

THE CATHOLIC
Spirit

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

POPE FRANCIS

1936-2025



OSV NEWS

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Obituary

Father Mario R. Claro

Father Mario Richard Claro, 84, of Franklin died April 19, 2025, at UVA Medical Center, Charlottesville, Va.

He was born September 19, 1940 in New York, N.Y., a son of the late Mario Gaetano and Margaret Mary (Duffy) Claro.



Father Mario had fully adopted Franklin as his home, where he was actively involved in the community and was very supportive of the Pendleton County Ministerial Association and was a favorite of the VFW for their ceremonies. Known for his

welcoming nature, humility, and good humor, Father Mario was an incredibly personable individual who sought to genuinely know and understand those around him. As a priest, Father Mario will be remembered for taking time during every Mass to welcome visitors, always being available to the faithful, exploring the mysteries of the faith, and his devotion to the Blessed Mother. Overjoyed by children's presence in church, Father Mario was delighted by their youthful clamors during Mass (which he often encouraged), likely because he truly recognized children to be the "lifeblood of the church".

Father Mario loved life to the fullest: the thrill of travel, sharing a meal and some fine wine with friends, and caring for his beloved pets. Additionally, he was an avid reader and theological researcher in both trade and hobby to the last. He was an amazing teacher and historian of the faith. His extensive personal library has been left to St. Leo Parish in Inwood.

Simply put, Father Mario, ever the Lord's servant, truly loved God and His people.

He is survived by his brother, Frank Claro of Manchester, N.J.; and niece, Kathleen S. Claro of Yonkers, N.Y.; his parish family at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton including the Sasso Family; as well as countless friends.

A Funeral Mass will be held 11 a.m., Friday, May 16, 2025 at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish with Bishop Mark E. Brennan officiating. Additionally, a committal service and inurnment will be held 3 p.m., Sunday, May 18 in Cedar Hill Cemetery, Franklin, with Father Arul Anthony officiating.

In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made in Father Mario's name locally to Christian Assistance Network (CAN) P.O. Box 572, Franklin, WV 26807; Pendleton Animal Welfare Shelter (PAWS), P.O. Box 804, Franklin, WV 26807; globally to Catholic Charities, 2050 Ballenger Ave., Alexandria, VA 22314; Shriners Children's Hospital, P.O. Box 947765, Atlanta, GA 30394; or any charity dedicated to the protection of animals.

Condolences and memories may be shared at www.obaughfuneralhome.com.

Father Mario, as he was most often referred, attended Immaculate Conception College of Philosophy in Troy, N.Y., and St. Bonaventure University in Olean, N.Y. He also earned a master's in theology with a specialization in liturgy from the University of Notre Dame at South Bend. He completed his preparatory studies for the priesthood at Mt. Alvernia Seminary in Wappingers Falls, N.Y., and was ordained June 10, 1967. He previously served at St. Agnes in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Father Mario was incardinated into the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Dec. 22, 1970. He previously served as associate pastor of St. Paul Parish in Weirton from 1968 to 1970 and St. Anne Parish, Bristol, Va., from 1970 to 1972. He became chaplain at Mount Saint Joseph Motherhouse in Wheeling in 1972 and served as chaplain for a time at Central Catholic High School in Wheeling. He returned to Weirton in 1977 to serve as associate pastor of St. Joseph the Worker Parish. From 1978 to 1983, he was on the faculty at St. Joseph Preparatory Seminary in Vienna, where he also served as dean of students.

Father Mario served as associate director of the diocesan Office of Sacraments, Worship and Spirituality from 1983 to 1988; coordinator of the diocesan Office of Liturgical Practices in 1988; and diocesan coordinator for the diocesan Department of Catholic Education and Formation from 1987 to 1992. He was also regional representative of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions Region 4, consultant for the Diocesan Art and Architecture Commission, and teacher and liturgy coordinator for the Diaconate and Ministries Formation Program.

Additionally, Father Mario served as rector of the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling from 1989 to 1994; pastor of St. Theresa Parish in Morgantown from 1994 to 1998; and pastor of St. Mary Parish in Petersburg and Epiphany of the Lord Parish in Moorefield from 1998 to 2006. He also became pastor of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Franklin in 1998 and served there until his retirement from active ministry.

To Report Suspected Cases of Sexual Abuse of Children: The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston encourages reporting to civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. We also encourage utilizing www.reportbishopabuse.org to make a report about any bishop in the U.S. If you have reason to believe that a bishop has engaged in sexual misconduct or has interfered with an investigation into sexual misconduct, please contact civil authorities in the applicable jurisdiction and visit www.reportbishopabuse.org. **To Report to Civil Authorities: Contact your local law enforcement:** numbers will vary based on your location. If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call 911. To confidentially report any incidence of suspected child abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse, contact the West Virginia Bureau for Children and Families' Child Protective Services by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 800.352.6513. You may report anonymously to this hotline if you prefer. **To Report to Diocesan Authorities:** The diocese encourages reporting to the appropriate civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. The diocese also encourages reporting to the appropriate church authorities. To report suspected cases of sexual abuse of children by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, contact one of the following designees at 1.888.434.6237 or 304.233.0880: Mr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Mr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; or Sr. Martha Gomez, ext. 264. You may also call the Diocese's Office of Safe Environment at 304.230.1504 or the Diocese's sexual abuse hotline at 833.230.5656. Additional methods of reporting are available at www.dwc.org, under "Accountability." Complaint forms are available online at www.dwc.org, click "Diocese" on the menu bar, then "Offices," then "Safe Environment", then "Download Files and Forms." The form is titled "Complaint Form for Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor." The form may be returned via U.S. mail to: Office of Safe Environment, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, PO Box 230, Wheeling WV 26003. **To Report to the Diocese's Victim Assistance Coordinator:** call Erin McFarland, M.Ed., LPC, at 304.559.6742. The Diocese partners with Navex Global to offer EthicsPoint to report other concerns such as suspected financial, professional, and personal misconduct of a priest, deacon, religious, or lay employee of the Diocese or any Catholic parish or school in WV. EthicsPoint can be accessed via www.dwc.org, under "Accountability", then "Report Misconduct" or by calling 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint is a third-party reporting system that reports to civil authorities where applicable and Diocesan authorities, and the identity of the person reporting is protected. Links and information: WV Department of Health and Human Resources: <https://www.wvdhhr.org/report.asp>. West Virginia State Police, Crimes Against Children Unit: 304-293-6400.

Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops requires all Dioceses/Eparchies have a Safe Environment Program for the protection of children and young people. The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's Safe Environment Program consists of the following components for persons seeking employment or to volunteer, directly or indirectly, with children: background check; receipt of the Diocese's Policy Relating to Sexual Abuse of Children; sexual abuse awareness training for adults. Training may be completed online or via live workshop. For information, go to www.dwc.org, click "Diocese", then "Offices," then "Office of Safe Environment."

The Catholic Spirit's Print Schedule for 2025

There are 10 print editions in 2025. Below are the names of the issues and the publishing dates. Please note, the publishing dates may or may not be on feast days. Digital issues are published every Friday, delivered by e-mail to subscribers, and posted on thecatholicspiritwv.org.

2025 Print Issues and Dates:

Month of Mary, Mother of God, May 23; Month of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, June 13; Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, August 15; Triumph of the Cross, September 12; Month of the Rosary, October 3; Advent, November 21; Christmas, December 19



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Global Pastor:

In Word and Deed, Pope Preached Mercy and Outreach

By Cindy Wooden, Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis, who died April 21 at the age of 88, gave new energy to millions of Catholics — and caused concern for some — as he transformed the image of the papacy into a pastoral ministry based on personal encounters and strong convictions about poverty, mission and dialogue.

U.S. Cardinal Kevin J. Farrell, chamberlain of the

Holy Roman Church, announced that Pope Francis had died at 7:35 a.m. April 21, 2025.

“His whole life was dedicated to the service of the Lord and his church,” Cardinal Farrell said in a video announcement broadcast from the chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae, where Pope Francis lived.

His gestures — from tenderly embracing the sick to repeatedly visiting prisoners — touched millions of hearts. But contro-

versy raged over his denunciations of the excesses of unbridled capitalism, his warnings about the human contributions to climate change and his insistence on accompanying, not judging, gay people.

With bronchitis and difficulty breathing, Pope Francis was admitted to Rome’s Gemelli hospital Feb. 14. He was diagnosed with double pneumonia and a complex infection. He had returned to the Vatican March 23 to continue his convalescence.

God’s mercy was a constant theme in Pope Francis’ preaching and was so central to his vision of what the church’s ministry must embody that he proclaimed an extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy for Dec. 8, 2015–Nov. 20, 2016.

Elected March 13, 2013, Pope Francis was the first pope in history to come from the Southern Hemisphere, the first non-European to be elected in almost 1,300 years and the first Jesuit to serve as successor to St. Peter.

