



Papa Francesco

The People's Pope



A humble shepherd, a prophet of mercy, and a pilgrim of hope

December 17, 1936 — April 21, 2025

From the moment he first bowed before the people of God in 2013, asking for their prayers, Pope Francis signalled a new way of leadership: one rooted not in power, but in humility. He chose the name “Francis”, a name that carried a radical call to rebuild not buildings, but hearts. He embodied the Gospel he proclaimed, not from the marble halls of grandeur, but from the dusty streets where the poor, the wounded, and the forgotten dwell.

Pope Francis did not just preach Christ's mission; he lived it. Like Jesus who declared in Luke 4:18–19 that He was sent to bring good news to the poor and liberty to the captives, Pope Francis moved the Church from comfort to the peripheries. He dreamed of a

Church that is not pristine but “bruised, hurting, and dirty” because it has ventured into the chaos of human life.

Throughout his papacy and even in his passing, simplicity remained his most powerful witness. He lived in a modest guesthouse, wore a plain wooden cross, and refused the trappings of power. His final farewell was in keeping with this spirit, no golden embellishments, no lavish displays, just a simple wooden coffin, and the same scuffed black shoes that had walked the dusty roads of love.

He was the People's Pope, not because he sought popularity, but because he made each person feel seen, heard, and loved. His leadership was not about holding on to power but about letting go, lifting others up, and leading the Church to walk together — a synodal Church, listening, discerning, and moving as one.

His teachings were not written from ivory towers but born from the wounds of the world. In *Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the*

Gospel), he lit a fire in the Church to go out into the streets. In *Laudato Si' (Praise Be to You)*, he bound the cry of the poor to the cry of the earth. In *Fratelli Tutti (All Brothers and Sisters)*, he dreamed of a world where walls fall and bridges are built — a world fuelled by solidarity, not suspicion.

He challenged the Church to be more: to shed clericalism, to confront injustice, to embrace the wounded with tenderness. He reminded us that holiness is not reserved for the perfect, but for those willing to risk love in the ordinary struggles of life. His words and actions called us to a faith that is alive, messy, and deeply human.

In his final years, he remained a relentless voice for peace, pleading for dialogue over violence, crying out for suffering peoples across Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, and Myanmar. His last writings, *Laudate Deum* and *Dilexit Nos*, captured his burning heart for justice, mercy, and creation.

More than anything, Pope Francis showed us that greatness is not found in thrones or

titles but in the dust on one's shoes, the scars from walking with the wounded, and the tenderness of a heart poured out for others.

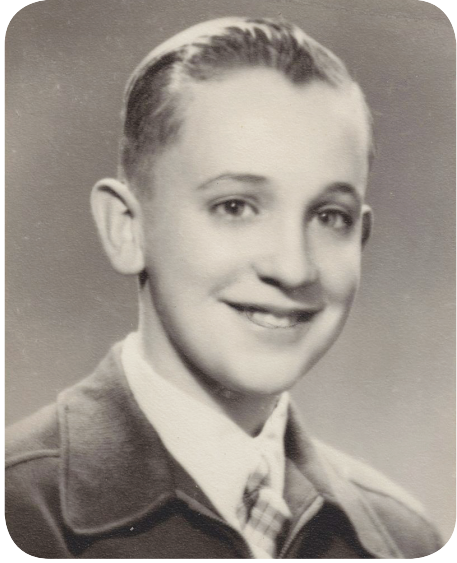
His death leaves a great void, but also a luminous trail — a trail of mercy, humility, and radical love. His scuffed shoes now rest, but they point us forward. They beckon us to continue the journey he began: to walk humbly with the poor, to listen deeply, to embrace boldly, and to trust fiercely in the boundless mercy of God.

As we grieve his passing, we also give thanks. For the life of a man who refused to wield power but chose instead to wash feet. For a leader who dared to dream of a Church on the move, bruised but alive. For a prophet who never stopped whispering the tenderness of God into a noisy, hardened world.

Pope Francis has gone ahead of us — a pilgrim reaching his final home. May we honour him not with statues or memorials, but by following the dusty road he walked so well, until the Church becomes once more a living sign of mercy, justice, and joy.

From Buenos Aires to the Vatican

The making of Pope Francis



Born Jorge Mario Bergoglio on December 17, 1936, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Pope Francis grew up in a humble household of Italian immigrants. His father, Mario José Bergoglio, was a railway worker, and his mother, Regina María Sívori, was a homemaker who instilled in him a strong Catholic faith. As the eldest of five children, Jorge learned the values of hard work, humility, and the importance of family. His early experiences with love, sacrifice, and community deeply shaped his view of the world and his role as a servant leader.

His journey to the priesthood began with a deeply personal encounter with God. At the age of 21, while going to confession at the then Church of San José de Flores on September 21, 1953 (Feast of St Matthew), he experienced what he described as a profound moment of grace and mercy. That moment marked his spiritual awakening and set him on the path of religious life.

The Jesuit Journey

Bergoglio first joined the diocesan seminary but felt called to the Society of Jesus which he entered in 1958. He was drawn by the Jesuit commitment to social justice, intellec-

tual rigour, and a life dedicated to serving the poor. After a long formation process, he was ordained a priest in 1969.

In 1973, at just 36, Fr Jorge Mario Bergoglio was appointed Provincial Superior of the Jesuits in Argentina, a position he held until 1979. His leadership occurred during Argentina's military dictatorship, a time marked by widespread human rights abuses. Fr Bergoglio faced the challenge of balancing pastoral care with the safety of his fellow Jesuits and the laity.

He later admitted to making mistakes during this time, especially in handling certain situations, but remained committed to Jesuit values of humility and spiritual discernment. As Provincial, he focused on poverty, community life, and serving the marginalised, while rejecting clericalism and promoting a Church of the poor.

In 1976, amid escalating repression by the military junta, Fr Bergoglio was forced into exile. He was removed from his role as Provincial and sent to a quieter Jesuit community in Córdoba, stepping out of the political and ecclesiastical limelight. Despite this, he continued to live out his vocation, focusing on the spiritual life and serving the people.

The "Bishop of Slums"

Appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Buenos Aires in 1992 by Pope John Paul II, Jorge Mario Bergoglio returned to active leadership in a city he knew well. In 1998, following the death of Cardinal Juan Carlos Aramburu, he was named Archbishop of Buenos Aires — rising to lead Argentina's largest and most influential diocese.

From the start, Bergoglio became known as the "bishop of the slums." He deliberately rejected the privileges of his office, choosing to live in a modest apartment rather than the bishop's palace, cooking his own meals, and traveling by bus like the people he served. He

regularly visited the *villas miserias* — the sprawling slums of the city's outskirts — ministering to those abandoned by society and often by the Church.

Eschewing ceremony and protocol, he focused instead on listening, accompaniment, and mercy. He often told priests that they should be close to their people, urging them to be "shepherds living with the smell of the sheep." This call to immerse themselves fully in the lives of their flock became a hallmark of his pastoral style — one that would later shape his papacy on the global stage.

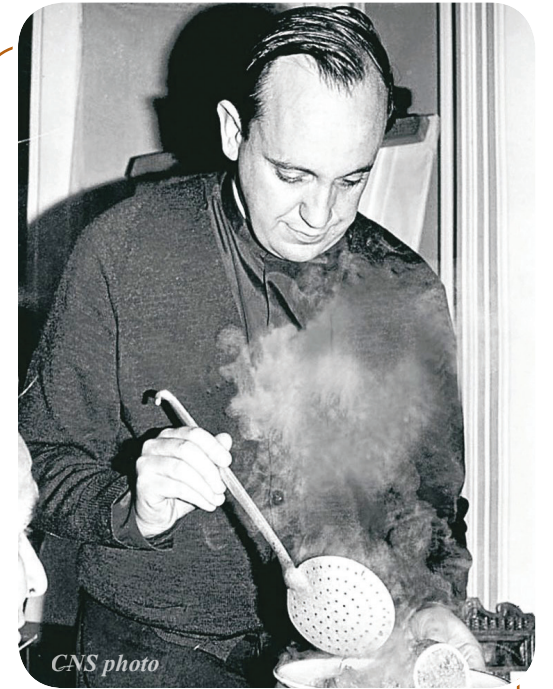
Proficiency in Languages

His proficiency in multiple languages also played a significant role in shaping his papacy. Fluent in Spanish, his native tongue, he also speaks Italian and German, thanks to his Jesuit formation. His deep knowledge of Latin is a testament to his intellectual rigour, which he applied throughout his ecclesial career, especially in theological studies. His proficiency in languages helped bridge cultural and linguistic divides, making him an accessible pope to Catholics and non-Catholics alike across the globe.

In fact, his first public address as Pope was in Italian followed by Spanish, a gesture to his Latin American roots and a reflection of his desire to reach out to the largest Catholic populations in the world. He has also spoken in English, French, and Portuguese during important global engagements, showing his deep understanding of the global Church and his willingness to communicate with people from all walks of life.

A Papacy Shaped by a Life of Mercy

On March 13, 2013, Bergoglio became the 266th pope, taking the name Francis after



"I have chosen to live in a simple apartment, to eat simply, and to take public transport, because the people I serve deserve that I be with them, not isolated."

St Francis of Assisi — a symbol of poverty, peace, and care for creation. He made history as the *first Jesuit pope*, the *first pope from Latin America*, and the *first non-European pope* in over 1,200 years.

From the moment he stepped onto the balcony of St Peter's Basilica, Pope Francis set the tone for his papacy. His first words were humble: "Brothers and sisters, good evening. You know that the duty of the conclave was to give the Church a bishop. It seems that my brother cardinals have chosen one from far away. I am happy to be with you in this journey."

His papacy would emphasise the peripheries, both geographical and existential, reaching out to the marginalised, advocating for peace, justice, and environmental sustainability. His focus on dialogue, inclusivity, and mercy has shaped the direction of the Church in the 21st century.

Legacy in Motion

Pope Francis' early experiences as a Jesuit, pastor, and archbishop laid the foundation for a papacy that challenges comfort and calls the Church to go forth — to serve, to heal, and to bring hope.



His love for Mary

On the night of his election, March 13, 2013, Pope Francis shared his first heartfelt wish: to pray before the Madonna. The very next day, he made his way to the Basilica of St Mary Major, entrusting his papacy to her care. Now, in a final act of devotion, his earthly journey ended where it began. In between, he returned to the Madonna over 100 times, each visit a quiet conversation between a son and his Mother.

