

**Death of Pope Francis**  
**Reflection by Bishop Paul**  
**Tuesday, April 22, 2025**

When I heard the news of Pope Francis' death yesterday afternoon, it came as a shock. We knew that Pope Francis had been ill for some time, but he seemed to be gradually improving and on Easter Sunday he greeted the crowds of people from the balcony of St Peter's. Then he even drove around among the people in the square. So, to me, the news of his death yesterday was unexpected.

I have been pleased to see the coverage of his death on TV and on radio and in the newspapers. Many people have expressed their appreciation for the great service he gave throughout his long life, particularly in his twelve years as Pope.

I have happy memories of time spent with Pope Francis when I visited him in 2019 together with the other Australian bishops. He spent over two hours speaking with us. Each bishop had the chance to ask a question or make a comment. Pope Francis listened carefully and responded to each one. We sensed his deep concern for people. He was interested in the communities in our dioceses in Australia. He was interested in communities around the world.

He had particular empathy for those who were going through difficult times and he showed this in simple ways. Soon after he became Pope, his first trip outside Rome was to the island of Lampedusa, off the coast of Italy. There he met refugees driven from their homelands by war. For the past eighteen months, he phoned the priest in the parish in Gaza every day. Each day he assured them of his support and he prayed with them for the gift of peace.

When he first appeared on the balcony of St Peter's as Pope, he asked the people in the square to pray for him. He paused for a time of quiet and the whole crowd was silent. They prayed for God's blessing on his ministry as Pope. Today we also pray for him. We give thanks for his service to Christ and his service to people all around the world, particularly to people in great need. We pray that the Lord Jesus will welcome him into eternal life.

Eternal rest, grant to 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.