In the first three years of his papacy, he published three major documents: “Evangelii Gaudium” (“The Joy of the Gospel”), a detailed vision of the program for his papacy and his



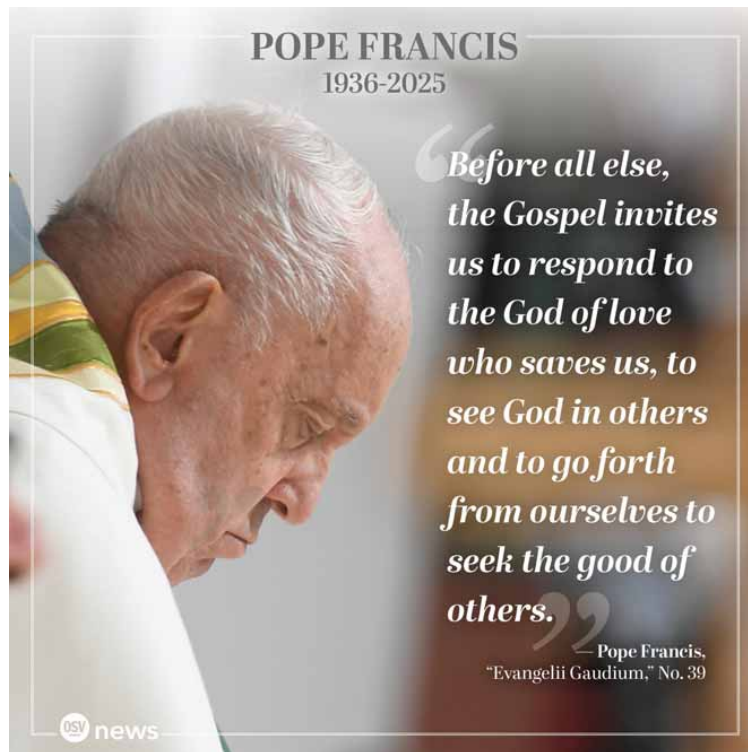
CNS photo/Lola Gomez

Pope Francis holds his crosier as the Gospel is read at Mass on the feast of Christ the King and the local celebration of World Youth Day in St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican Nov. 24, 2024.

vision for the church — particularly the church’s outreach and its response to challenges posed by secular culture; “Laudato Si’, on Care for Our Common Home,” on the environment; and “Amoris Laetitia” (“The Joy of Love”), his reflections on the discussions of the synods of bishops on the family in 2014 and 2015.

Holiness was the topic of his March 2018 apostolic exhortation, “Gaudete et Exsultate” (“Rejoice and Be Glad”) in which he insisted being holy is not boring or impossible, and that it grows through small, daily gestures and acts of loving kindness.

Following in the footsteps of his predecessors, **See “Pope” on Page 4**



Pope’s Funeral Set for April 26

By Cindy Wooden, Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The funeral Mass of Pope Francis will be celebrated April 26 in St. Peter’s Square, the Vatican announced.

Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, dean of the College of Cardinals, will preside over the liturgy, which begins a nine-day period of official mourning and daily memorial Masses.

The deceased pope’s body, which was taken to the chapel of his residence late April 21, the day of his death, was carried into St. Peter’s Basilica for public viewing and prayer early April 23.

The public viewing was scheduled to end late April 25 with another prayer service to

close the coffin.

The rites and rituals for dressing the body, moving it to St. Peter’s Basilica and celebrating the funeral are published in the “Ordo Exsequiarum Romani Pontificis” (“Funeral Rites of the Roman Pontiff”).

The rites originally were approved by St. John Paul II in 1998 but were released only when he died in 2005. Modified versions of the rites were used after Pope Benedict XVI died Dec. 31, 2022, and Pope Francis revised and simplified them in 2024.

U.S. Cardinal Kevin J. Farrell, the chamberlain of the Holy Roman Church, presided over a prayer service for the formal verification of the

pope’s death April 21 in the chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae, where Pope Francis celebrated an early morning Mass most days before his final illness.

Cardinal Farrell lead the prayerful procession to take the pope’s body, already in its coffin, from the chapel, into St. Peter’s Square and then into the basilica.

According to the book of rites, he would say, “Dearest brothers and sisters, with great emotion we accompany the mortal remains of our Pope Francis into the Vatican basilica where he often exercised his ministry as the bishop of the church that is in Rome and as pastor of the universal church.”

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OSV News photo/Yara Nardi, pool via Reuters
Pope Francis holds the monstrance as he gives his extraordinary blessing “urbi et orbi” (to the city and the world) from the atrium of St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican March 27, 2020.

Pope ...

Cont’d from Page 3

Pope Francis was an untiring voice for peace, urging an end to armed conflict, supporting dialogue and encouraging reconciliation. The pope described Russia’s invasion of Ukraine as “madness” and called on the world’s bishops to join him in consecrating Ukraine and Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. When Hamas militants attacked communities in Israel, killing scores of people and taking more than 200 people hostage in late 2023, and Israel retaliated by attacking Gaza, Pope Francis made repeated appeals for the return of hostages, a ceasefire to deliver humanitarian aid, and a real commitment to a negotiated peace.

Promoting peace, solidarity and respect for the Earth, the pope insisted people needed to recognize each other as brothers and sisters and issued an encyclical about that, “Fratelli Tutti, on Fraternity and Social Friendship.” He signed the text at the tomb of St. Francis of Assisi on the saint’s feast day, Oct. 4, 2020.

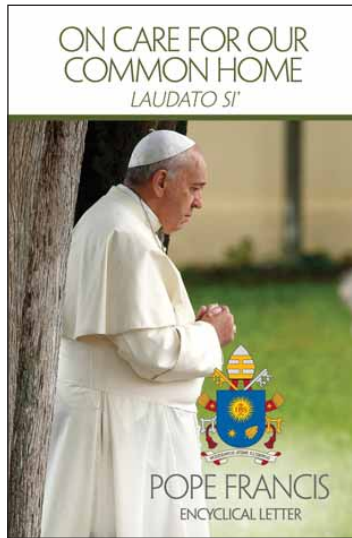
Pope Francis spent much of the first nine years of his pontificate pursuing

two ambitious projects: revitalizing the church’s efforts at evangelization — constantly urging outreach rather than a preoccupation with internal church affairs — and reforming the central administration of the Vatican, emphasizing its role of assisting bishops around the world rather than dictating policy to them.

On March 19, 2022, the ninth anniversary of the inauguration of his papacy, he finally promulgated “Praedicate Evangelium” (“Preach the Gospel”), his complete restructuring of the Roma Curia, highlighting its mission to serve the church’s evangelization efforts at all levels.

His simple lifestyle, which included his decision not to live in the Apostolic Palace and his choice of riding around Rome in a small Fiat or Ford instead of a Mercedes sedan, sent a message of austerity to Vatican officials and clergy throughout the church. He reinforced the message with frequent admonitions about the Gospel demands and evangelical witness of poverty and simplicity.

Although he repeatedly said he did not like to travel, he made 47 foreign trips, taking his message of Gospel joy to North and



OSV News photo/courtesy U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
This is the cover of the English edition of Pope Francis’ encyclical on the environment, “Laudato Si’, on Care for Our Common Home.”

South America, Europe, Africa and Asia.

Jorge Mario Bergoglio was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina’s capital city, Dec. 17, 1936. He earned a chemical technician’s diploma from his high school and entered the Jesuit novitiate in March 1958. After studying liberal arts in Santiago, Chile, he returned to Argentina and earned his licentiate in philosophy from the Colegio San Jose in San Miguel.

He was ordained a priest Dec. 13, 1969, and after his perpetual profession as a Jesuit in 1973, he became master of novices at the Seminary of Villa Barilari in San Miguel. Later that same year, he was appointed superior of the Jesuit province of Argentina, a role in which by his own account he proved a divisive figure because of an “authoritarian and quick manner of making decisions.”

In May 1992, Father Bergoglio was named an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires. He was appointed coadjutor archbishop five years later and became archbishop of Buenos Aires in 1998; Pope John Paul II named him to the College of Cardinals in 2001.

As leader of an archdiocese with more than 2.5 million Catholics, Cardinal Bergoglio strove to be close to the people. He rode the bus, visited the poor, lived in a simple apartment and cooked his own meals.

His international reputation was enhanced by his work at the 2007 assembly of the Latin Ameri-



CNS photo/Paul Haring
Pope Francis greets people as he arrives to celebrate vespers with priests, men and women religious in St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York Sept. 24, 2015.

can bishops’ council, CELAM, and particularly by his role as head of the committee that drafted the gathering’s final document on reforming and reinvigorating the church’s evangelizing efforts on the continent.

Cardinal Bergoglio was a known and respected figure within the College of Cardinals, so much so that no

one disputed a respected Italian journal’s report that he received the second-highest number of votes on all four ballots cast in the 2005 conclave that elected Pope Benedict XVI.

Eight years later, Pope Benedict retired. At the cardinals’ meetings prior to the 2013 conclave to elect his successor, the need to

See “Pope” on Page 5



CNS photo/Paul Haring
Pope Francis blesses a prisoner as he visits the Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility in Philadelphia in this Sept. 27, 2015, file photo.



CNS photo/Vatican Media
Pope Francis blesses the unborn child of Mychael Schilmoeller, pastoral care minister at St. Michael Parish in Prior Lake, Minn., as he meets a group of U.S. young adults during his general audience at the Vatican Jan. 15, 2020.

Pope ...