Pope Francis prays in front of the Salus Populi Romani icon in the Basilica of St Mary Major. (Vatican Media)



Key Moments in His Early Life and Vocation

1936: Born Jorge Mario Bergoglio in Buenos Aires, Argentina, to Italian immigrant parents.

1953: At 21, experiences a transformative moment during confession, marking the beginning of his calling to the priesthood.

1958: Enters the Society of Jesus and begins his Jesuit formation.

1969: Ordained a priest at 33 years old.

1973–1979: Appointed Provincial Superior of the Jesuits in Argentina, leading the order during Argentina's military dictatorship.

1998: Appointed Archbishop of Buenos Aires, where he becomes known as the "Bishop of the Slums" for his focus on pastoral care in impoverished areas.

2013: Elected Pope Francis on March 13, marking the beginning of a historic papacy.

2013 (March 13): Takes the name Francis, inspired by St Francis of Assisi, a symbol of humility, peace, and love for creation.

A vision of universal fraternity



On October 3, 2020, Pope Francis released *Fratelli Tutti*, an encyclical on fraternity and social friendship, drawing inspiration from St Francis of Assisi. The document calls for the world to move beyond fear, division, and isolation, and instead work towards unity and love. At its core is the truth that all people, regardless of nationality, culture, religion, or status, are brothers and sisters. Pope Francis critiques individualism and nationalism, which often lead to conflict and exclusion, urging people to adopt a more inclusive vision that ensures everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

Peace Through Justice and Mercy

For Pope Francis, peace is inseparable from justice. True peace isn't simply the absence of violence or war but requires a commitment to justice, love, and mercy. He highlights the need for economic systems that prioritise human dignity over material gain, advocating for social justice that benefits the poor and marginalized. Pope Francis also underscores mercy as a crucial element of peace, encouraging individuals and societies to practice forgiveness and reconciliation, as well as healing past wrongs.

Dialogue and Diplomacy

Pope Francis emphasises dialogue as a

“Dialogue is the only way to reach a new understanding, to resolve conflicts, and to build bridges of peace.”
(*Fratelli Tutti*, 198)

The Higher Committee of Human Fraternity meets at the Vatican, Sept 11, 2019. (Vatican Media)

vital tool for building peace. He calls for open and respectful conversations between world leaders, religious groups, and individuals to bridge divides and resolve conflicts. Interfaith dialogue is especially important, as Pope Francis believes that religious leaders must collaborate to address shared challenges such as poverty, inequality, and climate change. Diplomacy is another key aspect of his vision, with Pope Francis urging nations to prioritise peaceful negotiations and cooperation over conflict and war.

Practical Implications for Peace

Pope Francis's call for peace in *Fratelli Tutti* is not merely theoretical but offers practical guidance for action. He encourages promoting peace within families and communities by fostering relationships based on respect and understanding. The Pope also stresses the importance of caring for the marginalised, advocating for the poor, refugees, and excluded groups, and calls for policies that promote social

justice and human rights. Additionally, he critiques global political and economic systems that perpetuate inequality and violence, urging governments and individuals to act as agents of change and work towards building a more just and peaceful world.

A Vision for Global Brotherhood

Pope Francis envisions a world of global fraternity, where peace is not just the absence of violence but is rooted in justice, mercy, and solidarity. He calls for a universal recognition of the dignity of every person and a commitment to the common good. In Malaysia, a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society, *Fratelli Tutti* offers a vision of how to cultivate peace and unity, encouraging the nation to embody the values of fraternity and social friendship. Pope Francis's message challenges individuals, families, communities, and nations to come together, embrace solidarity, and work towards a more just, compassionate, and peaceful world for all.

A journey of renewal

Milestones

- **2013**
Elected Pope (March 13), first from Latin America and Jesuit order.
Publishes *Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)*, calling for a more missionary Church.
- **2015**
Laudato Si': Encyclical on ecology and the poor, urging action on climate change.
- **2016**
Jubilee Year of Mercy: Global invitation to forgiveness and healing.
- **2019**
Signs *Human Fraternity Document* in Abu Dhabi, promoting interfaith dialogue.
- **2020**
Fratelli Tutti: Encyclical on global fraternity, peace, and social justice.
- **2021-2024**
Launches Synod on Synodality: Focuses on listening and walking together as a Church.
- **2024**
Launches World Children's Day: Celebrating children's dignity and rights.
- **2025**
Jubilee Year of Hope: Theme "Hope Does Not Disappoint."



Two popes?

In 2013, Pope Benedict XVI made history by resigning due to age and health, the first papal resignation in nearly 600 years. He became Pope Emeritus and retired to the Mater Ecclesiae Monastery in the Vatican. His successor, Pope Francis, was elected and became the first pope in history to lead the Church while having a predecessor still alive. Despite their distinct roles, the two popes maintained a harmonious and respectful relationship. Pope Benedict refrained from involving himself in Pope Francis' papacy, allowing the latter to lead without concern for overlapping authority.

The presence of two living popes symbolised the Church's unity and was carefully managed to avoid confusion. Their coexistence was marked by occasional public appearances, like during the 2014 canonization of Popes John XXIII and John Paul II, which highlighted the continuity of the papacy. The arrangement lasted until Pope Benedict XVI's death in December 2022, ending a unique chapter in the history of the Catholic Church.

Lumen Fidei: The Light of Faith

In *Lumen Fidei*, Pope Francis presents faith as a guiding light in the life of every believer, stressing its vital role in helping individuals navigate the complexities of life. Written shortly after his election, the encyclical draws on the teachings of his predecessor, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, and reflects Pope Francis' deep commitment to bringing faith into the contemporary world. Pope Francis outlines how faith is not just a personal experience but part of a wider tradition, passed down through the centuries by the Church.

Faith is not meant to be understood in isolation but in harmony with reason, showing that the two are complementary rather than contradictory. In the encyclical, Christ is described as the ultimate light of faith, revealing the fullness of truth through His life, death, and resurrection. Additionally, Pope Francis emphasises that faith has a social dimension, urging



Pope Francis talks with retired Pope Benedict XVI at the papal summer residence at Castel Gandolfo, Italy, March 23, 2013. (OSV News photo/Vatican Media via Reuters)

Christians to live out their faith through concrete acts of charity, justice, and service to others. *Lumen Fidei* challenges believers

to live faith with humility, compassion, and courage, continuing the journey towards a world marked by peace and fraternity.

Laudato Si': A call to care for our Common Home

Initiatives in Malaysia

In Malaysia, *Laudato Si'* has inspired a dynamic and growing movement within the Catholic Church, leading to a variety of ecological initiatives that reflect Pope Francis' call for integral ecology. From parish-level programmes to national campaigns, Malaysian Catholics are actively embracing environmental stewardship as a core expression of their faith.

National and Regional Programmes

Protect Our Earth, Protect Our Children Campaign (PROTEC): PROTEC was launched by the Episcopal Commission for Creation Justice in Malaysia on 1 September 2020, with support from the Catholic Bishops of Malaysia. The five-year initiative focuses on different environmental themes each year, aligned with the Season of Creation (1 September to 4 October). Themes so far include reducing electricity use, cutting food waste, eliminating plastic pollution, reducing fuel consumption, and minimising paper and wood usage. The campaign will continue with ProTec 2.0 Regenerate from 2025 to 2030.

Ecological dioceses: On July 13, 2023, all nine Malaysian bishops signed pledges to make their dioceses fully ecological, committing to "a deep ecological spirituality" and advancing "ecological justice and resilience for all creation." This pledge, made during the Catholic Bishops Conference at MAJODI Centre in Plentong, Johore, aligns with the Ecological Diocese Protocols, which emphasise decarbonised pathways and building community and Earth resilience.

The bishops also signed documents containing self-monitoring forms to aid dioceses and parishes in making a swift, impactful ecological transition.

Decarbonising Malaysia Project: Initiated in 2023 by the Episcopal Commission for Creation Justice (ECCJ), this project aims to guide the Catholic Church in Malaysia towards a just transition to a low-carbon economy. The initiative focuses on promoting ecological justice and resilience at all levels of the Church, encouraging parishes, dioceses, and institutions to adopt sustainable practices in line with *Laudato Si'*.

Laudato Si' Movement in Malaysia:

The global *Laudato Si'* Movement, formerly known as the Global Catholic Climate Movement, has a presence in Malaysia, fostering ecological spirituality and action among Catholics. The movement encourages the formation of *Laudato Si'* Circles—small groups dedicated to prayer, reflection, and environmental action—and offers programs to train *Laudato Si'* Animators who lead ecological initiatives in their communities.

In 2015, Pope Francis released *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*, an encyclical that marked a turning point in how the Catholic Church, and indeed much of the world, approaches climate change and environmental degradation. For the first time, a Pope framed ecological issues not merely as scientific or political concerns, but as profoundly moral and spiritual ones, tied to the core of human dignity and justice.

Pope Francis made it clear that climate change is not just an environmental crisis, it is a social crisis. The poor, he stressed, are the first to suffer from pollution, natural disasters, and resource scarcity. He called for an "integral ecology" that recognises the interconnectedness of all life: human beings, nature, and the Creator. "Everything is connected," he wrote, insisting that harm to the environment is harm to humanity itself.

The impact of *Laudato Si'* was immediate and far-reaching. It influenced global discussions at the United Nations, notably encouraging momentum for the landmark Paris Climate Agreement in 2015. World leaders, scientists, activists, and faith communities alike cited the document as a moral imperative for urgent climate action. Pope Francis's message gave spiritual authority to environmental concerns and united religious, secular, and scientific voices in a common cause.

Beyond political influence, *Laudato Si'*

sparked a global movement within the Church itself. Parishes, schools, universities, and Catholic organizations around the world launched new initiatives for sustainability, renewable energy, ecological education, and advocacy for climate justice. Networks such as the Global Catholic Climate Movement (now *Laudato Si'* Movement) were energised, promoting the encyclical's teachings at every level of society.

Pope Francis continued this momentum

by instituting the *Season of Creation* as a special time of prayer and action for the environment each year. He also convened major synods, such as the *Amazon Synod in 2019*, which highlighted the urgent need to protect indigenous peoples and the

biodiversity of critical ecosystems.

