuked for enjoying many outdoor sporting activities, whereby John Paul responded that "these are activities practiced by at least 50% of cardinals." In Poland at the time, there were only two cardinals.

"Sometimes we (popes) unfortunately come across as bitter, sad priests who are more authoritarian than authoritative, more like old bachelors than wedded to the Church, more like officials than pastors, more supercilious than joyful, and this, too, is certainly not good," the pope wrote.

"But generally, we priests tend to enjoy humour and even have a fair stock of jokes

and amusing stories, which we are often quite good at telling, as well as being the object of them."

The pope in his essay also told a joke involving himself, printed here in its entirety:

As soon as he arrives at the airport in New York for his apostolic journey in the United States, Pope Francis finds an enormous limousine waiting for him. He is rather embarrassed by that magnificent splendor, but then thinks that it has been ages since he last drove, and never a vehicle of that kind, and he thinks to himself: OK, when will I get another chance? He looks at the limousine and says to the driver, "You couldn't let me try it out, could you?" "Look, I'm really sorry, Your Holiness," replies the driver, "but I really can't, you know, there are rules and regulations."

But you know what they say, how the pope is when he gets something into his head ... in short, he insists and insists, until the driver gives in. So Pope Francis gets behind the steering wheel, on one of those enormous highways, and he begins to enjoy it, presses down on the accelerator, going 50 miles per hour, 80, 120 ... until he hears a siren, and a police car pulls up beside him and stops him. A young policeman comes up to the darkened

window. The pope rather nervously lowers it and the policeman turns white. "Excuse me a moment," he says, and goes back to his vehicle to call headquarters. "Boss, I think I have a problem."

"What problem?" asks the chief.

"Well, I've stopped a car for speeding, but there's a guy in there who's really important." "How important? Is he the mayor?"

"No, no, boss ... more than the mayor."

"And more than the mayor, who is there? The governor?"

"No, no, more. ..."

"But he can't be the president?"





"More, I reckon. ..."


"And who can be more important than the president?"

"Look, boss, I don't know exactly who he is, all I can tell you is that it's the pope who is driving him!"

