



ON THE DEATH OF HIS HOLINESS, POPE FRANCIS

Let us entrust ourselves to him, for he alone can make all things new (cf. Rev. 21:5)!

(Homily of His Holiness, Pope Francis, 20th April 2025)

The people of the Catholic Diocese of Sale join with millions of people around the world as we mourn the death of our Holy Father, Pope Francis.

We remember that when he was presented to the world on the balcony of St Peter's on 13th March 2013, he bowed in humility and requested that we, the Church would pray for him. On that night as he commenced his Petrine Ministry as the Bishop of Rome and Pontiff of the world's Catholics, he showed us how he would lead.

In choosing the name Francis (after Saint Francis of Assisi), Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Buenos Aires, claimed a way of being Pope. At his election he took immediate action that his papacy would reflect a humility in style, dress and manner. He would not preside over a papal court. He chose to live as others live in the Vatican and took up residence at Santa Marta, rather than the papal apartment. Throughout the past twelve years we have seen traces of the great saint of Assisi modelled in the manner of Pope Francis' leadership: Compassionate to the poor; merciful to the forgotten; welcoming to the stranger; humble in lifestyle; courageous in addressing concerns of the modern world; a voice of challenge to the powerful and always deeply concerned to remind the Church that her mission was the same as the mission of Jesus. Of course, within *Laudato Si* the poetry of St Francis's Canticle of Creation echoes so profoundly, as we are called to steward the beauty of God's creation. He has modelled the synodal way of being Church – a Church which accompanies the other by deep listening, respectful dialogue, working co-responsibly, and always attuned to the Holy Spirit.

Throughout his Pontificate, he became someone to whom the world would turn. He was a moral compass. He lived his papacy as a service to others and a source of communion. In moments of international crisis, in conflicts and division, unrest among nations, in reaching out to refugees and asylum seekers, in speaking to the hearts of the women and men of our time, he brought the message of Jesus to life.



In the midst of the anguish of others he spoke of the mercy of God: He said, ‘the face of God is mercy.’ The mission of the beatitudes was real, tangible and a participation in the mission of the Kingdom of God.

In his encyclicals, pastoral letters, his preaching and his actions, Pope Francis never left anyone in doubt about the source of his life. His dream was that if we could really live in solidarity as sisters and brothers, then we could truly experience a lasting peace. His constant challenge to the powerful who exploit the poverty and rights of others often made some world leaders and others uncomfortable. He was unafraid. He was tireless. As we wondered at this stamina, he continued to go to the peripheries to be a sign of hope and connection. Papal visits were opportunities for him to deeply connect with the faith of people, and also to bring an international lens to the forgotten, the oppressed and the marginalized. As he aged, he also showed us that even the challenge of growing older did not diminish his spirit. In him, vulnerability brought strength.

Pope Francis often spoke of his own sinfulness and the mercy of God in his life. He worked hard to address concerns of the misconduct of others. He confronted clericalism and any sense of entitlement or careerism. He was steely in his resolve to address issues of abuse. Curial reform was high on his agenda. He introduced reforms to the style of leadership he expected and wished the various dicasteries of the Holy See to model cooperation and accountability. He addressed the management of the economy of the Vatican and pursued reforms to address misappropriation of assets and finances. His appointment of women to significant positions of leadership within the Vatican and entrusting authority to their voice have been hallmarks.

I had the opportunity to meet Pope Francis and to be in his company on several occasions. He was always quick witted. Incisive and insightful. He did not suffer fools. His every response flowed from the scripture: He was clearly a man close to God and the Word had found a home in him. He spoke directly but with kindness. His words and witness were a powerful testimony on how we bishops were to live among our people. His famous quote that pastors should “know the smell of the sheep” said it all. That priests should know us as fathers and not be orphans! He was a man of personal integrity who practised what he preached, and by doing so, restored for many their trust in the Church, especially in those parts of the globe, like Australia, where trust had been so broken by the scandal of clerical sexual abuse of minors.



In January this year Pope Francis, released his autobiography, Hope. A beautiful reflection on the story of one man's life. He writes, "we Christians must know that hope doesn't deceive and doesn't disappoint. All is born to blossom in an eternal springtime."

And so, Pope Francis now enters the promise of eternal life in this, the Year of Hope, welcomed, we pray, by the God who inspired his first breath and who accompanied his last. We will miss him as our spiritual father, our bridge of unity, and our leader in faith. We entrust him to the mercy of the Father. We give thanks for the life and ministry of Pope Francis who has shown us how to be pilgrims of hope. We offer our prayers for him, confident that the loving arms of his merciful God are opened for him: 'welcome, good and faithful servant.'

May Pope Francis rest in peace.

+Greg Bennet
Bishop of Sale