In 2023, Francis followed up *Laudato Si'* with a new apostolic exhortation, *Laudate Deum*, warning that the world was dangerously slow in responding to the ecological crisis. He urged renewed political will, a conversion of hearts, and a new way of living that respects both the planet and the poorest among us.

Through his consistent, passionate advocacy, Pope Francis permanently placed care for creation at the heart of Catholic mission and global conscience. His call echoes louder each year: humanity must change course not just to save the Earth, but to honour the Creator, protect the vulnerable, and secure a future for generations to come.

**"The world is now increasingly witnessing a moment of crisis... If we are to avoid a major environmental catastrophe, we must act urgently."
Laudato Si', 57**



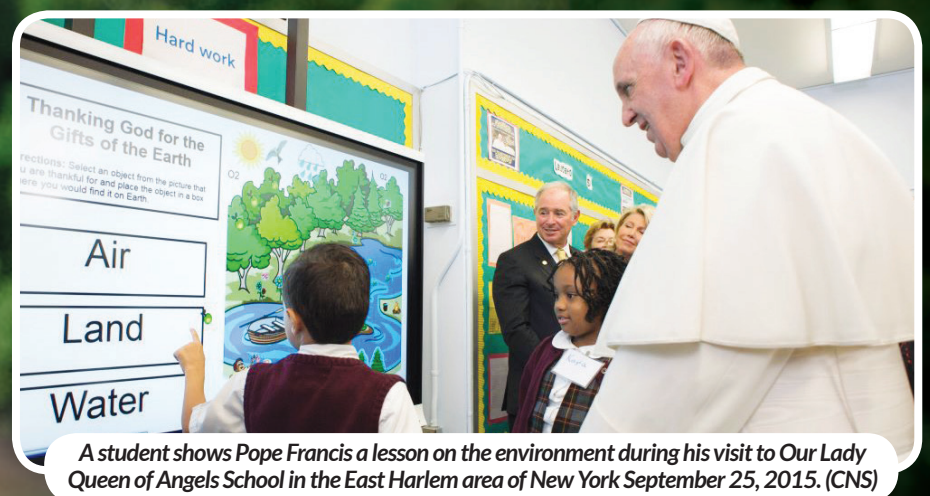
(Wikimedia Common Mike Peel)



Pope Francis plants a tree at the National Martyrs' Memorial in Bangladesh on November 30, 2017.



Pope Francis greets Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg during his general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican in this file photo from April 17, 2019. (CNS/Vatican Media)



A student shows Pope Francis a lesson on the environment during his visit to Our Lady Queen of Angels School in the East Harlem area of New York September 25, 2015. (CNS)

Introduces several significant annual observances



WORLD DAY FOR THE CARE OF CREATION

Established on September 1, 2015, the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, encourages Catholic communities around the world to pray for our common home.

The day is inspired by Pope Francis' landmark encyclical *Laudato Si'*, which calls on "every person living on this planet" to care for our shared Earth as well as by the Orthodox tradition and part of the Season of Creation.

Pope Francis spoke in Catholic and secular venues about the detrimental impacts of a "throwaway culture" perpetuated by unscrupulous profiteering and rampant consumerism.

Having written two milestone documents on care for creation, *Laudato Si'* (2015) and *Laudate Deum* (2023), Pope Francis articulated a powerful vision for ecological responsibility. In *Laudato Si'*, he wrote: "We have to realise that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor."



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WORLD DAY OF THE POOR

Pope Francis established the World Day of the Poor in 2016, as part of his Apostolic Letter *Misericordia et Misera*, marking the conclusion of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. The first observance took place on November 19, 2017, and it has since been celebrated annually on the 33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time, typically falling in mid-November.

This initiative reflects Pope Francis' deep commitment to social justice and his desire for the Church to be a "field hospital" for the marginalised. Each year, the Pope issues a message highlighting the plight of the poor and calling for concrete acts of solidarity. For instance, in 2023, the theme was "Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor" (Tobit 4:7).

The World Day of the Poor is marked by various



charitable activities, including free medical clinics in St Peter's Square and communal meals. In 2024, Pope Francis continued this tradition by hosting lunch for approximately 1,300 poor individuals in the Vatican.



Pope Francis enjoys lunch with a group of poor and needy in St Paul VI Hall. (CNA/Daniel Ibanez)



Pope Francis greets the elderly during the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, 2023 (Vatican Media)

WORLD DAY FOR GRANDPARENTS AND THE ELDERLY

Pope Francis instituted a Church-wide celebration of a World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly in 2021. It is celebrated on the Sunday closes to the Feast Sts Joachim and Anne, the grandparents of Jesus.

Recalling the upcoming feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple when the elderly Simeon and Anna encountered the child Jesus and recognised Him as the Messiah, Pope Francis said, "the Holy Spirit even today stirs up thoughts and words of wisdom in the elderly." The voice of the elderly "is precious," he said, "because it sings the praises of God and preserves the roots of the peoples."

The elderly, he continued, "remind us that old age is a gift and that grandparents are the link between the different generation, to pass on to the young the experience of life."

The Holy Father said he instituted the World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly because "grandparents are often forgotten, and we forget this wealth of preserving roots and passing on" what the elderly have received.

He stressed on the importance of grandparents and grandchildren getting to know one another, because "as the prophet Joel says, grandparents seeing their grandchildren dream," while "young people, drawing strength from their grandparents, will go forward and prophesy."



WORLD CHILDREN'S DAY

World Children's Day, a significant follow-up to World Youth Day, was held in Rome on 25–26 May 2024. Pope Francis joyfully announced the event at the Angelus on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. This new initiative responds to the important question: "What kind of world do we want to leave to the children who are growing up now?" Pope Francis emphasised, "Like Jesus, we want to put children at the centre and care for them." Sponsored by the Dicastery for Culture and

Education, the event saw over 50,000 children, parents, and educators from more than 100 countries flocked to Rome to participate.

Proposed by nine-year-old Alessandro

The idea for a day entirely dedicated to children was proposed to Pope Francis in July by nine-year-old Alessandro during the *Popecast*, the second podcast produced by *Vatican Media* in preparation for the World Youth Day in Lisbon. "I like it very much!" Pope Francis replied after hearing Alessandro's voice message. "We can have it organised by the grandparents. A beautiful idea. I will think about it and see how to do it."

Pope Francis envisioned World Children's Day as a "movement of boys and girls who want to build a world of peace, where we are all brothers and sisters, a world that has a future because we want to take care of the environment around us".

The next World Children's Day is scheduled for September 2026 in Rome.



Pope Francis poses with a group of children during his weekly general audience in St Peter's Square at the Vatican, 2024. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

SUNDAY OF THE WORD OF GOD

In 2019, Pope Francis established the Sunday of the Word of God, celebrated annually on the third Sunday in Ordinary Time. Through the apostolic letter *Aperuit Illis*, he called for a renewed focus on the importance of

Sacred Scripture in the life of every Christian.

The Sunday of the Word of God invites Catholics to deepen their relationship with Scripture, hearing God's living Word and integrating it into daily life.





The joy of the Gospel and the mission of peace

E*vangeli* *Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*), an apostolic exhortation written by Pope Francis was released in November 2013. In this document, the Pope invites the Church to embrace a renewed and joyful mission of evangelisation. He emphasises that the Gospel is not just a message of doctrine but a source of joy that leads to personal transformation and social change. For Pope Francis, evangelisation is not just about preaching. It is about living out the Gospel through acts of mercy, justice, and service, especially to the poor and marginalised.

Core Messages of *Evangelii Gaudium*

The Joy of Evangelisation

Pope Francis emphasises that the Gospel brings joy to those who

encounter it. This joy is not superficial but deeply transformative, affecting both personal lives and society as a whole. Evangelisation, he argues, should flow from this joy — sharing the Good News is an invitation to live with hope and purpose.

A Church for the Marginalised

The Pope stresses that the Church must reach out to those on the peripheries—those who are excluded from society, whether because of poverty, illness, or spiritual alienation. The Church should not focus inwardly but be a force of healing and hope for those who are often forgotten.

Mercy and Justice in Action

Pope Francis calls the Church to be a community of mercy and justice. The Gospel message must be lived out through acts of compassion, standing up for the poor and op-

pressed, and working toward a more just and inclusive society.

A Call for Social Transformation

Evangelisation must include efforts to transform society. The Church is called not only to spread the Good News but also to work toward a world where justice, peace, and human dignity are upheld. Pope Francis calls for a “culture of encounter,” where people come together across divides to create a better world.

The Role of the Laity

Evangelisation is not just the task of priests and religious; it is the responsibility of all Catholics. Pope Francis calls on the laity to take an active role in sharing the Gospel, whether through their professional lives, relationships, or social engagement. The laity are essential in building a vibrant, missionary

Church.

*Impact of *Evangelii Gaudium**

Since its release, *Evangelii Gaudium* has had a profound impact on the Catholic Church’s approach to evangelisation. Pope Francis’ call to move beyond a “self-referential” Church has inspired Catholics to engage more deeply with their communities, focusing on the poor, the marginalised, and those who are distant from the faith.

Key Areas of Impact:

Focus on Social Justice: The encyclical has deepened the Church’s commitment to social justice. Many Catholics have embraced Pope Francis’s call to stand in solidarity with the poor and advocate for social change.

Renewed Missionary Zeal: The

Pope’s vision for a Church that reaches out has encouraged new missionary efforts, both in traditional mission areas and in urban centres where secularism is on the rise.

Witness of Joy: Catholics around the world have embraced the idea that evangelisation is not just about preaching but about offering a joyful witness of love, compassion, and service. This has led to a greater focus on personal relationships and authentic living as key parts of evangelisation.

Ecumenism and Interfaith Dialogue: Pope Francis’s emphasis on building bridges has also led to stronger efforts for ecumenism and interfaith cooperation. He encourages dialogue and mutual respect among different faith communities to work together for the common good.

Council of Cardinals

The Council was established by Pope Francis with a chirograph on September 28, 2013, with the tasks of assisting him in the governance of the universal Church and of considering a project for the reform of the Roman Curia.

The latter was accomplished with the new apostolic constitution

Praedicate Evangelium, published on March 19, 2022.

The Council of Cardinals, often referred to as the C9, is a key advisory body established by Pope Francis to assist him in Church governance and reform. It plays a central role in his effort to make the Catholic Church more transparent,

accountable, and responsive to pastoral needs.

