

The Death of Pope Francis
Nine Days of Mourning **21 April – 29 April 2025**
Day 1 – 21 April

Scripture **Matthew 28:8 15**

And the women came up to him and, falling down before him, clasped his feet.
Then Jesus said to them,
*‘Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee;
they will see me there’.*

Reflection

Our reaction to the fragile image of Pope Francis yesterday, Easter Sunday, 20 April 2025 is compounded by the sadness we feel on hearing of his death early today. Writing about the Holy Father’s appearance on Palm Sunday, a week ago, Johnson Kotaram, described “a fragile old man in a striped poncho, worn black trousers, and oxygen tubing, rolling quietly through the grandeur of St. Peter’s Basilica – this was not the Pope as prince or priest...this was the Pope as a reminder that grace may arrive not dressed in white but in weakness.”

In today’s Gospel we meet Jesus, risen from the dead, not clinging to the veneration of the women but commissioning them to spread the Good News to the other disciples because another chapter awaited them in Galilee.

Pope Francis has left us tasks too and many more chapters as we continue his mission to the poor and marginalised, to those experiencing homelessness and war, to the hungry and thirsty – all to be done with his customary humility.

Prayer

Let us pray,

Risen Jesus,
Accompany us on our journey of sadness
as you walked with the disciples on the road to Emmaus.
Help us respond to our calling, follow Your example
and the witness of Pope Francis to be there for each other,
in a spirit of solidarity as sisters and brothers.
Give us the courage to broaden our horizons
and reach out to those who need Your light,
no matter who they are or where they come from.
We ask this in Your name. Amen.

The Death of Pope Francis
Nine Days of Mourning
Day 2 – 22 April

21 April – 29 April 2025

Scripture John 20:16

“Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’
She turned and said to him in Hebrew ‘Rabbouni’,
which means Teacher”.

Reflection

It was when Jesus called her by name that Mary Magdalene recognised the one she had presumed to be the gardener, as her ‘Teacher’. The closeness they had shared, broken by death was restored anew in the light of the resurrection and the calling of her name. He entrusted her to share this news with the other disciples.

Pope Francis highlighted the ‘genius of woman’ in feminine styles of holiness which he said were ‘an essential means of reflecting God’s holiness in the world.’

In his Apostolic Exhortation – *Gaudete et Exsultate* (2018) on holiness- the Holy Father continued:

‘Indeed, in times when women tended to be most ignored or overlooked, the Holy Spirit raised up saints whose attractiveness produced new spiritual vigour and important reforms in the Church.’

Later in this document, Pope Francis describes the Beatitudes as a ‘Christian’s identity card’ ...we have to do each in our own way, what Jesus told us in the Sermon on the Mount.’

Prayer The Beatitudes of Pope Francis (Sweden – 2016)

Let us pray,

Blessed are those who remain faithful while enduring evils inflicted on them by others and forgive them from their heart.

Blessed are those who look into the eyes of the abandoned and marginalised and show their closeness.

Blessed are those who see God in every person and strive to make others also discover him.

Blessed are those who protect and care for our common home.

Blessed are those who renounce their own comfort in order to help others.

Blessed are those who pray and work for full communion between Christians

The Death of Pope Francis
Nine Days of Mourning
Day 3 – 23 April

21 April – 29 April 2025

Scripture Acts 3:6

Peter said, “I have neither silver nor gold,
but what I do have I give you:
in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise and walk.”
Then Peter took him by the right hand and raised him up,
and immediately his feet and ankles grew strong.
He leaped up, stood, and walked around,
and went into the temple with them,
walking and jumping and praising God.

Reflection The Wisdom of Pope Francis

Everyone has experienced some degree of despair that “makes us feel as if our soul were crushed,” unable to breathe and perhaps even eager for death, Pope Francis said.

“We have to understand when our spirit is in this state of extended sadness, where there is almost no air. This happens to all of us” to some degree, he said.

So then what should people do when they go through “these dark moments because of a family tragedy, an illness, something that brings me down?” he asked. In times of hopeless, spiritual despair, he said, the answer is to pray hard, just like Job, who cried out day and night for God to listen.

The Pope of Hope

*The Message of Pope Francis this Jubilee Year for World Day of the Sick 2025 focused on hope and led with the quotation ‘**hope does not disappoint**’ from Romans 5:5. This was supported by a phrase ‘**but strengthens us in times of trial**’.*

Let us pray, in the spirit of Pope Francis, for all who are sick today:

God of tenderness and healing,
Be with those who are ill in their struggle at this time.
Fill them with Christian hope that does not disappoint
and strengthen them in this time of trial.
May they who are supported by so many in prayer
be lifted up on the wings of our intercessions.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.
May Mary, who stood at the cross of her Son comfort the sick today.
A Mhuire na nGrás, a Mháthair Mhic Dé, Go gcuire tú ar a leas iad.