By Jonah McKeown

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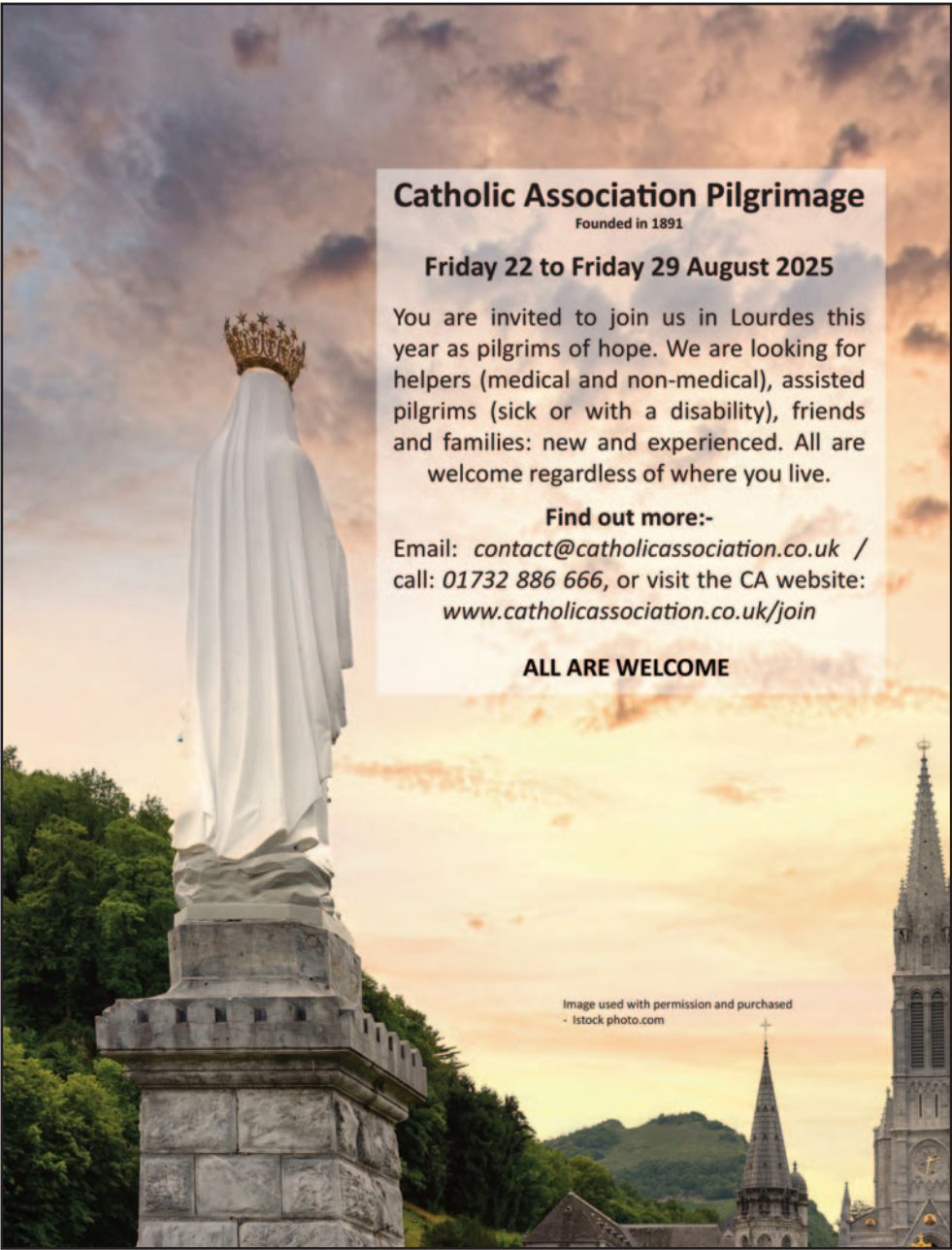
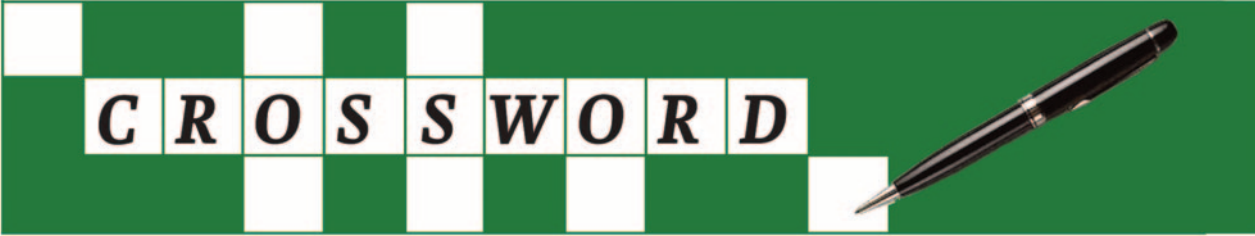


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You can use both sets of clues to solve the puzzle: the solutions are the same.

CRYPTIC Across

- 1 Enemy of Gideon's defeated during the witching hour, said one (9)

6 Musical about a High Priest (7)

7 Riddle to penetrate? (5)

9 Change in a little while going back to protect the testament (5)

10 Fielder's body parts used to take wickets in the end (3,4)

11 Foot part's essential to dancing, they say (6)

13 Grand aura about directions for the Holy Roman Emperor (6) 16 Hymn book each sailor kept (7)

18 One has a habit of getting into minicab bother (5)

20 Harsh being back at sea (5)

21 Bigbrewersarenuts,ridiculous(3-4)

22 Tyre here company backs after one phone order (9)

CRYPTIC Down

- 1 Recommendation when weather's bad in French wine area? (5)