The Council includes cardinals from around the world, reflecting Pope Francis’s global vision of the Church, with members from Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Europe.

The first meeting of the C9 was held on October 1, 2013.



“The Church must step outside of itself and go out to those who need the Good News. It must be a missionary Church, focused on the peripheries and the margins.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 20)



The Financial Scandals

Pope Francis worked to address Vatican financial scandals by focusing on transparency and accountability. His key actions include:

Vatican Bank Reform: Restructured the Vatican Bank and created the Financial Intelligence Authority (AIF) to combat money laundering.

London Real Estate Scandal: Following a controversial property investment, the Pope initiated investigations, resulting in arrests and reforms.

Secretariat of State Mismanagement: Increased oversight and audits to ensure funds were used for charity.

2021 Financial Trial: A trial began involving Vatican officials on charges of embezzlement, with the Pope emphasising accountability.



“Demands that the legitimate rights of women be respected, based on the firm conviction that men and women are equal in dignity, present the Church with profound and challenging questions which cannot be lightly evaded”

(*Evangelii Gaudium*, 104)

The role of women

Pope Francis consistently elevated the dignity and contributions of women in the Church and society. While maintaining traditional doctrinal positions, he called for greater inclusion of women in leadership roles within the Vatican and local dioceses.

He appointed women to senior positions, including the first female undersecretary of the Synod of Bishops, Nathalie Beccart, who was also given voting rights at the Synod — an unprecedented move. Francis also named women such as Barbara Jatta as the first female director of the Vatican Museums and ap-

pointed laywomen to positions in the Dicastery for Bishops and the Council for the Economy.

In *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Amoris Laetitia*, he stressed on the unique and essential contributions of women to family life, pastoral care, and the moral compass of humanity.

Francis also condemned violence against women as a “blasphemy against God,” and called for global efforts to combat abuse, inequality, and marginalisation. His vision was clear: a more synodal Church must listen to and walk with women as protagonists of faith and builders of peace.

A Church for the Poor

Pope Francis has consistently emphasised that the Church must be a **Church for the poor and by the poor**, rooted in the Gospel's call to serve the most vulnerable members of society. His teachings highlight a preferential option for the poor, which places the marginalised at the heart of the Church's mission. This vision stems from the belief that Christ's ministry was marked by compassion for the marginalised and that the Church is called to mirror this mission through concrete action in solidarity with the suffering, the oppressed, and the excluded.

The Preferential Option for the Poor

Pope Francis often refers to the "preferential option for the poor" as a guiding principle of Catholic social teaching. This idea emphasises that the Church's focus must be on those who are most marginalised and suffering. In both his homilies and papal messages, the Pope underscores that Christ Himself identified with the poor and marginalised, and the Church must do the same. This means not only providing charity but working to transform social structures that perpetuate inequality.

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), Pope Francis explains that "the poor are at the very heart of the Gospel" and should be central to the Church's mission. For him, serving the poor is not an afterthought; it is the essence of the Gospel message. He writes: "A poor person, who is abandoned, is a sufferer of Christ himself. If we are called to follow Jesus, it is in our following of Him that we will encounter those who are poor." (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 195).

In his view, the Church must engage with the poor not only through charitable works but also by helping to create a more just and equitable world. **The poor are not to be seen merely as recipients of aid but as active members of the community with dignity and inherent rights.**

Solidarity with the Marginalised

For Pope Francis, solidarity is the cornerstone of a just society. He speaks about a world where no one is left behind, where the well-being of all, particularly the most vulnerable, is prioritised. The Pope's teaching calls on all Catholics to move beyond charity alone and adopt a mindset of solidarity, recognising the shared humanity in every person, particularly the poor.

In *Fratelli Tutti* (2020), Pope Francis extends this call to global fraternity, stating that true peace and justice can only be achieved when all members of society work together for the common good, especially those who are suffering.

He writes: "Solidarity is the answer to the globalisation of indifference. A society that ignores the needs of the poor is a society destined to fail." (*Fratelli Tutti*, 22).

Through this message, Pope Francis challenges the Church and the world to build communities based on mutual respect, compassion, and a commitment to the common good.

Reforming Economic Systems for Justice

A critical aspect of Pope Francis' teaching is his cri-

tique of the global economic system, which he believes often exploits the poor. In both *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Laudato Si'* (2015), he condemns the idolatry of money and the economic structures that perpetuate inequality. Pope Francis argues that the global economy should serve humanity, not the other way around.

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Pope calls for a radical transformation of economic systems, urging nations to create economies of solidarity rather than economies of exclusion.

He writes: "Money must serve, not rule! The economy is at the service of people and should work for the common good. We need to change the structure of the economy to promote human dignity and justice." (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 58).

His emphasis on economic justice calls for the implementation of policies that do not exploit the poor and disenfranchised, but instead promote equality, care for the environment, and the dignity of every person.

Pope Francis advocates for economic models that protect the most vulnerable, supporting the need for structural change in society to ensure that economic progress benefits all members of society.

Church and Social Justice: A Call for Action

Pope Francis' teachings challenge the Church to go beyond simply preaching social justice and to actively pursue it through concrete action. In his papal messages and homilies, he frequently stresses the need for the Church to become a transformative force in society, advocating for policies that uphold human dignity and equality. The Church's work, he argues, must include raising awareness of social injustices and working to dismantle systems that oppress the poor.

In his homily at the World Day of Peace in 2017, Pope Francis reminded the Church:

"We are called to be peacemakers, defenders of justice, and promoters of a culture of encounter. The Church must be an advocate for the oppressed, working to ensure that every person is treated with dignity, particularly those most marginalised by society."

A Vision for a Just and Compassionate World

His teachings on solidarity, social justice, and the preferential option for the poor are foundational to his papacy. They call upon Catholics to live out the Gospel in a way that prioritises those on the margins, advocating for societal transformation based on justice, equality, and human dignity. By focusing on the needs of the poor and building a more just world, the Church is answering its divine calling to be the Body of Christ for all people, especially those who are suffering.

These messages resonate far beyond the Church, influencing international discussions on poverty, inequality, and human rights. Pope Francis' papal encyclicals and teachings invite everyone to reflect on their role in creating a more just and compassionate world, rooted in the Gospel's message of love, solidarity, and peace.



On the Church's Mission to the Poor

"A poor person, who is abandoned, is a sufferer of Christ himself. If we are called to follow Jesus, it is in our following of Him that we will encounter those who are poor."

Evangelii Gaudium, 195

The Pope's Global Pilgrimage: A Summary of Apostolic Journeys (2013-2024)

In the 12 years of his pontificate, Pope Francis visited 68 countries giving life to a tireless mission to take the Word of God and the comfort of His love to the whole human family.

Asia: A Pastoral Priority and Culture of Encounter

Pope Francis made 13 journeys to Asia, highlighting the continent as a pastoral priority. His message of peace, hope, environmental care, and interfaith dialogue resonated across diverse cultures, from the Korean peninsula to the islands of Oceania.

- **South Korea** (2014): Beatified Korean martyrs and called for peace between North and South Korea.
- **Sri Lanka** (2015): Canonised Joseph Vaz, urging healing after civil war.
- **Philippines** (2015): Comforted Typhoon Yolanda survivors; celebrated Mass with millions. It was also the largest papal crowd with six to seven million attending the closing Mass.
- **Myanmar and Bangladesh** (2017): Advocated for harmony, met Rohingya refugees.
- **Thailand & Japan** (2019): Spoke against human trafficking and nuclear weapons.
- **Kazakhstan** (2022): Joined interfaith forum amidst global conflict.
- **Mongolia** (2023): Encouraged tiny Catholic community; urged Chinese Catholics to be good citizens.
- **Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, Singapore** (2024): Promoted Muslim-Christian friendship, unity with indigenous peoples, and the dignity of the poor and the affluent alike.



Pope Francis venerates a statue of Mary and Jesus with incense August 16, 2014. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)



Pope Francis visits families of typhoon Yolanda victims in one of the areas in Palo, Leyte Saturday, January 17, 2015.



Pope Francis prays with religious leaders after meeting Rohingya refugees from Myanmar during an inter-religious and ecumenical meeting for peace in the garden of the archbishop's residence in Dhaka, Bangladesh, December 1, 2017. (CNS/Paul Haring)



Pope Francis receives a scarf as a gift from Choijiljav Dambajav, abbot of the Buddhists' Zuun Khuree Dashichoiling Monastery in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, during an ecumenical and inter-religious meeting at the city's Hun Theatre September 3, 2023. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

Middle East: Paths to Peace and Dialogue

Francis' five trips to the Middle East broke new ground in Catholic-Muslim relations and interfaith understanding.

- **Jordan, Israel, Palestine** (2014): Prayed at the wall dividing Israel and Palestine.
- **Turkey** (2014): Emphasised Christian-Muslim dialogue.
- **UAE** (2019): First pope to visit the Arabian Peninsula; signed the Document on Human Fraternity.
- **Iraq** (2021): Historic visit bringing comfort to persecuted Christians.
- **Bahrain** (2022): Advanced dialogue and co-existence.



Pope Francis touches the wall that divides Israel from the West Bank. (Vatican Media/ Osservatore Romano)



Pope Francis and Grand Mufti of Istanbul, Rahmi Yaran pray in the Sultan Ahmet mosque, 2014. (CNS photo)

Americas: Solidarity with the Poor and Marginalised

Francis made eight major journeys to the Americas, bringing his message of social justice and mercy to both the Global South and the developed North.

- **Brazil** (2013): First international trip for World Youth Day.
- **Ecuador, Bolivia, Paraguay** (2015): Defended the rights of the poor and indigenous.
- **Cuba and USA** (2015): Encouraged reconciliation; addressed US Congress and the UN.
- **Mexico** (2016): Spoke out against violence and border injustices.
- **Colombia** (2017): Supported peace process.
- **Chile and Peru** (2018): Called for ecological justice.
- **Panama** (2019): World Youth Day: Young people as builders of the future.
- **Canada** (2022): Apologised for Church's role in residential schools.