The Death of Pope Francis
Nine Days of Mourning
Day 4 – 24 April

21 April – 29 April 2025

Scripture **Luke 24:35-36**

The disciples of Jesus recounted what had taken place along the way, and how they had come to recognize him in the breaking of bread. While they were still speaking about this, he stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you."

Reflection **Pope Francis**

"Peace is not just the absence of war, but a general condition in which the human person is in harmony with himself, with nature and with others. ... Nevertheless, silencing arms and stopping outbreaks of war remain the unavoidable conditions for embarking on a journey toward the attainment of peace in its different forms. I think of the conflicts that still cause bloodshed in too many regions of the planet, of tensions in families and communities — in how many families, communities, and even parish communities, there is war! — as well as the sharp divisions in our cities and towns between groups of different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. We must convince ourselves that, despite all appearances to the contrary, harmony is always possible, at every level and in every situation. There is no future without proposals and projects for peace! There is no future without peace!"

Prayer **Adapted from A Prayer for Sudan by Suzie Brouard - CAFOD**

Let us pray together

God of tenderness,

Be with all people caught up in conflict at the present time:

With those who harbour thoughts of ethnic hatred and violence

Pour love into their hearts.

With those who have fled their homes with nothing

Give strength to their limbs.

With those who search for food, water and safety

Lead them to a peaceful place to rest.

With those who are exhausted and despairing

Give hope to their uncertain future.

God of tenderness, we ask you, be with your people today.

Amen.

The Death of Pope Francis
Nine Days of Mourning **21 April – 29 April 2025**
Day 5 – 25 April
Feast of Saint Mark the Evangelist

Scripture **Mark 16:15-20**

Jesus appeared to the Eleven and said to them:
“Go into the whole world
and proclaim the Good News to every creature.

Reflection

“LAUDATO SI’, mi’ Signore” – “Praise be to you, my Lord” - is the proclamation of Good News to all creatures. In this letter Pope Francis invites us to consider our shared responsibility for the world in which we live and our connectedness with all living beings and the all the gifts of creation. The letter begins in this way: ‘In the words of the beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. “Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs”. (*Laudato Si* 1.)

We can also get one insight into why the Pope chose the name ‘Francis’ after the one he called the ‘Icon of Hope’ – Saint Francis of Assisi.

“I believe that Saint Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically. He was particularly concerned for God’s creation and for the poor and outcast. He loved, and was deeply loved for his joy, his generous self-giving, his openheartedness. He was a mystic and a pilgrim who lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself. He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace. “(*L.S.10*)

Prayer

All say: The poor and the earth are crying out.
 O Lord, seize us with your power and light,
 help us to protect all life,
 to prepare for a better future,
 for the coming of your Kingdom
 of justice, peace, love and beauty.
 Praise be to you! Amen.

The Death of Pope Francis
Nine Days of Mourning
Day 6 – 26 April

21 April – 29 April 2025

Scripture Acts 4:19-20

Peter and John, however, said to them in reply,
“Whether it is right in the sight of God
for us to obey you rather than God, you be the judges.
It is impossible for us not to speak about what we have seen and heard.”

Reflection

Peter and John could not remain silent about what they had seen and heard about Jesus. They were witnesses to all that had taken place. In that spirit we recall that the first Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis was ‘The Joy of the Gospel (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*) published in November 2013.

“THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew. In this Exhortation I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by this joy, while pointing out new paths for the Church’s journey in years to come.”

It is significant that Pope Francis will be laid to rest today in the Basilica of St. Mary Major – a place of deep devotion and spiritual strength for him. Pope Francis recognised that Mary was the bearer of the Good News into the world and wrote this prayer to her.

Pope Francis’ Prayer to: MARY – Woman of Listening

Mary, woman of listening, open our ears;
grant us to know how to listen to the word of your Son Jesus among
the thousands of words of this world;
grant that we may listen to the reality in which we live,
to every person we encounter, especially those who are poor,
in need, in hardship.

Mary, woman of decision, illuminate our mind and our heart, so
that we may obey, unhesitating, the word of your Son Jesus; give us
the courage to decide, not to let ourselves be dragged along, letting
others direct our life.

Mary, woman of action, obtain that our hands and feet move “with
haste” toward others, to bring them the charity and love of your Son
Jesus, to bring the light of the Gospel to the world, as you did.
Amen.

The Death of Pope Francis
Nine Days of Mourning

21 April – 29 April 2025

Day 7 – 27 April
(Sunday of the Divine Mercy)

Scripture **John 20:**

‘Peace be with you... Peace be with you...Receive the Holy Spirit ...For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven...Peace be with you.’

