



CURIA GENERALIZIA DELLA COMPAGNIA DI GESÙ

Death of Pope Francis

2025/06

TO THE WHOLE SOCIETY

Dear Brothers,

The Society of Jesus shares in the sorrow of all the people of God, joined together in the Church, in union with many other people of good will, at the end of the earthly life of Pope Francis. It does so with deep feeling and with the serenity born of the firm hope in the resurrection through which the Lord Jesus opened for us the door to full participation in the life of God.

We mourn the passing of one who was placed at the service of the Universal Church and exercised the Petrine ministry for more than 12 years. At the same time, we feel the departure of our dear brother in this *mínima Compañía de Jesús*, Jorge Mario Bergoglio. In the Society, we have shared the same spiritual charism and the same manner of following Our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are disquieted by his departure, and yet a deep sense of gratitude springs spontaneously from our hearts to God the Father, rich in mercy, for *so much good received* through the service of a whole lifetime and for the way in which Pope Francis knew how to guide the Church during his pontificate, in communion and continuity with his predecessors in the endeavour to put into practice the spirit and guidelines of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council.

Pope Francis kept a watchful eye on what was happening in the world to offer a word of hope to all. His extraordinary encyclicals *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli tutti* reveal not only a lucid analysis of the state of humanity, but, in the light of the Gospel, they also offer ways to eliminate the causes of so much injustice and to promote reconciliation. For Pope Francis, dialogue with one another, between political rivals or between religions and cultures, is the way to continue to propose peace and social stability, to create environments of mutual understanding, care for one another and support in solidarity. On many occasions, we listened to his words, his pastoral reflection and we admired his tireless activity, as he proposed initiatives or joined those of others, always convinced of the value of the word and of encounter. How could we forget the extraordinary moment of prayer he himself called for in the face of the coronavirus emergency in March 2020, in an empty St Peter's Square? Or the constant concern for peace in the face of intolerance and wars that threaten international coexistence and generate untold suffering among the most defenceless. Or the empathy of his heart with the immense flow of forcibly displaced persons throughout the world, especially those compelled to risk their lives crossing the Mediterranean.

In the words spoken on the evening of 13 March 2013, when greeting the faithful gathered in St. Peter's Square to celebrate the newly elected Pope, we already find two key dimensions



of his ministry: the importance of walking together, Bishop and people, on a path of fraternity, love, trust and hope; and the centrality of prayer, especially that of intercession.

The importance given to the development of the Synod of Bishops and the attention given to synodality as a constitutive dimension of being Church strikingly exemplify this “walking together”. In no way does it diminish the Primacy of Peter or episcopal responsibility; on the contrary, it allows it to be exercised with the conscious participation of all the baptized, of the people of God on the way, recognising the presence and action of the Lord through his Holy Spirit in the life of the ecclesial community.

The invitation to prayer, which he made that night to all the faithful, is impressed on our memory: *Let us pray together, Bishop and people. I ask you to pray to the Lord to bless me.* Throughout his pontificate, he concluded his speeches, including the Sunday Angelus, with the same invitation: *please do not forget to pray for me.* He never tired of reminding us how prayer is born of trust in God and familiarity with Him. In prayer, we can discover the secret of the life of the saints (cf. General Audience of 28 September 2022).

When he addressed us, his Jesuit confreres, he always insisted on the importance of reserving sufficient space in our life-mission for prayer and attention to spiritual experience. We need only recall what he wrote me in his letter of 6 February 2019, communicating his approval and confirmation of the Universal Apostolic Preferences: *The first preference (to show the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and discernment) is crucial because it presupposes as a basic condition the Jesuit's relationship with the Lord, in a personal and communal life of prayer and discernment. I recommend that, in your service as Superior General, you insist on this. Without this prayerful attitude the other preferences will not bear fruit.* He reaffirmed in this way the exhortation he made in his meeting with the members of the 36th General Congregation (24 October 2016), when he strongly insisted on the need to ask for consolation constantly, allowing ourselves to be moved by the Lord nailed to the cross who moves us to the service of so many crucified in today's world.

On that occasion, he pointed out to us something that we can consider an essential element of our identity. As if answering an implicit question about who a Jesuit is, Pope Francis addressed the Congregation and affirmed that *the Jesuit is a servant of the joy of the gospel* in whatever mission he is engaging. From this joy flows our obedience to God's will, our being sent to the service of the Church's mission and our apostolates together with our availability for the service of the poor. It is this joy that must characterise our way of proceeding so that it be *ecclesial, inculturated, poor, focussed on service, free from all worldly ambition.*

The call to the joy that comes from the Crucified-Risen One and his Gospel through which this consoling news is proclaimed has been a constant feature of Pope Francis's pontificate. It is not by chance that many of his magisterial documents, beginning with the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* which set the tone for his pontificate, have even in their titles this reference to profound joy that was for him something indispensable.

It is precisely on the basis of a living and life-giving relationship with the Lord, founded on consolation and joy, that we will be able to be *with pastoral activity, but above all with the witness of a life entirely devoted to the service of the Church, Bride of Christ, the evangelical leaven of the world, in the unceasing search for the glory of God and the good of souls* (Pope Francis's response to the congratulations of Fr Adolfo Nicolás on his election, 16 March 2013).



We remember with grateful hearts the discreet and constant attention of Pope Francis to the Society of Jesus, to our life and our apostolate. Many of you were able to meet him in various countries of the world because he always had time for frank and fraternal sharing with the Jesuits who lived and worked in the places he visited.

We accompany Pope Francis with our hearts and prayers in his definitive encounter with the God of unconditional love and infinite mercy whose face Pope Francis showed us with his life and teaching. Confident that the Lord is welcoming his faithful Servant to the banquet of heaven and moved by his example, we renew our desire and our commitment to follow Jesus poor and humble and to serve his Church.

Arturo Sosa, S.J.
Superior General

Rome, 21 April 2025
Easter Monday

(Original: Spanish)