Young people dance and sing during the opening ceremony of World Youth Day on Copacabana beach in Rio de Janeiro, 2013. (CNS/Paul Haring)



Pope Francis arrives with Indigenous leaders for a meeting with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities at Maskwacis, Alberta, July 25, 2022. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)



Pope Francis addresses the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York September 25, 2013. (CNS photo/Mike Segar, Reuters)



Pope Francis touches a statue of Mary and Jesus after crowning it during Mass at Lobito beach in Iquique, Chile, January 18, 2018. (CNS/Paul Haring)

Africa: Faith, Justice, and Peace in Motion

Pope Francis visited 10 African countries over several trips, focusing on peace, inter-religious dialogue, and healing in post-conflict societies.

- **Kenya, Uganda, Central African Republic** (2015): Opened Holy Door in war-torn CAR.
- **Egypt** (2017): Promoted Muslim-Christian understanding.
- **Morocco** (2019): Emphasised migration as a human dignity issue.
- **Mozambique, Madagascar, Mauritius** (2019): Advocated care for creation and social equity.
- **DR Congo and South Sudan** (2023): Urged an end to violence and the embrace of peace.



Pope in Bangui: 'I come as a pilgrim of peace and a messenger of hope.'



Pope Francis walks with children as he visits the "Matthew 25" house in Maputo, Mozambique, September 5, 2019. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Europe: Rekindling the Christian Soul of a Continent

With 37 apostolic journeys to Europe and pastoral activity across 27 nations, Pope Francis addressed the continent's secularism, migration issues, and Christian unity.

- **Eastern and post-communist nations (Albania, Baltic States, Balkans)**: Spoke of freedom, hope, and remembrance.
- **Western Europe (France, Ireland, Portugal, Switzerland, Sweden)**: Challenged secularism and emphasised fraternity.
- **Pilgrimage centres (Fatima, Kraków)**: Encouraged devotion and youth engagement.
- **Migration hotspots (Greece, Malta, Cyprus)**: Defended migrant dignity and called for European solidarity.
- **Final visits in 2024 to Belgium, Luxembourg, and France** closed a decade-long pilgrimage with calls to fraternity and peace.



Pope Francis walks with World Youth Day pilgrims as he arrives for a July 30 prayer vigil at the Field of Mercy in Krakow, Poland. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)



Pope Francis meets refugees at the Moria refugee camp on the island of Lesbos, Greece, in this April 16, 2016, file photo. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)



Pope Francis blesses a disabled person during his visit at the serafico institute in Assisi, Italy, October 4, 2013. (CNS photo)



Pope Francis greets immigrants as he arrives at the port in Lampedusa, Italy, July 8, 2013. (CNS/Tullio Puglia, pool)



Pope Francis greets the crowd during his general audience in Paul VI hall at the Vatican January 30, 2013. (CNS/Reuters/Philimon Bulawayo)

Italy: The Everyday Mission

Though not classified among international journeys, Italy was the stage of countless pastoral visits, from Lampedusa to Assisi. Francis made it a point to remain close to Italy's poor, immigrants, youth, and earthquake victims, demonstrating that the pope's mission begins at home.

Conclusion

Pope Francis' apostolic journeys were not simply diplomatic or symbolic. They were deeply evangelical. Across continents and cultures, he built bridges, uplifted the marginalised, and invited all to a "culture of encounter." These 12 years of missionary journeys form a mosaic of peace, justice, and Gospel witness on a global scale.



Embracing a culture of mercy

Pope Francis' Teachings on Reconciliation

Pope Francis has consistently called the world to embrace a culture of peace — one rooted not in force or dominance, but in mercy, dialogue, and forgiveness. For Francis, peace is never merely the absence of war; it is the presence of justice, healing, and restored relationships.

His emphasis on reconciliation became especially visible during the Jubilee Year of Mercy (2015–2016), when he urged every Catholic and person of goodwill to become “missionaries of mercy,” actively opening their hearts to forgiveness and healing. He called for the Church to be “a field hospital,” tending to wounds with tenderness rather than judgment.



Peace Requires Justice and Forgiveness

For Pope Francis, building peace is not a passive stance. It is a moral and spiritual task.

He stresses that:

True peace requires justice — systems and structures that uphold human dignity, economic fairness, and the protection of the vulnerable.

Forgiveness is not forgetting, but a courageous choice to end cycles of hatred, revenge, and division.

Reconciliation must be both personal and collective — between individuals, communities, religions, and nations.

In *Fratelli Tutti*, Francis writes powerfully about “social forgiveness,” a

deep healing that can break historical chains of conflict. “Without memory, there is no future,” he says, calling for a peace rooted in truth, not silence.

Mercy in Action: Embracing the Wounded

Francis’ gestures of compassion, kneeling in confession, embracing refugees, praying in silence with leaders of other faiths, are expressions of his conviction that mercy must be seen and felt. During his visits to conflict zones, he has not shied away from uncomfortable truths, but always pointed to a path forward through encounter and humility.

He has washed the feet of prisoners and migrants, visited genocide memorials, and publicly wept with victims of abuse.

His actions remind the Church that peace is not abstract. It must be practiced through empathy, listening, and courageous acts of love.

24 Hours For The Lord

For one day, every year, churches across the world remain open for 24 hours inviting everyone to pray in front of the Blessed Sacrament and encounter Jesus through confession.

This ‘24 Hours for the Lord’ is a time when hearts burdened by sin find renewal and the faithful meet Jesus face to face in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

But where did it all begin?

It all began in Rome, near St Peter’s Square, at Centro San Lorenzo, where Daniele Venturi helped spark what would become a global movement.

Daniele Venturi, who sadly passed away just days ago, described that night 12 years ago: “One of the most significant nights that ignited this Eucharistic spark was during the period between the resignation of Benedict XVI and the beginning of Pope Francis’ pontificate.

“We were right here, inside this very church where we find ourselves today, engaged in intense prayer that lasted several days, 24 hours a day, day and night.”

On March 13, 2013, as the world waited to hear the name of the new Pope, a group of young people continued to pray before the Eucharist — 24 hours of adoration, asking God to guide the Church.

Months later, they gathered again, this time to celebrate the birthday of the newly elected Pope Francis. They called it “24 Hours for the Lord.”

And to their amazement, Pope Francis heard about it. The very next day, he sent them a message of thanks. He sent them his greetings, his gratitude, and rosaries.

And then, one year later, he gave them something even greater. In 2014, Pope Francis instituted “24 Hours for the Lord” for the entire Church.

And from that spark, a global movement was born. But Centro San Lorenzo never stopped. To this day, it remains a place of adoration, prayer, and mission.

Fabiola Inzunza, Head of the Centre, explains: “Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is the heart of the centre, because it is there where everything is born.”

And Pope Francis didn’t just proclaim it. He lived it. Every year, he attended, prayed, heard confessions, and went to confession himself.



The Jubilee Year of Mercy (2015-2016)

A Year that Opened Doors

Launched: December 8, 2015 (Feast of the Immaculate Conception)

Theme: “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” (Luke 6:36)

Symbol: The Holy Door opened in cathedrals worldwide as a sign of God’s invitation to reconciliation

Goal: To remind the Church of her mission to be a witness of mercy, especially through the Sacraments, prayer, and acts of justice and charity

Global Participation: Millions of Catholics crossed Holy Doors in pilgrimage, seeking forgiveness, healing, and peace

Leadership during crisis (COVID-19)

MASSES FROM SANTA MARTA:

From March to May 2020, Pope Francis celebrated Mass daily at 6.00am (12 noon Malaysian time) in the chapel of his residence, Casa Santa Marta. These were live-streamed globally, offering comfort and spiritual support

DAILY PRAYERS FOR FRONTLINERS:

Each Mass was dedicated to different groups affected by the pandemic — health care workers, the elderly, prisoners, educators, and more.

SPIRITUAL OUTREACH:

Pope Francis embraced digital communication to reach the faithful, reminding them they were not alone despite physical isolation.

UNPRECEDENTED “STATIO ORBIS”:

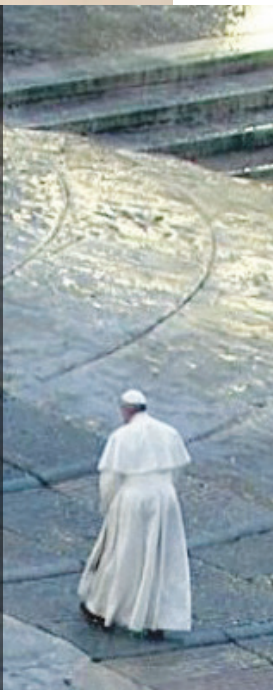
On March 27, 2020, he stood alone in a rain-soaked, empty St Peter’s Square to offer an extraordinary *Urbi et Orbi* blessing with the Blessed Sacrament, praying for global healing and hope.

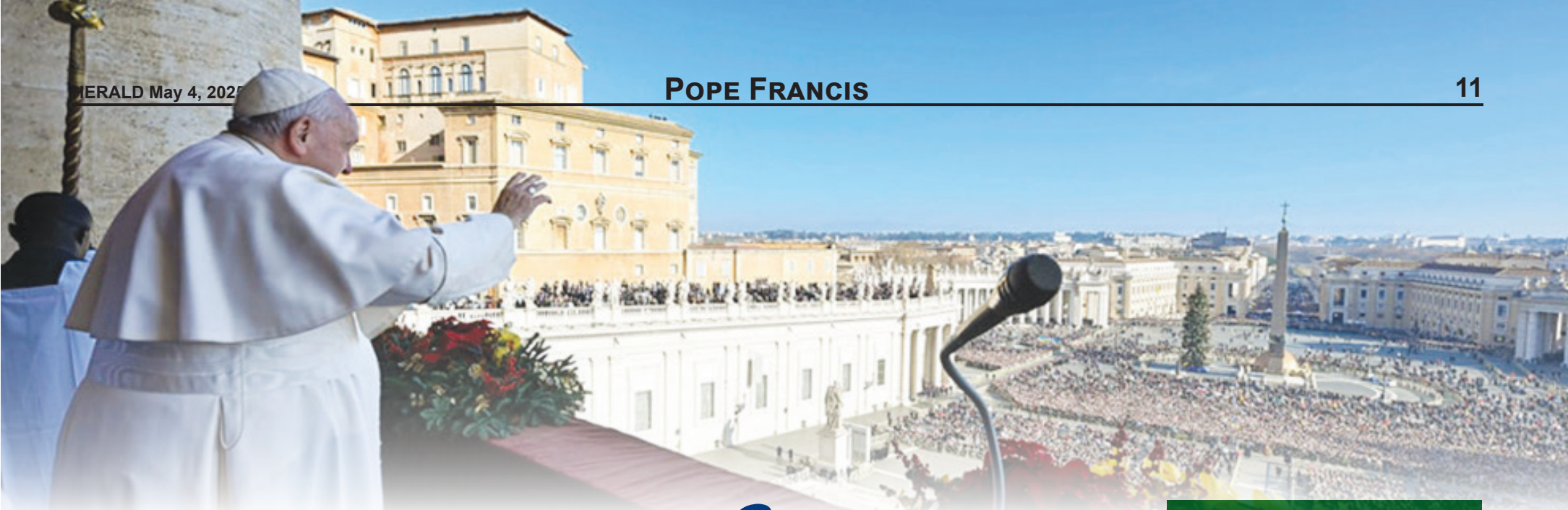
GLOBAL SYMBOL OF HOPE:

The image of him, alone with the monstrance in a deserted square, became a defining moment of spiritual leadership during the crisis.

CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT:

Throughout lockdowns, he continued issuing messages of solidarity, launched charitable funds, and encouraged vaccine equity.





A promoter of peace in a world filled with conflict

Pope Francis has emerged as one of the most passionate voices advocating for peace in an increasingly divided world. His leadership is defined by his opposition to war and violence, his call for disarmament, and his tireless efforts to promote peace in regions enduring prolonged conflict.

Opposition to War and Violence:

Pope Francis has consistently condemned all forms of violence, calling for peaceful resolutions to conflicts.

He has spoken out against wars in regions such as Syria, Ukraine, and Yemen, urging nations to end hostilities and prioritise diplomacy.

Calls for Disarmament:

Pope Francis advocates for global disarmament, particularly regarding nuclear weapons, urging countries to reduce their military arsenals and work towards a world free of weapons of mass destruction.

He is vocal about the human cost of military spending, calling for resources to be redirected toward human development, health, and education.

The Cry for Peace in the Middle East:

Pope Francis has called for international efforts to bring peace to war-torn regions, especially in Syria and Iraq.

In 2014, he led a prayer vigil for peace in the Middle East, seeking divine intervention to end violence in the region.

Ukraine Crisis:

Pope Francis has spoken out against the Russian invasion of Ukraine, denouncing the violence and loss of innocent lives.

He has called for an immediate ceasefire, peace talks, and support for those affected by the war, emphasizing the human suffering caused by conflict.

Africa:

Pope Francis has placed significant focus on peace in Africa, particularly in regions like South Sudan, Central African Republic, and Democratic Republic of Congo.

He has made peace-focused visits to these areas, encouraging political leaders to pursue reconciliation and peacebuilding.



Pope Francis holds a Ukrainian national flag from Bucha as he greets Ukrainian refugees during his general audience in the Paul VI hall at the Vatican April 6, 2022. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)



People attending a candlelight vigil in St Peter's Square at the Vatican. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)



Pope Francis kisses the feet of South Sudanese leaders. (Vatican Media)

All life is precious, the change in the CCC

In 2018, Pope Francis made a historic change to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, officially declaring that the death penalty is no longer morally acceptable. This shift reflected his deep commitment to peace, human dignity, and the sanctity of life.

The revised Catechism reinforced that the death penalty is no longer justified, even for the most serious crimes. Pope Francis argued that modern societies have alternatives to execution and that punishment should focus on rehabilitation, not vengeance.

Previously, the Church allowed the death penalty in certain cases to protect society. However, Pope Francis argued that, with modern systems of justice, the death penalty is unnecessary. This change marked a clear shift from the Church's prior stance.

The Pope believed every individual has the potential for redemption, no matter their past. His rejection of the death penalty is rooted in the belief that life should be protected, and society should focus on rehabilitation and not on retribution.

His change to the Catechism sparked global conversations about capital punishment and inspired many countries to reconsider its use. His call for abolition aligns with a growing international movement to end the death penalty.

The Pope stressed that justice systems should focus on reconciliation, rehabilitation, and the dignity of all individuals, not on vengeance.

Pope Francis' stance on the death penalty is part of his broader vision for a world based on peace and the respect for life. The change in the CCC reflects the Church's commitment to uphold human dignity and to work toward a future where every life is valued. The Pope's leadership reminds us that every life is precious, and society must strive for justice rooted in forgiveness and rehabilitation, not punishment.



The Church's Role in Peacemaking

Pope Francis underscores the role of the Church as a peacemaker, calling for active engagement in conflict zones to promote healing and reconciliation.

He has met with world leaders to encourage efforts toward peace, emphasizing that war is never the solution.

Promoting Dialogue and Diplomacy

Pope Francis champions interfaith dialogue, particularly between Christians

and Muslims, as a means to prevent conflict and build understanding.

His visits to countries like Cuba and the UAE emphasize peaceful coexistence and dialogue between nations and religions.

Messages of Hope

Pope Francis consistently speaks about the importance of hope in times of war, urging people to trust in peace and work toward global unity.

He believes that hope is essential to overcoming hatred and violence and calls on all people of goodwill to work together for a better, peaceful world.

His leadership in promoting peace, despite the world's many conflicts, underscores his papacy's mission to bring healing, reconciliation, and justice to all people.



Pope Francis shakes hands with Bhaddanta Kumarabhivasma, chairman of the state Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee, during a meeting with the Buddhist committee in Yangon, Myanmar November 29, 2017. (Vatican Media)



Pope Francis speaks to Iraqi religious figures during an interfaith service in the ancient city of Ur in southern Iraq's Dhi Qar province, Nasiriya, 2021. (Vatican Media)



Pope Francis receives members of the Sikh Delegation from Guru Nanak Darbar Dubai, United Arab Emirates. (Vatican Media)

A Pope of Dialogue and Encounter

Pope Francis has consistently championed interfaith dialogue as a powerful path toward global peace and mutual understanding. At the heart of his mission is the belief that faith should never be used to divide or fuel violence, but rather to unite people in a shared commitment to justice, dignity, and the common good.

In a world increasingly marked by polarisation, extremism, and suspicion, Pope Francis has emerged as a global voice for reconciliation across religious, cultural, and ethnic lines. He often speaks of “the culture of encounter,” where people of different backgrounds learn to see each other not as threats, but as brothers and sisters.

Landmark Visit to Abu Dhabi (2019)

One of the most historic moments of his papacy came in February 2019, when Pope Francis became the first pope to visit the Arabian Peninsula, the birthplace of Islam. There, he met with Grand Imam Ahmed el-Tayeb, one of the most influential leaders in Sunni Islam, to sign the *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*.

This groundbreaking document calls on all people, regardless of religion, race, or culture, to reject violence, protect human life, uphold religious freedom, and build societies rooted in mutual respect.



Pope Francis and Sheikh Ahmad el-Tayeb, grand imam of Egypt's al-Azhar mosque and university, sign documents during an inter-religious meeting at the Founder's Memorial in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, February 4, 2019. The document was on “human fraternity” and improving Christian-Muslim relations. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

Key Themes of Pope Francis' Interfaith Outreach:

Human Dignity for All:

Every person, regardless of faith or nationality, has equal worth and rights. The Pope has spoken strongly against religious discrimination, xenophobia, and persecution.

“The world cannot be divided into believers and non-believers. The real division is between those who build bridges and those who build walls.”

Rejecting Religious Violence:

He has condemned terrorism committed in the name of God and emphasised that authentic religion always promotes peace.

Dialogue Over Division:

Francis urges continuous dialogue between Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, and all religious

traditions. Dialogue does not erase differences, but fosters mutual respect.

Friendship and Cooperation:

Rather than competition or conversion, the Pope promotes friendship and joint action specially in responding to humanitarian crises, protecting the environment, and caring for the poor.

Other Notable Interfaith Encounters:

Holy Land Pilgrimage (2014): Pope Francis visited Israel and Palestine, calling for peace and unity among Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

Visit to Iraq (2021): Despite security concerns, he traveled to war-torn Iraq, meeting with Shiite leader Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani and visiting religious sites in Nineveh and Ur.

Meeting with Buddhist Leaders in Thailand and Sri Lanka: Francis has emphasised respect and harmony among Eastern religions and Christianity.

International Day of Human Fraternity was recognised by the UN in 2020 and it's celebrated on February 4. It is rooted in the Document on Human Fraternity signed in Abu Dhabi, to promote dialogue across religions and cultures.



Invocation for peace with Pope Francis, the Ecumenical Patriarch, and leaders of Israel and Palestine in the Vatican Gardens on 8 June 2014. (From the archives)



Pope Francis shakes hands with Hindu Kurukkal SivaSri T. Mahadeva after receiving a robe from him during a meeting with religious leaders at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall in Colombo. (CNS photo)



Iraq's Shia Muslim leader, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, meets the pope in Najaf. [Handout/Vatican Media]

Amoris Laetitia: A Pastoral Approach to Family Life

Amoris Laetitia (*The Joy of Love*), published by Pope Francis in April 2016, emerged from the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia (2015) and the Synod on the Family. It addresses the joys and challenges of family life in today's world, highlighting the importance of love, marriage, and pastoral care. Pope Francis stresses that the family is the heart of society, central to the Church's mission, and a place where love, faith, and values are nurtured.

The document emphasises the need for mercy and support for families, particularly those in difficult situations such as divorce, remarriage, and cohabitation. Pope Francis encourages a pastoral approach, offering

guidance and care for individuals and families, without judgment, and invites the Church to accompany those who face challenges in their family life.

Amoris Laetitia strongly promotes life-long marriage, mutual respect, and openness to life. At the same time, it recognises the complexity of modern family life, urging Church leaders to be compassionate and understanding.

One of the most debated sections, Chapter Eight, deals with the Church's approach to divorced and remarried Catholics and whether they should be allowed to receive Communion. The ambiguity around this issue sparked controversy, with critics questioning if the document introduced a



Pope Francis greets newly married couples during his general audience in St Peter's Square at the Vatican in this September 30, 2015, file photo. (CNS photo/L'Osservatore Romano)

change in Church teaching. However, Pope Francis clarified that the focus is on personal discernment rather than altering doctrine.