Reflection

The Risen Jesus greets the disciples with wishes of peace on three occasions in the one day, according to John. The power to forgive is granted to them in their reception of the Holy Spirit. Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013) wrote: “Let me say this once more: God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy ... Time and time again he bears us on his shoulders. No one can strip us of the dignity bestowed upon us by this boundless and unfailing love.” This continuous affirmation of God’s forgiveness has been a hallmark of this Papacy.

The Jubilee of Mercy followed in 2015 with its many graces and encouraging words. ‘From the heart of the Trinity, from the depths of the mystery of God, the great river of mercy wells up and overflows unceasingly. It is a spring that will never run dry, no matter how many people draw from it. Every time someone is in need, he or she can approach it, because the mercy of God never ends.’ **Misericordiae Vultus, 22**

‘The Church’s first truth is the love of Christ... wherever the Church is present, the mercy of the Father must be evident, in our parishes, communities, associations and movements, in a word, wherever there are Christians, everyone should find an oasis of mercy.’ **Misericordiae Vultus, 12**

Prayer

All say:

Let us pray,

God of peace, source of mercy,
Plant in us seeds of tenderness and generosity that will bear fruit
in the unfolding days ahead.
Water the roots of forgiveness and green the arid areas of our
lives with gentle drops of compassion.
Pour your living grace into our hearts so that we can be an oasis
of mercy wherever we are.
We ask this through Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Death of Pope Francis
Nine Days of Mourning
Day 8 – 28 April

21 April – 29 April 2025

Scripture Acts 4: 31

‘As they prayed, the house where they were assembled rocked; they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to proclaim the word of God boldly’.

Reflection

In his first encyclical letter ***Lumen Fidei***, Pope Francis said faith in Jesus Christ helps one to joyfully live life “on wings of hope.”

Constantly encouraging people to turn to God, the Holy Father opened the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope writing in ***Spes Non Confundit***: “Christian hope does not deceive or disappoint because it is grounded in the certainty that nothing and no one may ever separate us from God’s love ... The death and resurrection of Jesus is the heart of our faith and the basis of our hope.”

We usually hear that people are ‘rocked’ by scandals in the Church and not emboldened to go out and proclaim the word of God boldly. While we acknowledge the reality of the pain caused we can be inspired by the Jubilee message of Hope to move forward on our pilgrimage with boldness of heart.

In a message to participants in the **2022 “Holiness Today” symposium**, he said: “Without this joy, faith shrinks into an oppressive and dreary thing; the saints are not ‘sourpusses’ but men and women with joyful hearts, open to hope ... Blessed Carlo Acutis is likewise a model of Christian joy for teenagers and young people. And the evangelical, and paradoxical, ‘perfect joy’ of St. Francis of Assisi continues to impress us.”

Prayer The Jubilee Prayer 2025

Father in heaven, may the *faith* you have given us in your Son, Jesus Christ, our brother, and the flame of *charity* enkindled in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, reawaken in us the blessed *hope* for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel. May those seeds transform from within both humanity and the whole cosmos in the sure expectation of a new heaven and a new earth, when, with the powers of Evil vanquished, your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee reawaken in us, *Pilgrims of Hope*, a yearning for the treasures of heaven.

May that same grace spread the joy and peace of our Redeemer throughout the earth. To you our God, eternally blessed, be glory and praise for ever. **Amen**

The Death of Pope Francis

Nine Days of Mourning

21 April – 29 April 2025

Day 9 – 29 April

Feast of Saint Catherine of Siena

Scripture

Acts 4:32

The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed for his own use anything he had, as everything they owned was held in common.

Reflection

Pope Francis encouraged people to learn how to listen and walk together as one missionary Church at the conclusion of the 2024 Synod on Synodality.

“Everyone, everyone, everyone! Nobody left outside: everyone ... It is up to us to amplify the sound of this whispering, never getting in its way; to open the doors, never building walls.”

“How much damage the women and men of the Church do when they build walls, how much damage! Everyone is welcome, everyone, everyone!” he said.

In his **2018 World Day of Migrants and Refugees message**, he said: “The Lord entrusts to the Church’s motherly love every person forced to leave their homeland in search of a better future ... In this regard, I wish to reaffirm that ‘our shared response may be articulated by four verbs: to welcome, to protect, to promote, and to integrate.’

There is no doubting the courage and enthusiasm of Pope Francis for this return to the spirit of the early church in its inclusiveness as recounted in the Acts of the Apostles. Saint Catherine of Siena (14th century) knew very well the obstacles that are placed in front of those working for reform and change. Her sharp observations remind us that moving forward involves facing unpleasant realities.

‘When one is in charge, one often fails in true justice. And this is the reason: one is afraid of losing one’s status, so in order not to displease others, one keeps covering and hiding their wrong-doing, smearing ointment on a wound which at the time needs to be cauterized.’

Prayer

The Synodal Prayer

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts;

Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.

Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions. Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.

All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time,
in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Ame