Cont'd from Page 4

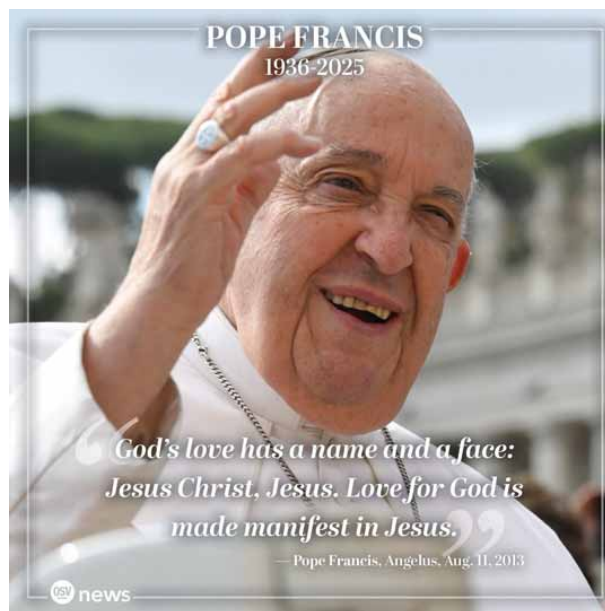
reform the Vatican bureaucracy was a common theme of concern.

Addressing the gathering, Cardinal Bergoglio warned against "self-referentiality and a kind of theological narcissism" in the church and argued the next pope "must be a man who, from the contemplation and adoration of Jesus Christ, helps the church to go out to the existential peripheries" to spread the Gospel.

His election March 13 came on the second day of the conclave, on its fifth ballot. He chose the name Francis to honor St. Francis of Assisi, "the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation," he said.

"Go out" was Pope Francis' constant plea to every Catholic, from curial cardinals to the people in the pews. More than once, he told people that while the Bible presents Jesus as knocking at the door of people's hearts to get in, today Jesus is knocking at the doors of parish churches trying to get out and among the people.

But he faced criticism for what many saw as a lack of consistency in dealing forcefully with the clerical sexual abuse crisis, especially when



it came to holding bishops accountable for handling allegations and removing priests credibly accused of abuse.

And while his pontificate marked major progress in the Vatican's attempts to reach an agreement with China's communist government on the appointment of Catholic bishops, a provisional accord signed in September 2018, and renewed in 2020, 2022 and 2024, was denounced

by critics as a betrayal of Catholics who risked their lives for refusing any cooperation with the communists.

Like his predecessors, Pope Francis was a strong defender of the sacredness of human life. Meeting Catholic physicians in November 2014, for example, he insisted that in "the light of faith and the light of correct reason, human life is always sacred and always of 'quality.' There is no human life that is more sacred than another" and no "human life qualitatively more significant than another."

For Pope Francis, helping the defenseless also meant paying special attention to prisoners, victims of war and, particularly, Christians and other religious minorities persecuted for their faith.

When Islamic State forces and other terrorist groups began specifically targeting Christians and other religious minorities in Syria and Iraq, and later in North Africa, Pope Francis demanded the international community act.

He frequently cited figures that the number of Christian martyrs is greater today than in the first centuries of Christianity, and he insisted the international community cannot "look the other way."

(Page 3 and Page 5 graphics: OSV News graphic/Chelsea Alt)

POPE FRANCIS' PONTIFICATE A TIMELINE

- 2013**
 - MARCH 13**: Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Buenos Aires, Argentina, is elected, becoming the first Jesuit pope, first pope from the Southern Hemisphere and first non-European elected in almost 1,300 years.
 - JULY 8**: Pope Francis makes his first trip outside of Rome to the Italian island of Lampedusa to highlight the plight of Mediterranean-crossing migrants.
- 2014**
 - JUNE 8**: Pope Francis, Israeli President Shimon Peres, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople and others gather in the Vatican Gardens to pray for peace in the Holy Land.
- 2015**
 - SEPT. 19-27**: Pope Francis travels to Cuba, Washington, D.C., New York and Philadelphia, addressing Congress, the United Nations and the World Meeting and Families, canonizing St. Junipero Serra and visiting the 9/11 memorial.
- 2016**
 - FEB. 12-17**: Pope Francis meets Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill of Moscow at the Havana airport and signs a joint declaration in the presence of Cuban President Raul Castro. In Mexico, he celebrates Mass in Ciudad Juárez, bordering El Paso, Texas, with hundreds of thousands of people attending.
- 2017**
 - APRIL 13**: Pope Francis celebrates Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper at a maximum security prison and washes the feet of 12 prisoners, including three women and a Muslim man who was preparing for baptism, continuing a practice he began as archbishop of Buenos Aires.
- 2018**
 - APRIL 21**: Pope Francis appoints three women as consultors to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the first time women and laypeople were named as active contributors -- not support staff. They joined a growing number of women the pope has named to top-level positions at the Vatican.
 - AUG. 2**: Pope Francis orders the revision of the Catechism of the Catholic Church to describe the death penalty as morally inadmissible.
- 2019**
 - FEB. 4**: Pope Francis and Sheikh Ahmad el-Tayeb, grand imam of Egypt's Al-Azhar mosque and university, sign the document on "Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together" during an interreligious meeting in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.
 - FEB. 21-24**: Pope Francis convenes a global summit on child protection and abuse, bringing together nearly 200 church leaders -- presidents of bishops' conferences, the heads of the Eastern Catholic churches, superiors of men's and women's religious orders, survivors and Roman Curia officials. The summit at the Vatican included a penitential liturgy.
- 2020**
 - MARCH 27**: In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, Pope Francis prays and delivers his extraordinary blessing "urbi et orbi" (to the city and the world) during an evening prayer service from St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. St. Peter's Square was empty, and the service was livestreamed.
- 2021**
 - MARCH 5-8**: Pope visits Iraq amidst sporadic violence continuing in the country and COVID-19. He honored those who remained faithful and worked to rebuild the country.
- 2022**
 - JULY 4**: The pope undergoes a three-hour scheduled surgery at a Rome hospital to remove part of his colon. Officials said it was required to treat diverticulitis, when bulging pouches in the lining of the intestine or colon become inflamed or infected. Throughout his pontificate he has suffered bouts of painful sciatica, and knee problems led him to start using a wheelchair in 2022.
 - JULY 24-29**: Pope Francis makes "a penitential trip" to Canada to meet with, listen to and apologize to members of Canada's First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities, especially those who experienced abuse or attempts at forced assimilation at church-run residential schools.
- 2023**
 - JAN. 5**: Pope Francis presides over the funeral Mass for Pope Benedict XVI in St. Peter's Square. It was the first time in more than 200 years that a pope celebrated the funeral of his predecessor.
- 2024**
 - OCTOBER**: Pope Francis presides over the second month-long session of the Synod on Synodality. In a surprise move, he signs his name to the final document drafted by synod delegates.
 - DECEMBER**: Approved and signed off on "Fiducia Supplicans," a document permitting blessings of those in irregular relationships, and which was strongly objected to by many church leaders.
 - OCTOBER**: Pope Francis releases his final encyclical, *Dilexit Nos*, on the Sacred Heart of Jesus.
- 2025**
 - FEB. 14**: Pope Francis is admitted to Gemelli hospital, diagnosed with bronchitis.
 - MAR. 23**: Pope Francis is released from hospital after a 38-day stay.
 - APRIL 20**: Pope Francis makes his final public appearance on Easter Sunday.
 - APRIL 21**: Pope Francis dies at 88.

Statement from Bishop Brennan on the Passing of Pope Francis

WHEELING — On Monday, April 21, Bishop Mark Brennan released the following statement on the passing of Pope Francis:

“I join with my fellow Catholics and men and women around the world in mourning the death of Pope Francis. I have great affection for him, since he was the Pope who took a chance and named me, an ordinary parish priest, to be a bishop, invigorating my life with a new ministry that has been a blessing for the past eight years. Recently I have been praying that he return to good health but, if God should decide to take him home, that death would come quickly and peacefully. It did.

As a priest and later as the Archbishop of Buenos Aires and, for the past twelve years as Pope Francis, he has reached out to people who are often overlooked and even despised. He has upheld the truth of the Catholic faith while showing

great patience and sympathy toward those who find some of its moral and spiritual teachings difficult. He has reminded us that we must take better care of this Earth, our common home, or we may lose it. He has pleaded with national leaders to forsake war and to welcome migrants fleeing persecution and poverty. He has been a man fully engaged in the fundamental ministry of the Bishop of Rome: to confirm his brothers and sisters throughout the world in faith and love. We will miss him.

As we do with all loved ones and even for people we do not know who have died, let us pray for our brother, Francis, and commend him to God, now that his earthly pilgrimage has been completed. Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.”

Ad Limina Visit in 2019



CNS Photo/Vatican Media

Pope Francis greets Bishop Mark Brennan during a meeting with U.S. bishops from Regions IV and V making their “ad limina” visits to the Vatican on Dec. 3, 2019. The regions include the District of Columbia, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, U.S. Virgin Islands, West Virginia, the Archdiocese for the Military Services, Louisiana, Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee.



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'Requiescat in Pace,' Pope Francis

Bishop Brennan Gathers Faithful at Cathedral for Memorial Mass on Day of Late Pontiff's Passing

By Colleen Rowan

"On this Monday of Easter Week, we gather to remember our Holy Father Pope Francis who passed away earlier this morning," Bishop Mark Brennan said to the faithful gathered at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling on the evening of April 21. "You have come on very short notice. I'm very grateful. You've come because of your love for the Holy Father and for your Church."

It was a Memorial Mass for the pope in "Thanksgiving for his Life and Pontificate."

As he continued at the beginning of the celebration, Bishop Brennan said the Mass would be the first of nine that would be offered for the late pontiff—"A novena of Masses for our Holy Father, for the repose of his soul, and the consolation of the Church."

In his homily, the bishop said those gathered would notice that the prayers and readings for Mass were those for the Monday of Easter Week and that, even for a pope, the readings do not change. Pope Francis, he said, wouldn't mind one bit.