Ultimately, *Amoris Laetitia* reflects Pope Francis' desire for a Church of mercy, one that is inclusive and sensitive to the

varied realities of family life. It calls for a Church that offers support, guidance, and healing for all families, grounded in love and compassion, while still upholding the Church's traditional teachings on marriage and family.

Pope Francis convened four Synods of Bishops during his papacy

Here's a summary of each:

Synod on the Family (2014 and 2015):

First Session (October 2014): Focused on challenges facing families, particularly divorce, remarriage, and pastoral care for complex family situations.

Second Session (October 2015): Finalised recommendations and led to the apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, emphasising mercy and inclusion for families.

Synod on Amazonia: New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology (2019):

This Synod focused on the Amazon region, addressing issues such as environmental protection, the plight of indigenous people, and the role of the Church in promoting justice and stewardship of the environment. It resulted in the publication of the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Querida Amazonia*, which highlighted the importance of integral ecology, solidarity, and pastoral care for the region's people.

Synod on Young People, Faith, and Vocational Discernment (2018):

This Synod focused on youth, their relationship with faith, their role in the Church, and the challenges they face in the modern world, including the rise of secularism and the search for meaning. It led to the publication of the apostolic exhortation *Christus Vivit*, which offered guidance for young people on their journey of faith.

Synod on Synodality (2021–2024)

This Synod with a focus on synodality itself — the way the Church listens to and journeys together with all of its members. The Synod has involved consultation at various levels of the Church worldwide, with a focus on listening, dialogue, and discernment. It is aimed at renewing the Church's approach to governance and mission, involving a broader participation of the faithful, including women and laypeople, in decision-making processes.

Key Documents Released:

1. **Preparatory Document (2021):** This laid out the Synod's vision of creating a more participatory Church where all members can contribute to decision-making processes.

2. **Instrumentum Laboris (2023):** A working document that reflected the global consultations, focusing unity, participation, and mission. It set the framework for the final discussions during the Synod's concluding assembly.

3. **Final Document (2024):** The culmination of the Synod, summarising the insights, decisions, and future steps for the Church, particularly regarding governance, pastoral care, and the role of the faithful.

Empowering the Present of the Church

Pope Francis has made engaging with youth a key focus of his papacy, highlighting their important role in the Church and society. His approach is one of accompaniment, encouraging youth to actively participate and address their unique challenges.

Key Initiatives:

World Youth Day (WYD): Pope Francis champions WYD, urging young people to become missionary disciples and share the joy of the Gospel in their everyday lives.

Synod on Youth (2018): The Synod focused on youth's concerns, highlighting the need for the Church to be inclusive, dynamic, and responsive to their challenges.

Christus Vivit (2019): In this exhortation, Pope Francis declares youth as "the now of the Church" and calls them to be active agents of change, shaping the future of

the Church and society.

Social Justice and Environment: Pope Francis encourages youth to engage in social justice issues like climate change, poverty, and human rights, seeing them as powerful agents of transformation.

Listening and Accompaniment: He emphasises the Church's role in listening to youth, offering them empathy, support, and guidance as they navigate their faith journey.

Message to Youth:

Pope Francis consistently reminds youth that they are the present of the Church, not just its future. He urges them to take ownership of their faith, live with courage, and engage in the world as missionary disciples, empowering them to shape the Church and society with purpose and hope.



Pope Francis poses for a selfie during a pre-synod gathering of youth delegates at the Pontifical International Maria Mater Ecclesiae College in Rome in March 2018. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)



Jubilee of Hope

The Jubilee of Hope, a key initiative within the Synod on Synodality, was launched by Pope Francis to foster mercy, reconciliation, and unity within the Church. This event underscored the importance of renewal and hope, particularly for the marginalised, and reflected the Pope's emphasis on participatory governance within the Church.

Key Highlights

Mercy and Reconciliation: Focused on God's forgiveness and healing, encouraging acts of charity, prayer, and mutual support within communities.

Hope for the Marginalised: Reached out to those suffering from poverty, violence, displacement, and social exclusion, offering a message of solidarity and hope.

Global Participation: Engaged dioceses worldwide through pilgrimages, liturgies, and special

events, inviting Catholics to join in a collective spiritual journey.

Ecumenism: Promoted Christian unity through ecumenical events, fostering dialogue and collaboration with other Christian denominations.

The Jubilee of Hope serves as a profound opportunity for spiritual renewal, embodying the Church's mission of spreading hope, compassion, and love to all people, especially the most vulnerable.



A Pope felt from Afar:

Francis' quiet footprint in Malaysia

Though he never stepped foot in Malaysia, Pope Francis left a deep and lasting imprint on the hearts of its people. His messages, broadcast from Rome, lived out through his global journeys, and echoed in pastoral letters, were warmly received across Malaysia's Catholic and interfaith communities.

He became a spiritual figure not only to Catholics, but to many Malaysians who admired his sincerity, humility, and progressive compassion.

Malaysia's Connection to Pope Francis

Diplomatic Ties: Malaysia and the Holy See formalised relations in 2011, just two years before Francis' election. This

strengthened the diplomatic relationship between the two especially with Malaysia's first resident ambassador to the Holy See, Tan Sri Bernard Giluk Dompok in 2016.

Pope Francis consistently showing interest in Southeast Asia's development and interfaith harmony.

Papal Audiences: Malaysian bishops and youth delegates had the opportunity to meet Pope Francis during various synods, *ad liminas*, *World Youth Days* and *Jubilee of Hope* events. Their exchanges left lasting impressions of the Pope's focus on a Church that is deeply engaged with the world, particularly the marginalised.

Regional Outreach: In 2024, he visited

neighbouring Singapore and Indonesia. Hundreds of Malaysian Catholics crossed the Causeway or flew to Jakarta to attend the papal Masses, events which further united the Catholic community across Southeast Asia and solidified the spiritual bonds between Pope Francis and his Malaysian followers.

Humanitarian Influence: Pope Francis' calls for global solidarity during crises like the Rohingya refugee crisis, climate emergencies, and the COVID-19 pandemic resonated strongly with Malaysian NGOs and religious leaders. His frequent appeals for peace, justice, and the protection of human dignity found strong support within Malaysia's religious landscape.

During the 2018 "ad limina" visit, Bishop Sebastian Francis, President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei, shared his impression of Pope Francis's leadership: "He has fostered a culture of listening and discernment. His responses are thoughtful, with clear points when needed. By the time we meet him, much has been discussed with dicasteries, so our conversation focuses on the Church's direction in the world. We expressed support for his guidance, even on challenging topics like "Amoris Laetitia", emphasising understanding the document in its entirety. We believe his direction reflects the Holy Spirit's will for the Church today."

Elevation of Malaysian cardinals

In recognition of the growing importance of the Catholic Church in Asia and the global South, Pope Francis has elevated key figures from the Malaysian Church to the College of Cardinals — the first Cardinal Anthony Soter Fernandez in 2016 and Cardinal Sebastian Francis in 2024.

These appointments are a testament to his commitment to strengthening the representation of Asia within the Church's leadership, recognising the unique challenges and opportunities of the region.

Pope Francis' decision to elevate Malaysian cardinals reflects his broader vision of a Church that is inclusive, diverse,

and globally representative. The elevation of these cardinals not only honours their leadership and dedication to the Church but also underscores the significant role that Malaysia, as a Catholic minority in a predominantly Muslim country, plays in shaping the future of the global Catholic community.

The appointments also reflect the Pope's focus on promoting leaders from regions that have historically been underrepresented in the Vatican. With the majority of Catholics now living in the Global South, Pope Francis has consistently made it a priority to ensure that bishops from Africa,

Asia, and Latin America have a strong voice in the decision-making processes of the Church. This approach emphasizes the Church's universal nature, highlighting the vital contributions of the Global South to the Church's mission.

For Malaysia, the elevation of its cardinals has been seen as an acknowledgment of the growing influence of the Church in the region, especially with regard to fostering interfaith dialogue, promoting peace, and advancing social justice. The new cardinals bring a unique perspective to the College, reflecting the dynamic multicultural and multi-religious context of Malaysia. Their

presence ensures that the concerns and experiences of the Catholic communities in Asia and the Global South are better represented at the highest levels of the Church.

These appointments also signal the continuing impact of Pope Francis's papacy on the global Church, reinforcing his commitment to the principles of synodality, inclusion, and collaboration. By empowering bishops from diverse backgrounds, Pope Francis ensures that the Church remains responsive to the challenges of a rapidly changing world, while remaining faithful to its mission of spreading the Gospel and serving the needs of humanity.



Pope Francis places a red biretta on new Cardinal Soter Fernandez in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, November 19, 2016.



Pope Francis places a red biretta on new Cardinal Sebastian Francis, in St Peter's Square at the Vatican September 30, 2023. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

Malaysian Bishops Appointed by him

Most Rev Julian Leow Beng Kim, Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur
Appointed on July 3, 2014



Notable For: Archbishop Julian has been instrumental in promoting interfaith dialogue and fostering social engagement within the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur. His efforts in building bridges between different faith communities have made significant contributions to the Church's mission in Malaysia.

Rt Rev Richard Ng, Bishop of Miri
Appointed on October 30, 2013



Notable For: Bishop Richard is known for his deep theological insights and contributions to biblical studies, enhancing the Church's understanding of Scripture. His leadership focuses on strengthening the presbyterium, building infrastructure, training catechists, and providing faith formation to meet the growing needs of the faithful.

Most Rev Simon Poh, Archbishop of Kuching
Appointed: July 9, 2015 (Auxiliary Bishop of Kuching) and on March 4, 2017 elevated to Archbishop of Kuching



Notable For: Archbishop Simon has been a impactful leader for the Church in Sarawak, with a focus on youth, unity, and interfaith harmony. His pastoral care extends beyond the Catholic community, reaching out to other religious groups and focusing on the importance of unity in diversity.

Rt Rev Bernard Paul, Bishop of Malacca Johore
Appointed on November 24, 2015



Notable For: Bishop Bernard is committed to strengthening local parish communities and reaching out to the poor and marginalized. His emphasis on social justice and care for the less fortunate has guided his leadership in the Diocese of Malacca Johore.