2 Poles follow east Maine river banks to estate (7)

3 Saint Poles back from 2, and the Spanish, see in the morning (6)

4 One's no good in charge at first, but is very sweet (5)

5 Christian Roman's spreading mostly rubbish between Europe and America (7)

6 Paul's fellow soldier damaged pup's chair (9)

8 It runs in Iraq on Brussels tariffs top two phones supported (9)

12 Disturbance with fish supper only half wolfed down (5-2)

- 14 Spooks wreck a comeback, totally, for ancient language (7)

15 Frenchman's to the fore in Brexit – real European traditionalist on nationality (6)

17 'Beat retreat' code-word (5)

19 Gunners in the ascendant during support for Hebridean island (5)

QUICK Across

- 1 One of a tribe from whom Moses took a wife (9)

6 High Priest who opposed the Maccabees (7)

7 Soak;suffuse(5)

9 Eurofractions?(5)

10 Close fielding position in cricket (3,4)

11 Arch area of the foot (6)

13 The -----'s War: alternative, now dated, name for World War I (6) 16 Book of hymns or poems associated with the Old Testament (7)

18 Archimandrite;prelate(5)

20 Demanding;forbidding(5)

21 Large vats for steeping and serving beverages (3-4)

22 Ancient Levant maritime country with ports at Tyre and Sidon (9)

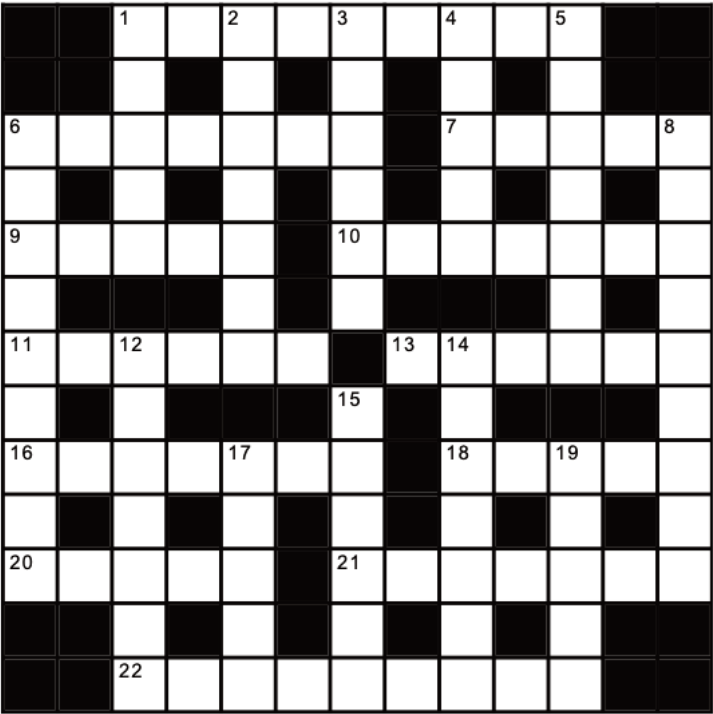
QUICK Down

- 1 Town noted for its Chardonnay and Pinot Noir/Gamay Burgundies (5)

2 Manorhouse;estate(7)

3 Abbot of Bec who became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1093 (6)

4 Cupcake topper (5)



- 5 Roman Christian who sent greetings to Timothy via Paul... (7)

6 ...and Christian at Colossae cited by Paul (9)

8 Western river boundary of Mesopotamia (9)

12 Organize a new restructure(5-2)

14 Language probably spoken by Christ (7)

15 French, previously Armorican (6)

17 Staccato, energetic, South American dance (5)

19 Outer Hebridean island home of Dad's Army's Private Frazer (5)

SOLUTION

Across: 1 Midianite, 6 Alcinus, 7 Imbue, 9 Cents, 10 Leg slip, 11 Instep, 13 Kaiser, 16 Psalter, 18 Abbot, 20 Stern, 21 Tea-urns, 22 Phoenicia. Down: 1 Macon, 2 Demesne, 3 Anselm, 4 Icing, 5 Eubulus, 6 Archippus, 8 Euphrates, 12 Shake-up, 14 Aramaic, 15 Breton, 17 Tango, 19 Barra.