"Is it not fitting that our Holy Father should die at the beginning of this beautiful Easter Week?" Bishop Brennan asked. "The eight days of heightened celebration of the Lord's Resurrection from the dead."

Our pope preached a living Christ, not a dead historical figure, Bishop Brennan continued. The power of his resurrection, the bishop added, infuses a new life in us that enables us to love God with heart, mind, soul, and strength; and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

"Pope Francis not only preached the risen Christ but taught us by example to stand up for the truth when it is denied and to stand with men and women who are oppressed or marginalized—migrants; children, unborn and born; and so many others," the bishop said.

Pope Francis was not like

the guards who knew Jesus had risen but lied to protect themselves; he spoke the truth and lived it, the bishop said. St. Peter, no longer denying that he knew Christ, but filled now with Apostolic courage, emphasized on Pentecost the reality of the Lord's rising to new life, the bishop said. In speaking of Christ, St. Peter quoted Psalm 16, the responsorial song for the Mass, which he attributed to King David in his prophetic role – "You will not abandon my soul to the netherworld, nor will you suffer your holy one to see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence."

We have, in Christ, the well-founded hope of eternal life with God after present life is ended as well as the grace needed to serve God and neighbor while still on earth, the bishop said.

Pope Francis, he said, designated this Jubilee Year as a Year of Hope, Bishop Brennan continued.

"Our hope now is that the Lord who inspired Pope Francis' lifelong service to him and to his Church will welcome him to the fullness of peace for which he fervently longed," he said.

In the Gospel for the Mass, (Matthew 28:8-15) Mary Magdalene and the other Mary left the tomb fearful yet overjoyed. These two emotions, together seem jarring to the mind, the bishop said, opposites that do not go together. But experience teaches that opposites can coexist.

Fearfulness and weariness at times about the demands of roles in marriage and friendships, in the priesthood, the diaconate, the religious life, as well as work and service in the civil community, he said, may be felt at times.

"But we find hope and strength in Christ's promise to give us the grace to meet those challenges. We know what it is to be both fearful and overjoyed at the same time," Bishop Brennan said. "I think we see that spirit in

Pope Francis on the last day of his life. He was clearly suffering, but he must have prayed for strength to appear before the people one last time and to show hospitality to our American vice president. He received that strength and then, last night, the Lord said: 'Jorge, Francis, my vicar, your work is done. Come home to me.' After the fearful work of the day came the joy of rest in the Lord.

"God will provide a new pope for us. We will pray for the College of Cardinals that, in their meeting, they will seek God's guidance to give us a good man to be the visible head of the Church. The invisible head of the Church, Jesus Christ, united by a shared human nature to us and blessed with divine power and wisdom has not died and will continue to guide and help us on our pilgrimage of faith. The church's life and its mission will go on. In its heart will beat that new life that the human Christ won in his resurrection. We will continue to celebrate his



Joyce Bibey photo

A memorial to Pope Francis stands at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling April 21.

victory over sin and death during this Easter Week and throughout the Easter Season and carry that same spirit for the rest of the year. We commend our Holy Father Pope Francis to the Lord, asking that he receive his soul with a broad

smile; and, when the Lord returns in glory, that he raise from the dead the body of his faithful servant to enjoy in its fullness the blessed life of the just in heaven. 'Requiescat in pace,' Pope Francis. Amen."



Joyce Bibey photo

Bishop Brennan, clergy, and altar servers prepare to process out of the cathedral at the Memorial Mass for Pope Francis April 21.

U.S. Political Leaders React to Death of Pope Francis

By **Kate Scanlon, OSV News**

WASHINGTON (OSV News) — President Donald Trump, officials in his administration and other U.S. political leaders issued statements expressing condolences for Pope Francis after the pontiff's death April 21 at age 88.

"Rest in Peace Pope Francis!" Trump wrote on his social media platform, Truth Social. "May God Bless him and all who loved him!"

Trump also ordered flags be flown at half-staff in memory of Pope Francis at public buildings, military posts, naval stations and ships, and embassies. Trump said he and first lady Melania Trump would attend the funeral.

"He was a good man, worked hard," Trump said in comments April 21 at the White House Easter Egg Roll. "He loved the world and it's an honor to do that."

The pontiff's death followed his stay in Rome's Gemelli hospital earlier this year while he recovered from respiratory infections. On Easter, the day before his death, Pope Francis gave his Easter blessing "urbi et orbi" (to the city and the world). He also held a brief meeting with U.S. Vice President JD Vance.

"I just learned of the passing of Pope Francis. My heart goes out to the millions of Christians all over the world who loved him," Vance, a Catholic, wrote on the social media platform X on April 21. "I was happy to see him yesterday, though he was obviously very ill."

Vance added he will always remember the "homily he gave in the very early days of COVID," in reference to Pope Francis' "urbi et orbi" blessing for the world at the

onset of the pandemic in 2020.

"It was really quite beautiful," Vance said. "May God rest his soul."

During his first term, Trump met with the pontiff at the Vatican, telling him, "Thank you. Thank you. I won't forget what you said," after their private meeting.

Former President Joe Biden, the nation's second Catholic president and a vocal admirer of Pope Francis, said in a statement on X, "Pope Francis will be remembered as one of the most consequential leaders of our time and I am better for having known him."

"It is with great sadness that Jill and I learned of the passing of His Holiness Pope Francis," Biden said, adding, "He was unlike any who came before him. For decades, he served the most vulnerable across Argentina and his mission of serving the poor never ceased."

Among the final actions of his single term in the White House, Biden bestowed the Presidential Medal of Freedom with Distinction, the nation's highest civilian honor, to Pope Francis.

In a post on X featuring a photo with Pope Francis at the White House, President Barack Obama said, "Pope Francis was the rare leader who made us want to be better people." He said the Holy Father "shook us out of our complacency and reminded us that we are all bound by moral obligations to God and one another."

"Today, Michelle and I mourn with everyone around the world — Catholic and non-Catholic alike — who

drew strength and inspiration from the Pope's example," he said. "May we continue to heed his call to 'never remain on the sidelines of this march of living hope.'"

House Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi, who is Catholic, as well as Catholic members of Congress on both sides of the aisle, expressed their condolences about his death.

"Perhaps his most distinctive leadership will be his historic commitment to addressing the climate crisis. In his ground-breaking encyclical, *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis writes with beauty and clarity, with moral force and fierce urgency to call on all of us to be good stewards of God's Creation," she said in a statement.

Former Speaker John Boehner, also Catholic, wrote on X, "Speaker, will you pray for me?" With those words, Pope Francis changed my life. He will forever hold a place in America's history as the first Pope to address a joint meeting of the US Congress, and in hearts across the world for his compassionate stewardship of the Church."

In a statement shared on X, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who is Catholic, said he and his wife, Jeanette, were saddened to hear of Pope Francis' death.

"We unite in prayer with Catholics worldwide for the repose of the pontiff's soul and for this period of transition for the Catholic Church. May He rest in peace," Rubio said.

"The United States of America extends its deepest condolences to our friends and partners at the Holy See on the passing of His Holiness Pope



CNS photo/Vatican Media
Pope Francis meets briefly with U.S. Vice President JD Vance, and his translator, in the papal residence, the Domus Sanctae Marthae, at the Vatican April 20. Pope Francis died April 21 at age 88.

Francis. Pope Francis has been a beacon of compassion, hope, and humility for Catholics worldwide," the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See posted on X. (Kate Scanlon is a national reporter for OSV News covering Washington.)

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Prayer, Pilgrims Accompany Pope's Body to Basilica



CNS photo/Lola Gomez

The body of Pope Francis lies in an open casket in front of the Altar of the Confession in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican April 23. The pope will lie in state for three days of public viewing and prayer ahead of his funeral Mass April 26.

By Cindy Wooden, Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — To the chanting of Christ's promise, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live," the mortal remains of Pope Francis were carried into St. Peter's Basilica by 14 pallbearers.

Thousands of people had made an early morning pilgrimage to St. Peter's Square April 23 to witness the transfer and pray for the late pope; they erupted in applause when his body, in an open casket, reached the square and again when it reached the top of the basilica steps.

The basilica was to be open until midnight April 23, from 7 a.m. to midnight April 24 and 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. April 25 for visits by the public. Another rite, to close the casket, was scheduled for late April 25. The pope's funeral was scheduled for April 26 in St. Peter's Square with burial to follow at Rome's Basilica of St. Mary Major.

U.S. Cardinal Kevin J. Farrell, as chamberlain of the Holy Roman Church, led the prayer service that accompanied the transfer of the body

from the chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae, where the pope had lived and where he died April 21 at the age of 88.

More than 80 cardinals joined the procession ahead of Cardinal Farrell, who was wearing a red and gold cope, and immediately preceded the pallbearers flanked by members of the Pontifical Swiss Guard.

Directly behind the casket were the men closest to the pope in his final days: his nurse, Massimiliano Strappetti; his two valets; and his personal secretaries.

Three religious sisters and a laywoman, whom the pope had appointed to top positions in the Roman Curia, came behind them: Franciscan Sister of the Eucharist Raffaella Petrini, president of the office governing Vatican City State; Salesian Sister Alessandra Smerilli, secretary of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development; Xavière Missionary Sister Nathalie Becquart, undersecretary of the Synod of Bishops; and Emilce Cuda, secretary of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America.

The basilica's bell-ringer sounded the death knell as the procession began.