Global tributes

World mourns for Pope Francis

Following the passing of Pope Francis, tributes poured in from world leaders, including our Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim. Anwar expressed his heartfelt condolences, lauding the Pope's transformative leadership and unwavering commitment to peace, social justice, and human dignity. He highlighted Pope Francis' advocacy for interfaith dialogue, his focus on the marginalised, and his environmental stewardship through the *Laudato Si'* encyclical. Anwar noted that the Pope's vision for a more compassionate, inclusive world had deeply

resonated with Malaysians, particularly the Catholic community. He emphasised that Pope Francis' legacy would continue to inspire efforts toward harmony, justice, and care for the planet in Malaysia and beyond.

Leaders from around the world echoed similar sentiments, reflecting on Pope Francis' impact on the global stage. From Donald Trump and Javier Milei to Anthony Albanese, Muhammad Yunus, and Gustavo Petro, the late pontiff's dedication to the poor, his calls for climate action, and his tireless

pursuit of peace were praised. His legacy of compassion and humility was recognized by leaders such as Emmanuel Macron, Roberta Metsola, and Friedrich Merz, while Viktor Orbán, Narendra Modi, and Giorgia Meloni commemorated his leadership with reflections on his guidance in times of trial. Volodymyr Zelensky mourned the loss of a Pope who had prayed for peace in Ukraine, while Filippo Grandi of the UNHCR honoured him for his relentless advocacy for refugees and the persecuted.

Over 250,000 people paid their

respects to Pope Francis during his three-day lying-in-state at St Peter's Basilica, a testament to the profound influence he had on both the Catholic faithful and those of other faiths, including Muslims. His calls for peace, justice, and interfaith dialogue resonated deeply within the Muslim world.

Pope Francis' message of hope, peace, and unity transcended borders and faiths, leaving an enduring legacy that will continue to inspire global efforts toward justice, compassion, and a better world for future generations.

His Simplicity

Lived Simply: Pope Francis resided at the Domus Sanctae Marthae guesthouse instead of the Apostolic Palace and often dined with Vatican employees.

Humble Attire: He wore a simple white cassock and black shoes, keeping his iron pectoral cross instead of switching to a gold one.

Refused Salary: After his election in 2013, Pope Francis declined his papal salary.

Modest Transportation: In Buenos Aires, he took public buses and subways, and at the Vatican, he preferred a used Renault 4 and Ford Focus, turning down a custom "popemobile."

Fundraising for the Needy: He auctioned a Harley-Davidson and Lamborghini to fund homeless and humanitarian projects.

Paid Own Hotel Bill: Even after his election, he paid his own hotel bill.

Simple Casket: His casket was a plain, unadorned cypress wood box.

Unadorned Final Resting Place: His niche at the Basilica of St Mary Major was simple and free of adornments, reflecting his lifelong commitment to humility and service.

"He lived simply.
He died simply."

Evangelising in the Digital Age

Pope Francis embraced modern technology not as a distraction, but as a powerful tool for evangelisation and human connection. Early in his pontificate, he made headlines by launching tweets from @Pontifex, reaching millions of followers in multiple languages and offering daily spiritual reflections in just 280 characters.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, he relied on livestreamed Masses, global video messages, and social media to connect with Catholics around the world. His use of digital platforms allowed him to break through isolation, offering hope and prayer even to those locked down at home.

Francis also repeatedly warned of the ethical challenges of the digital world. He encouraged young people to use the internet for building community, not spreading hate, and he championed digital inclusion so that no one is left behind in the information age. In *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*, he raised concerns about artificial intelligence, surveillance, and the commodification of data, urging a technology that serves humanity and creation.

Key elements of his legacy

1. A Synodal Church

Francis has called the Church to become "synodal" — a listening, discerning community where clergy and laity walk together. The ongoing Synod on Synodality has brought new energy to global conversations about inclusion, co-responsibility, and the voice of the people of God.

2. Integral Ecology and Global Solidarity

Laudato Si' reshaped Catholic social teaching for the climate era. It positioned

care for creation as inseparable from care for the poor, urging both personal ecological conversion and systemic reform.

3. A Church for the Poor

He revived the Gospel priority of the poor, urging pastors to smell like the sheep and rejecting clericalism. His simplicity, from living in a guesthouse to choosing modest vestments, embodied this vision.

4. Mercy and Inclusion

care for divorced and remarried Catholics, LGBTQ+ persons, and migrants, has drawn accusations from some quarters of diluting Church teaching.

His critics argue that initiatives like the Synod on Synodality, the reform of the Roman Curia, and his social encyclicals (*Laudato Si'*, *Fratelli Tutti*) risk shifting the focus of the Church too much towards social issues at the expense of doctrinal clarity. At times, even cardinals and bishops have voiced concerns, resulting in public letters, *dubia* (formal questions), and appeals for clarification.

The Jubilee of Mercy (2015–2016) emphasised that God's mercy is greater than human failure. He has welcomed those on the margins: refugees, the divorced, LGBTQ persons, prisoners, and those who have long felt excluded from Church life.

5. Interfaith Peacebuilding

From signing the Document on Human Fraternity to visiting Iraq, Pope Francis built lasting bridges between faiths, transforming the papacy into a true instrument of peace.

Challenges from within and without

Throughout his pontificate, Pope Francis has inspired millions with his emphasis on mercy, inclusion, care for the poor, and dialogue with the world. Yet, he has also faced notable criticism from both inside and outside the Catholic Church.

Some traditionalist and conservative Catholics have expressed concern that his pastoral approach, particularly in areas such as marriage and family, liturgy, migration, and the environment, could lead to doctrinal confusion. His encouragement of open discussions on sensitive topics, including pastoral

Outside the Church, political leaders and commentators have occasionally criticised Francis for his outspoken views on global inequality, climate change, and economic justice, labelling him "too political" or "too progressive".

Despite the criticism, Pope Francis has remained committed to his vision of a Church that is open, missionary, and deeply rooted in the Gospel. He frequently reminds the faithful that disagreement, when conducted respectfully, can be part of the Church's journey toward deeper understanding and unity. As he

HIS LOVE FOR SPORTS

He was a devoted fan of the Argentine club San Lorenzo, maintaining his membership throughout his papacy.

He viewed sports as a powerful tool for promoting unity, discipline, and personal growth. In his addresses, he emphasized that sports teach values like teamwork and perseverance, and can serve as a means to build a more inclusive society.



himself said, "A Church that does not leave room for the Holy Spirit to surprise her, is a Church that is closed to newness."

In navigating praise and criticism alike, Pope Francis continues to invite the Church and the world towards a future marked by mercy, fraternity, and hope.



Pope Francis, pray for us



More than 10 patriarchs of the Eastern churches blessing the body of the late Pope Francis at St Peter's Square demonstrating eloquently the universality and diversity of the Universal Church, a church breathing with both lungs.



Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, dean of the College of Cardinals presides over the funeral of Pope Francis at St Peter's Square, April 26, 2025. (Vatican Media)

VATICAN: On the eve of Divine Mercy Sunday, the world gathered in St Peter's Square to honour Pope Francis's life and legacy. His simple wooden coffin, with the open Gospel resting on top, symbolised the humility and selflessness that defined his papacy. The funeral Mass, presided over by Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, was a moving tribute to a pontificate that touched hearts globally, uniting millions from diverse backgrounds and faiths.

An estimated 250,000 people attended the funeral, with another 150,000 lining the route to the Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore to pay their respects. The crowd's presence highlighted the deep affection and admiration Pope Francis inspired worldwide, as people from all corners of the globe came together to honor his memory.

Cardinal Re reflected on two central themes of Pope Francis' papacy: inclusivity and peace. He recalled the Pope's final blessing on Easter Sunday, despite his frailty, capturing his unwavering commitment to his mission. Cardinal Re



Fourteen pallbearers carry Pope Francis' casket by the Pauline Chapel in Rome's Basilica of St Mary Major to its final resting place April 26, 2025. (CNS/Vatican Media)

emphasised Pope Francis' belief that the Church is a home for all, welcoming everyone, as encapsulated in his words at World Youth Day: "Everyone, everyone, everyone."

From the start of his papacy, Pope Francis' choice of the name of St Francis of Assisi symbolised his mission of humility and service. His leadership focused on mercy, compassion for the poor, and addressing global issues like migra-

tion, poverty, and the environment. Through his advocacy for refugees, calls for peace, and *Laudato Si'*, he urged shared responsibility for the planet and reminded the faithful to live out the Gospel through action.

The funeral Mass was filled with symbolic moments, including the procession passing a group of migrants, prisoners, and homeless people holding white roses — a tribute to the Pope's advocacy for the marginalised. Cardinal Re

praised Pope Francis as a "pope among the people" and emphasised his calls for peaceful negotiations over war, stating that "war is always a painful and tragic defeat for all."

Dignitaries such as US Presidents Donald Trump and Joe Biden, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, and representatives of other faiths paid their respects. The crowd's applause and chants of "Papa Francesco" reflected the affection and admiration Pope Francis inspired worldwide.

In keeping with his humble nature, Pope Francis chose to be buried in the Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore, near the Virgin Mary icon. His death marks the end of an era, but his legacy challenges the Church to continue his mission of peace, mercy, and inclusion.

In closing, Cardinal Re echoed Pope Francis' frequent request: "Do not forget to pray for me." Now, the faithful reverse that request: "Pope Francis, pray for us." May his legacy continue to bless the Church, bless Rome, and bless the world from heaven.

Medical History

- 1957 (Age 21): Underwent removal of part of his right lung due to a severe respiratory infection. Despite this, he has maintained good lung function.
- 1991: Suffered from a bout of sciatica, a condition that causes nerve pain, which has recurred during his papacy and affected mobility.
- July 2021: Underwent colon surgery (left hemicolectomy) to remove part of his colon due to diverticular stenosis. Hospitalised for 10 days at the Gemelli Hospital in Rome.
- 2022–2023: Increasing knee pain due to a torn ligament and inflammation (gonalgia), often seen using a wheelchair or cane; declined surgery citing adverse reaction to anaesthesia.
- June 2023: Underwent successful abdominal hernia surgery and spent nine days in hospital recovery.
- April 2025: Diagnosed with bilateral multimicrobial pneumonia, leading to significant breathing difficulties.

Chronic Conditions:

- Type 2 Diabetes
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Multiple Bronchiectasis: Ongoing lung condition.

Cause of Death:

Cerebral stroke leading to irreversible cardiocirculatory collapse



*"Thank you, Holy Father.
May your light continue to shine in the hearts of the faithful"*