

# In memory of Pope Francis

Amidst the joy of Easter, with deep sorrow and profound gratitude we mourn the death of Pope Francis.

His leadership of the Catholic Church over the last twelve years has been exemplary. His simplicity, humility, and deep compassion have attracted many to the Gospel message he shared through his teachings and his life as a bridge-builder between faiths, a voice for the voiceless, and a tireless advocate for the dignity of every person and the healing of our common home.

His life resonates strongly with the three-fold commitment embodied in the Sion charism: “to the Church, to the Jewish people, and to a world of justice, peace and love”.

## Jewish-Christian and interfaith dialogue

Pope Francis expanded the Church’s commitment to dialogue beyond its borders. He engaged openly with other faith traditions, extending hands of friendship and respect to Jewish, Muslim and other religious communities and condemning antisemitism.

In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis wrote:

*“Approaching, speaking, listening, looking at, coming to know and understand one another, and to find common ground: all these things are summed up in the one word ‘dialogue’. If we want to encounter and help one another, we have to dialogue.”*

These were not mere words for Francis; they reflected the way he lived. He placed great importance on building and maintaining relationships with Jews, people of other faiths, and those with no religious affiliation.

In the same paragraph, he wrote:

*“Unlike disagreement and conflict, persistent and courageous dialogue does not make headlines, but quietly helps the world to live much better than we imagine.”*

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Francis reminded us:

*“The Church, which shares with Jews an important part of the sacred Scriptures, looks upon the people of the covenant and their faith as one of the sacred roots of her own Christian identity.”*

The Pope invites us to read our shared Scriptures “together and to help one another to mine the riches of God’s Word”. He reminds us that we “share many ethical convictions and a common concern for justice and the development of peoples”.

## Eco-social justice

In Pope Francis, we encountered a pastor deeply attuned to the signs of the times. His leadership called the global Church into deeper solidarity with the poor and a renewed reverence for creation.

His vision of *integral ecology* – a recognition that the fate of the Earth is bound to the fate of the marginalised – reshaped how we understand and live our commitment to social justice.

In his apostolic exhortation *Laudate Deum* (2023), he wrote with urgency and clarity:

*“The impact of climate change will increasingly prejudice the lives and families of many persons. We will feel its effects in the areas of healthcare, sources of employment, access to resources, housing, forced migrations, etc.”*

For Pope Francis, ecological care was never separate from human dignity. He challenged the global community, and especially people of faith, to confront the systems that destroy both land and lives, and to walk humbly with the poor as we seek new ways of living together in right relationship.

In his 2022 Angelus address, he reminded us:

*“The Gospel calls us to be neighbors to the smallest and most abandoned, to give them a voice and to walk with them.”*

These words echo our own mission. He taught us not only to serve, but to listen, to encounter Christ in those on the margins, and to let that encounter transform our hearts.

## Peace

Pope Francis also emerged as a global peacemaker in an era of deep division and war. In his 2024 World Day of Peace message, he proclaimed:

*“Peace is built by pursuing justice. It is not the result of mere tolerance, but of fraternity that finds expression in dialogue and co-operation.”*

These words resonate powerfully in today’s fractured world, amid wars in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, and so many unseen corners of suffering. His relentless appeals for ceasefires, humanitarian corridors, and honest dialogue were born not of politics, but of deep compassion and conviction in the Gospel of peace.

## A legacy of hope

As we remember Pope Francis, a true disciple of Christ, we are inspired by the legacy he leaves behind: a Church more outward-facing, more merciful, more rooted in the Gospel of justice. We carry forward his mission with renewed resolve to protect the Earth, to walk with the poor, to labour for peace, and to listen across boundaries of faith and culture.

May he rest in the eternal peace of the God he served so faithfully. And may we, in his spirit, be women of compassion, dialogue, and communion.

In hope and remembrance,

The Sisters of Notre Dame de Sion/ The Sisters of Our Lady of Sion