To the singing of Psalms, beginning with "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want" (Psalm 23), the procession with the casket went into St. Peter's Square amid the public and then up the central ramp — where Pope Francis would ride in the popemobile — and into the church.

Inside the basilica, the choir and assembly chanted the Litany of Saints and then "Subvenite Sancti Dei," which begins with the petition: "Saints of God, come to his aid. Hasten to meet him, angels of the Lord. Receive his soul and present him to God the Most High."

Pope Francis' body, in a zinc-lined wooden casket covered in red fabric, was placed before the main altar on a low platform cut at an angle so that people coming to pay their respects could see his face.

Cardinal Farrell blessed the pope's body with holy water and incense and led those assembled in praying the Lord's Prayer.

Removing their red zucchetos, the cardinals bowed before the coffin, made the sign of the cross and left the basilica. They were followed

See "Prayer" on Page 10

Prayer ...

Cont'd from Page 9

by bishops, both those who work at the Vatican and those who head dioceses, then hundreds of priests and religious and top Vatican lay employees.

Mary Frances Brennan, who teaches at Kennedy Catholic High School in Seattle, was in the front row in St. Peter's Square.

She said she had learned the pope had died just a few hours before her flight to Rome was scheduled to leave.


"It was devastating," she said. "We really wanted to see the pope."

"He's my pope," she said. "I love him and want to honor him."

Additionally, Brennan said, "now all the people back home have a contact here and can see this through my eyes."

Waiting in line later to enter the basilica, Adjani Tovar from Mexico City told Catholic News Service that Pope Francis "was a very disruptive pope: As a Jesuit, a true Jesuit, he naturally had a closer connection with people, especially young people."

"He addressed topics that had been off-limits in the Catholic Church for a long time, and he's going to be remembered as a turning point for all the openness he showed to different communities, for his focus on inclusion, his relationships with heads of state, and his constant calls for peace," Tovar said.



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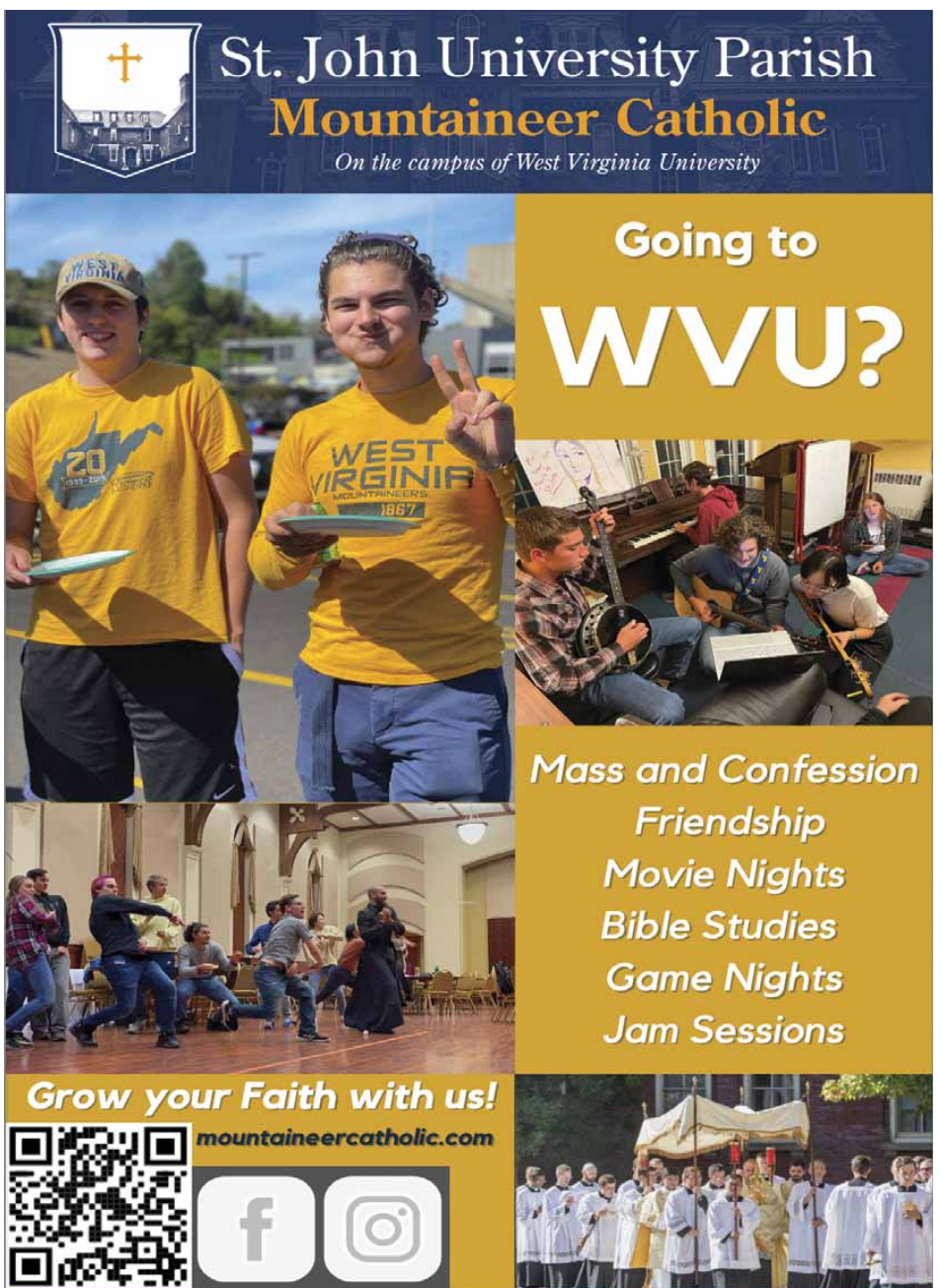
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Precise Rules Govern What Happens in Period Between Popes

By **Cindy Wooden, Catholic News Service**

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Centuries of experience dealing with the death, or occasional resignation, of a pope has left the Catholic Church with thorough instructions detailing who has responsibility for planning the funeral, preparing for the election of a new pope and taking care of essential business in the meantime.

The instructions are found in St. John Paul II's 1996 apostolic constitution, "Universi Dominici Gregis," which was revised by Pope Benedict XVI in 2007 and again just before he resigned in 2013.

The funeral and burial of a pope who dies in office should take place "between the fourth and sixth day after death," the document said. The exact date is determined at a meeting of all the cardinals able to reach the Vatican immediately after the papal death.

The cardinals also determine when the conclave to elect a new pope should begin, although Pope Benedict's update of "Universi Dominici Gregis" states that it should be at least 15 days from the death or resignation of the pope and can be no more than 20 days since the vacancy of the papacy.

An earlier start is possible, he said, "if it is clear that all the cardinal electors are present." Cardinal electors are

those who were under the age of 80 on the day the pope died or resigned.

The funeral marks the start of a mandated nine-day period of official mourning. For the next eight days other memorial Masses are celebrated in St. Peter's Basilica. The nine-day period is known as the "novendiales."

With the death of a pope, most top-level Vatican officials — including the prefects of dicasteries — lose their jobs, but that does not mean most Vatican employees get time off. Regular business continues with dicastery secretaries overseeing the steady flow of paperwork, correspondence and meeting planning.

However, the publication of documents, the nomination of new bishops and the approval of statutes for Catholic universities and religious orders are suspended. Anything that must be issued in the name of the Vatican or in the name of the pope must await the election of a new pope and the re-confirmation or appointment of prefects for the various offices.

The two senior Vatican officials who retain their titles and responsibilities are the "camerlengo" or chamberlain, currently U.S. Cardinal Kevin J. Farrell, whose job begins in earnest when a pope dies or resigns, and the head of the Apostolic Penitentiary, Cardinal Angelo De Donatis. The Apostolic Penitentiary is a Vatican

court dealing with matters related to the sacrament of confession and to indulgences, so keeping him in office ensures the possibility of absolution for penitents guilty of serious sin and seeking forgiveness.

"Universi Dominici Gregis" also specified that "the almoner of His Holiness will also continue to carry out works of charity in accordance with the criteria employed during the pope's lifetime." That position is held by Cardinal Konrad Krajewski, who also is prefect of Dicastery for the Service of Charity.

Everything having to do with the funeral and with preparations for the conclave to elect Pope Francis' successor belongs to the College of Cardinals.

The rites and rituals used — from the formal verification of the pope's death to the eight memorial Masses after the funeral — are published in the "Ordo Exsequiarum Romani Pontificis" ("Funeral Rites of the Roman Pontiff"), originally approved by St. John Paul II in 1998, but published only the day after his death in 2005.

In late 2024, the Vatican released a newer, simplified version on the orders of Pope Francis.

The physician who directs the Vatican health care service provides a civil certification of the pope's death, including its cause.

But the ritual verification of the pope's death takes place in the chapel of his residence and is presided over by the chamberlain, assisted by the dean of the College of Cardinals, the master of papal liturgical ceremonies and the physician.

If it ever was a custom to use a silver hammer to tap on the newly deceased pontiff's forehead to make sure he is dead, it is a long disused practice.

The chamberlain also is responsible for placing seals on the pope's study and bedroom and officially notifying the cardinal vicar for Rome and the archpriest of St. Peter's Basilica.

Before the conclave, all the cardinals — including those over 80 — participate in "congregations."

The "general congregation," with all the cardinals, handles "important

matters," according to "Universi Dominici Gregis," while "questions of lesser importance which arise on a daily basis or from time to time" are handled by the "particular congregation."

The document says the cardinals draw lots to determine the three cardinals who will assist the camerlengo by serving three-day terms as members of the "particular congregation." However, Pope Francis' apostolic constitution on the Roman Curia, "Praedicate Evangelium," said that "one of these is the Cardinal Coordinator of the Council for the Economy," currently German Cardinal Reinhard Marx of Munich and Freising.

The general congregation meets under the leadership of the dean, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, and besides setting the date for the funeral and for the conclave, it is responsible for:

- Ensuring that a commission of their members prepares the Domus Sanctae Marthae, the Vatican residence where Pope Francis lived, for the cardinals during the conclave. Rooms will be assigned by lot.

- Preparing the Sistine Chapel for the election of a new pope.

- Assigning two clerics "known for their sound doctrine, wisdom and moral authority" to prepare meditations for the cardinals on problems the church faces and on choosing the next pope.

- Approving the expenditures associated with the death of the pope.

- Arranging for the destruction of the papal fisherman's ring and the lead seal that had marked Pope Francis' letters.

Although not as secret as the conclave, the cardinals and those assisting them at the meetings of the general congregation take an oath of secrecy regarding "all matters in any way related to the election of the Roman Pontiff or those which, by their very nature, during the vacancy of the Apostolic See, call for the same secrecy."

During the general congregation meetings, the cardinals have the services of translators working in Italian, Spanish, English, French and German, as well as ushers and other aides.

Vatican Announces Canonization of Blessed Acutis is Postponed

By **Carol Glatz, Catholic News Service**

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — With the death of Pope Francis, the canonization of Blessed Carlo Acutis, which was scheduled for April 27, has been postponed.

"Following the death of the Supreme Pontiff Francis, notice is hereby given that the Eucharistic celebration and the rite of the canonization of Blessed Carlo Acutis, scheduled for April 27, 2025, second Sunday of Easter or Divine Mercy Sunday, on the occasion of the Jubilee of Adolescents, is suspended," the Vatican press office announced April 21.

The Mass for the Jubilee of Adolescents, however, would still be held, Matteo Bruni, head of the press office told reporters, clarifying that what had been canceled was a Mass for a canonization. The Holy Year and its associated events and Masses would continue, he added. The Jubilee of Adolescents was scheduled for April 25-27 in Rome.

The Dicastery for Evangelization's section for new evangelization, which is organizing the Holy Year 2025, shared its sorrow for the death of Pope Francis.

"We join in prayer" for his passing "in unity with all of God's people and the whole world," it said in a note released April 21.

It confirmed the program for the Jubilee of Adolescents has remained mostly the same, including the April 26 pilgrimage to the Holy Door and Mass April 27 in St. Peter's Square.

What has changed, it said, is there will be no canonization ceremony April 27, and the "musical celebration" scheduled to be held in Rome's Circus Maximus April 26 is canceled out of respect for the period of mourning.

Pope Francis had approved the decree for the canonization of Blessed Acutis May 23, 2024, and announced the date for his canonization end of November. He will be the first millennial to become a saint.



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Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Confirmation Schedule, Spring 2025 Bishop Mark E. Brennan, Celebrant

- Monday, April 28:** St. John University, Morgantown; 6:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, April 30:** Sacred Heart, Chester; 6:30 p.m.
- Sunday, May 4:** Our Lady of Fatima, Huntington, and St. Stephen, Ona, at Our Lady of Fatima; 5:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, May 6:** St. Joseph, Huntington; 6:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, May 7:** St. Francis de Sales, Morgantown; 5:15 p.m.
- Sunday, May 11:** Cathedral of St. Joseph, Wheeling; 10:30 a.m.
- Sunday, May 11:** St. Mary, Star City; 4:00 p.m.
- Monday, May 12:** St. Michael, Wheeling; 5:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, May 14:** St. Michael, Vienna; 7:00 p.m.
- Friday, May 16:** St. Joseph, Martinsburg; 6:00 p.m.
- Saturday, May 17:** St. James, Charles Town; 10:00 a.m.
- Saturday, May 17:** St. Leo, Inwood; 5:00 p.m.
- Sunday, May 18:** St. Bernadette, Hedgesville; 11:00 a.m.
- Sunday, May 18:** St. Vincent de Paul, Berkeley Springs; 5:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, May 21:** St. Joseph the Worker, Weirton; 6:30 p.m.
- Thursday, May 22:** St. Thomas Aquinas, Thomas; 5:00 p.m.
- Sunday, May 25:** St. Paul, Weirton; 2:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, May 28:** St. Patrick, Weston; 5:30 p.m.
- Saturday, May 31:** Annunciation of Our Lord, Fort Ashby; 4:30 p.m.
- Sunday, June 1:** St. Luke the Evangelist, Cheat Lake; 2:00 p.m.
- Saturday, June 7:** St. Francis of Assisi, St. Albans; 5:00 p.m.
- Sunday, June 8:** St. Francis de Sales, Beckley; 11:00 a.m.
- Sunday, June 8:** Sacred Heart, Bluefield, 4:30 p.m.

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Pastor mundial: De palabra y obra, el Papa predicó la misericordia y la solidaridad

Por Cindy Wooden, Catholic News Service

CIUDAD DEL VATICANO (CNS) — El Papa Francisco, quien falleció el 21 de abril a la edad de 88 años, energizó a millones de católicos — y causó preocupación para algunos — al transformar la imagen del pontificado en un ministerio pastoral basado en encuentros personales y fuertes convicciones sobre la pobreza, la misión y el diálogo.

El cardenal estadounidense Kevin J. Farrell, camarlengo de la Santa Iglesia Romana, anunció que el Papa Francisco había fallecido a las 7:35 de la mañana.

"Toda su vida estuvo dedicada al servicio del Señor y de Su Iglesia", dijo el cardenal Farrell en un anuncio en vídeo emitido desde la capilla de la Domus Sanctae Marthae, donde vivía el Papa Francisco.

Los gestos del primer Papa procedente de Latinoamérica -- desde abrazar tiernamente a los enfermos hasta visitar repetidamente a los presos -- llegaron a millones de corazones. Pero sus denuncias de los excesos de un capitalismo salvaje, sus advertencias sobre la contribución humana al cambio climático y su insistencia en acompañar, no juzgar, a las personas homosexuales suscitaban polémicas.

Sufriendo de bronquitis y dificultad para respirar, el Papa Francisco ingresó en el hospital Gemelli de Roma el 14 de febrero. Se le diagnosticó una neumonía doble y una infección compleja. Había regresado al Vaticano el 23 de marzo para continuar su convalecencia.

La misericordia de Dios fue un tema constante en la predicación del Papa Francisco y fue tan central en su visión de lo que debe encarnar el ministerio de la Iglesia que proclamó un Año Santo extraordinario de la Misericordia del 8 de diciembre de 2015 al 20 de noviembre de 2016.

Elegido el 13 de marzo de 2013, el Papa Francisco fue el primer Papa de la historia procedente del hemisferio sur, el primer no europeo en ser elegido en casi 1.300 años y el primer jesuita en ser sucesor de San Pedro.

En los primeros tres años de su pontificado, publicó tres documentos importantes: "Evangelii Gaudium" ("La Alegría del Evangelio"), una visión detallada del programa de su papado y su visión de la Iglesia -- en particular, la extensión de la Iglesia y su respuesta a los desafíos planteados por la cul-



Foto CNS/Lola Gomez

El Papa Francisco saluda a los niños durante la primera Jornada Mundial de los Niños, el 25 de mayo de 2024, en el Estadio Olímpico de Roma.

tura secular --; "Laudato Si'" ("Alabado Seas: Sobre el cuidado de la casa común", sobre el medio ambiente; y "Amoris Laetitia" ("La alegría del amor"), sus reflexiones sobre los debates de los sínodos de obispos sobre la familia en 2014 y 2015.

La santidad fue el tema de su exhortación apostólica de marzo de 2018, "Gaudete et Exsultate" ("Alegraos y regocijaos"), en la que insistió en que ser santo no es aburrido ni imposible, y que crece a través de pequeños gestos cotidianos y actos de amorosa bondad.

Siguiendo los pasos de sus predecesores, el Papa Francisco fue una voz incansable en favor de la paz, instando a poner fin a los conflictos armados, apoyando el diálogo y fomentando la reconciliación. El Papa calificó de "locura" la invasión rusa de Ucrania y pidió a los obispos del mundo que se unieran a él para consagrar Ucrania y Rusia al Inmaculado Corazón de María. Cuando militantes de Hamás atacaron comunidades en Israel, matando a decenas de personas y tomando a más de 200 como rehenes a finales de 2023, e Israel tomó represalias atacando

Gaza, el Papa Francisco hizo repetidos llamamientos para que se devolvieran los rehenes, se declarara un alto el fuego para entregar ayuda humanitaria y se estableciera un compromiso real con una paz negociada.

Promoviendo la paz, la solidaridad y el respeto por la Tierra, el Papa insistió en que las personas necesitan reconocerse como hermanos y hermanas y publicó una encíclica al respecto, "Fratelli Tutti", sobre la fraternidad y la amistad social". Firmó el texto ante la tumba de San Francisco de Asís el día de su fiesta, el 4 de octubre de 2020.

El Papa Francisco pasó gran parte de los primeros nueve años de su pontificado persiguiendo dos ambiciosos proyectos: revitalizar los esfuerzos evangelizadores de la Iglesia — constantemente instando a un encuentro con los demás en lugar de una preocupación por los asuntos internos de la Iglesia — y la reforma de la administración central del Vaticano, haciendo hincapié en su papel de ayudar a los obispos de todo el mundo en lugar de dictarles la política.

El 19 de marzo de 2022, noveno aniversario de la inauguración de

su papado, promulgó finalmente el "Praedicate Evangelium" ("Predicad el Evangelio"), su reestructuración completa de la Curia romana, destacando su misión de servir a los esfuerzos de evangelización de la Iglesia a todos los niveles.

Su estilo de vida sencillo, que incluía su decisión de no vivir en el Palacio Apostólico y su elección de desplazarse por Roma en un pequeño Fiat o Ford en lugar de un Mercedes, envió un mensaje de austeridad a los funcionarios vaticanos y al clero de toda la Iglesia. El Santo Padre reforzó el mensaje con frecuentes advertencias sobre las exigencias evangélicas y el testimonio evangélico de pobreza y sencillez.

Aunque dijo en repetidas ocasiones que no le gustaba viajar, realizó 47 viajes al extranjero, llevando su mensaje de alegría evangélica a América del Norte y del Sur, Europa, África y Asia.

Jorge Mario Bergoglio nació en Buenos Aires, capital de Argentina, el 17 de diciembre de 1936. Obtuvo el título de técnico químico en la secundaria y entró en el noviciado de los jesuitas en marzo de 1958.

Ver "Papa" en la página 14

Papa ...

Tras estudiar Filosofía y Letras en Santiago de Chile, regresó a Argentina y se licenció en Filosofía en el Colegio San José de San Miguel.

Fue ordenado sacerdote el 13 de diciembre de 1969, y tras su profesión perpetua como jesuita en 1973, fue nombrado maestro de novicios en el Seminario de Villa Barilari en San Miguel. Más tarde, ese mismo año, fue nombrado superior de la provincia jesuita de Argentina, un cargo en el que, según su propio relato, demostró ser una figura divisiva por su "manera autoritaria y rápida de tomar decisiones".

En mayo de 1992, el padre Bergoglio fue nombrado obispo auxiliar de la Arquidiócesis de Buenos Aires. Cinco años después fue nombrado arzobispo coadjutor y en 1998 arzobispo de Buenos Aires; el Papa Juan Pablo II le nombró miembro del Colegio Cardenalicio en 2001.

Como líder de una arquidiócesis con más de 2,5 millones de católicos, el cardenal Bergoglio se esforzó por estar cerca de la gente. Viajaba en autobús, visitaba a los pobres, vivía en un apartamento sencillo y se preparaba su propia comida.

Su reputación internacional se vio reforzada por su trabajo en la asamblea de 2007 del Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano (CELAM) y, en particular, por su papel como jefe del comité que redactó el documento final de la reunión sobre la reforma y la revitalización de los esfuerzos evangelizadores de la Iglesia en el continente.

El cardenal Bergoglio era una figura conocida y respetada en el Colegio Cardenalicio, hasta el punto de que nadie puso en duda la noticia pub-

licada por una prestigiosa revista italiana de que había obtenido el segundo mayor número de votos en las cuatro votaciones del cónclave de 2005 en el que se eligió al Papa Benedicto XVI.

Ocho años después, el Papa Benedicto se retiró. En las reuniones de cardenales previas al cónclave de 2013 para elegir a su sucesor, la necesidad de reformar la burocracia vaticana fue un tema común de preocupación.

En su discurso, el cardenal Bergoglio advirtió contra "la autorreferencialidad y una suerte de narcisismo teológico" en la Iglesia y argumentó que el próximo Papa debía ser "un hombre que, desde la contemplación de Jesucristo y desde la adoración a Jesucristo ayude a la Iglesia a salir de sí hacia las periferias existenciales" para difundir el Evangelio.

Su elección, el 13 de marzo, se produjo el segundo día del cónclave, en su quinta votación. Eligió el nombre de Francisco en honor a San Francisco de Asís, "el hombre de la pobreza, el hombre de la paz, el hombre que ama y protege la creación", dijo.

"Salgan" fue la petición constante del Papa Francisco a todos los católicos, desde los cardenales de la Curia hasta la gente de los bancos en las iglesias. Más de una vez, dijo a los fieles que mientras la Biblia presenta a Jesús llamando a la puerta del corazón de la gente para entrar, hoy Jesús llama a las puertas de las iglesias parroquiales intentando salir y estar entre la gente.

Sin embargo, fue criticado por lo que muchos consideraron una falta de coherencia a la hora de abordar con firmeza la crisis de los abusos sexuales por parte del clero, especialmente en lo que se refiere a responsabilizar a los obispos de la gestión de las denuncias y a destituir a los sac-

erdotes acusados de abusos de forma creíble.

Y aunque su pontificado supuso un gran avance en los intentos del Vaticano de llegar a un acuerdo con el gobierno comunista de China sobre el nombramiento de obispos católicos, un acuerdo provisional firmado en septiembre de 2018, y renovado en 2020, 2022 y 2024, fue denunciado por los críticos como una traición a los católicos que arriesgaron sus vidas por negarse a cualquier cooperación con los comunistas.

Al igual que sus predecesores, el Papa Francisco fue un firme defensor del carácter sagrado de la vida humana. En un encuentro con médicos católicos en noviembre de 2014, por ejemplo, insistió en que "a la luz de la fe y de la recta razón, la vida humana es siempre sagrada y siempre 'de calidad'. No existe una vida humana más sagrada que otra" ni "una vida humana cualitativamente más significativa que otra".

Para el Papa Francisco, ayudar a los indefensos también significa prestar especial atención a los prisioneros, a las víctimas de la guerra y, en particular, a los cristianos y otras minorías religiosas perseguidas por su fe.

Cuando las fuerzas del Estado Islámico y otros grupos terroristas comenzaron a atacar específicamente a los cristianos y otras minorías religiosas en Siria e Irak, y más tarde en el norte de África, el Papa Francisco exigió a la comunidad internacional que actuara.

Citó con frecuencia cifras según las cuales el número de mártires cristianos es hoy mayor que en los primeros siglos del cristianismo, e insistió en que la comunidad internacional no puede "mirar hacia otro lado".

Para denunciar presuntos casos de abuso sexual de menores:

La diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston te exhorta a denunciar cualquier delito ante las autoridades civiles. Para realizar una denuncia en contra de cualquier obispo en todos los Estados Unidos, favor de reportarlo en la página web www.repostbishopabuse.org. Y si, además, existen motivos para creer que un obispo ha cometido alguna conducta sexual inapropiada favor de comunicarse con las autoridades civiles de la jurisdicción correspondiente y también puede realizar un reporte en la página web antes mencionada.

Para informar a las autoridades civiles: comuníquese con la policía local; los números varían según su ubicación.

Si considera que alguien está en peligro inmediato, favor de llamar al 911.

Para informar de forma confidencial sobre cualquier sospecha de abuso o negligencia infantil, incluido el abuso sexual, favor de comunicarse con la Oficina de Servicios de Protección Infantil de Niños y Familias de West Virginia, llamando a la línea directa de abuso infantil al 1-800.352.6513.

Para informar a las autoridades diocesanas: La diócesis exhorta a informar primeramente a las autoridades civiles correspondientes, cuando la denuncia incluye un delito, y también alienta a informar a las autoridades eclesiales correspondientes.

Para reportar casos sospechosos de abuso sexual de menores por parte del personal de la Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston, comuníquese directamente con la diócesis a los teléfonos 1.888.434.6237 o 304.233.0880 para hablar con cualquiera de las siguientes personas asignadas: Sr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Sr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; y si desea hablar en español con Sor Martha Gómez, ext. 264.

También puede llamar a la Oficina de Ambiente Seguro de la diócesis

al 304.230.1504 o a la línea directa de abuso sexual de la diócesis al 833.230.5656.

Los formularios de quejas están disponibles en línea en la página web www.dwc.org, favor de hacer clic en "Diócesis" en la barra de menú, luego en "Oficinas", en "Ambiente seguro" y en "Descargar archivos y formularios". El formulario se titula "Formulario de queja para denuncias de abuso sexual de menores". El formulario se puede enviar por correo en Estados Unidos a: Office of Safe Environment, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, PO Box 230, Wheeling WV 26003.

Para informar al Coordinador de Asistencia a Víctimas de la Diócesis: Favor de llamar a Erin McFarland, M.Ed., LPC, al 304.559.6742. Además de las vías mencionadas anteriormente para denunciar el abuso sexual, la diócesis se ha asociado con la compañía Navex Global que ofrece la plataforma EthicsPoint para informar cualquier inquietud adicional, como sospecha de mala conducta financiera, profesional y personal de un sacerdote, diacono, religioso, o empleado laico de la diócesis o cualquier parroquia o escuela católica en West Virginia. Puede acceder a la plataforma EthicsPoint a través de la página web www.dwc.org, en "Rendición de cuentas", luego "Informar mala conducta" o llamando al 844.723. 8381.

EthicsPoint es una herramienta de denuncia confidencial y anónima, ellos se encargarán de transmitir su denuncia directamente a las autoridades civiles y a las autoridades diocesanas correspondientes, y lo más importante al denunciar a través de ellos, la identidad de la persona que denuncia está protegida.

Enlaces e información:

Departamento de Salud y Recursos Humanos de WV: <https://www.wvdhhr.org/report.asp>.

Policía Estatal de Virginia Occidental, Unidad de crímenes contra menores: 304-293-6400.

Pope on His Last Easter: Jesus' Resurrection Makes Christians Pilgrims of Hope

By Cindy Wooden, Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The hope Christians have is not a sign of avoiding reality but of trusting in the power of God to defeat sin and death as the resurrection of Jesus clearly shows, Pope Francis wrote in his last Easter message.

"All those who put their hope in God place their feeble hands in his strong and mighty hand; they let themselves be raised up and set out on a journey," said the message, read before Pope Francis gave his Easter blessing "urbi et orbi" (to the city and the world) April 20.

The pope's voice was weak, as it has been since he was released from the hospital March 23, and he barely raised his arms as he made the sign of the cross, but the tens of thousands of people in St. Peter's Square were appreciative and clapped loudly after saying, "Amen."

"Together with the risen Jesus," he wrote in his message, those who trust in God "become pilgrims of hope, witnesses of the victory of love and of the disarmed power of life."

The pope, who was still recovering from pneumonia at the time, was not present at the Easter morning Mass in St. Peter's Square but arrived shortly after noon to give the solemn blessing.

U.S. Vice President JD Vance and his family did not attend the Mass either, but Vance arrived at the Vatican at about 11:30 a.m. for a private meeting with Pope Francis in the papal residence, the Domus Sanctae Marthae. The Vatican said the meeting lasted just a few minutes and allowed the two to exchange Easter greetings.

Vance had met April 19 with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, and with Archbishop Paul R. Gallagher, the Vatican foreign minister. The Vatican said they discussed efforts to defend religious freedom as well as the international situation, especially regarding countries affected by war, political tensions and difficult humanitarian situations, with particular attention to migrants, refugees and prisoners.

With his voice still weak, Pope Francis wished everyone a Happy Easter and then asked his master of liturgical ceremonies, Archbishop Diego Ravelli, to read his message, which insisted that "Easter is the celebration of life!"

"God created us for life and wants the human family to rise again," he wrote. "In his eyes, every life is precious! The life of a child in the mother's womb, as well as the lives of the elderly and the sick, who in more and more countries are looked upon as people to be discarded."

Pope Francis condemned the "great thirst for death" seen in violence and wars around the world and in the "contempt" people, including government leaders, direct toward "the vulnerable, the marginalized and migrants!"

As is traditional for the message, the pope also prayed for peace in war-torn nations, mentioning by name: Israel, Palestine, Ukraine, Yemen, Sudan, South Sudan, Congo and Myanmar.

Pope Francis condemned "the growing climate of antisemitism throughout the world." But he also called attention to "the people of



CNS photo/Pablo Esparza

Pope Francis gives his blessing "urbi et orbi" (to the city and the world) from the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican April 20.

Gaza, and its Christian community in particular, where the terrible conflict continues to cause death and destruction and to create a dramatic and deplorable humanitarian situation."

"I appeal to the warring parties: call a ceasefire, release the hostages and come to the aid of a starving people that aspires to a future of peace," the papal message said.

Pope Francis had chosen Cardinal Angelo Comastri, retired archpriest of St. Peter's Basilica, to be his delegate to preside over the morning Mass and read his homily.

Some 50,000 tulips, daffodils, hyacinths, roses and other flowers and bushes decorated the steps leading up to St. Peter's Basilica while garlands framed the main entrance to the atrium of the basilica and adorned the central balcony.

Because Easter fell on the same day on the Julian and Gregorian calendars, meaning Catholic and Orthodox were celebrating on the same day, the Vatican added Byzantine "stichera" or hymns and "stichos" or Psalm verses after the chanting of the Gospel in Latin and in Greek.

The homily the pope prepared focused on the Easter Gospel's description of Mary Magdalene running to tell the disciples that Jesus had risen and Peter and John running to verify the news.

Running, the pope wrote, "expresses the desire, the yearning of the heart, the inner attitude of those who set out to search for Jesus."

And because he has risen from the dead, people must look for Jesus in someplace other than the tomb, the pope's text said.

"We must take action, set out to look for him:

look for him in life, look for him in the faces of our brothers and sisters," he said. "We must look for him without ceasing. Because if he has risen from the dead, then he is present everywhere, he dwells among us, he hides himself and reveals himself even today in the sisters and brothers we meet along the way, in the most ordinary and unpredictable situations of our lives."

Jesus "is alive and is with us always, shedding the tears of those who suffer and adding to the beauty of life through the small acts of love carried out by each of us," Pope Francis wrote.

After the Mass, the Easter blessing, Pope Francis got in the popemobile and rode around St. Peter's Square, waving to the crowd and blessing babies.

Pope Francis died the next day at age 88.

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Vatican Releases Unpublished Papal Reflection on Old Age

By Junno Arocho Esteves, Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Growing old isn't something to be feared, but rather something to embrace as a time of grace in one's life, Pope Francis wrote in a preface for a book that was not released before he died.

"Yes, we must not fear old age. We should not be afraid to embrace growing old, because life is life, and sugarcoating reality means betraying the truth of things," the pope wrote in the preface for "Waiting for a New Beginning: Reflections on Old Age."

The book, which was written by Cardinal Angelo Scola, retired archbishop of Milan, was set to be released April 24 by the Vatican publishing house. Pope Francis, who had written the preface in early February, died April 21 at the age of 88.

Cardinal Scola's reflections on how he was "preparing for his final encounter with Jesus" offered the "consoling certainty" that death was "not the end of everything, but the beginning of something new," the pope had written.

"It is a new beginning, as the title wisely suggests, because eternal life — which those who love already begin to experience here on earth, in the midst of their daily occupations — is the start of something that will never end. And it is 'new' precisely because we will live something we have never experienced fully before: eternity," he wrote.

Calling Cardinal Scola "a dear brother in the episcopate and a man who has carried out delicate and important responsibilities in the church," the pope said he was grateful for the Italian cardinal's reflection which "beautifully weaves together personal experience and cultural sensitivity."

The late pope noted the 83-year-old cardinal's "dismaying candor" about his own old age and said he found "a sense of kinship with the author."

"To restore dignity to a word too often seen as negative is something for which we should thank Cardinal Scola," the pope wrote. "Because to say 'old' does not mean 'worthless,' as a throw-away culture would sometimes have us believe. Saying 'old' instead means saying experience,

wisdom, understanding, discernment, prudence, attentiveness, slowness — all values we desperately need!"

Pope Francis said the real issue is not that one grows old but rather "how we grow old" and if it is lived "as a grace, and not with resentment."

If "we accept this period — which is sometimes long, when our strength wanes, our bodies tire more easily, and our reflexes are not what they once were — with gratitude and appreciation, then even old age becomes a fruitful stage of life, just as Romano Guardini taught us: one that can radiate goodness," he wrote.

The pope said he also appreciated Cardinal Scola's reflections on "the human and social value of grandparents," a subject he spoke about throughout his papacy.

"I have often emphasized how the role of grandparents is crucial to the balanced development of young people and, ultimately, to a more peaceful society," he wrote. "Amid the frenzy of our societies — so often obsessed with the superficial and the unhealthy pursuit of appearances — the wisdom of grandparents becomes a beacon, shining through uncertainty and offering guidance to grandchildren, who can draw from their elders' experience a deeper perspective on daily life."

He also noted the cardinal's words on the nature of suffering in one's old age, which he said showed that the book was "born not just of thought but of affection — because it is precisely to this affective dimension that Christian faith points."

"Christianity is not merely an intellectual exercise or a moral choice, but a loving attachment to a person — Christ, who came to meet us and chose to call us friends."

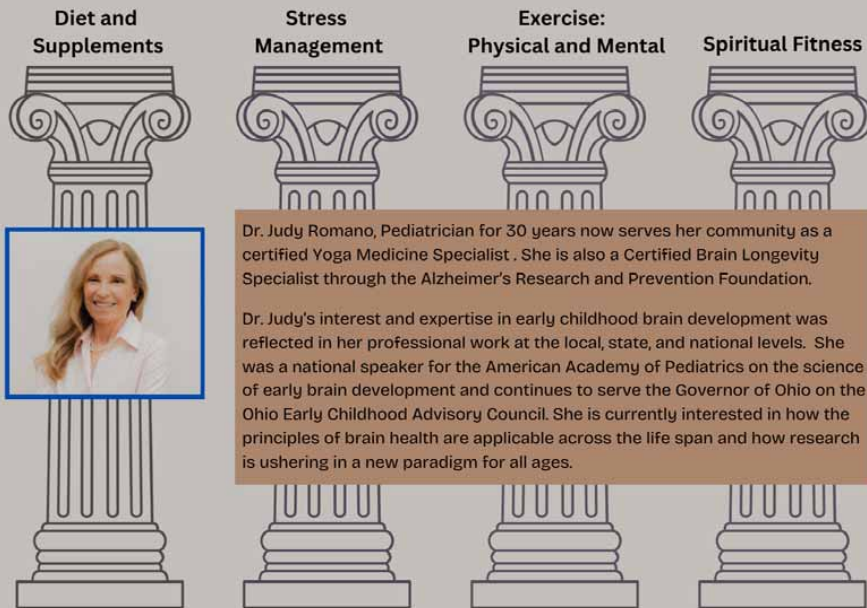
Pope Francis concluded the preface saying that he wished "to repeat the gesture I made upon first donning the white robe of the papacy in the Sistine Chapel" and embrace Cardinal Scola "at least in spirit."

"Now we are both older than we were that day in March 2013, but still united in gratitude to the loving God who offers us life and hope at every age and stage of our journey," he wrote.

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