



## *His Eminence Mykola Cardinal Bychok CSsR*

### **Statement of His Eminence Mykola Cardinal Bychok CSsR on the death of the Holy Father, Pope Francis**

#### **Christ is Risen!**

On this Bright Paschal Monday (Easter Monday), when we continue our joyful proclamation that Christ is Risen from the dead, the news that the Holy Father, Pope Francis has ended his earthly pilgrimage has filled me with much sadness. This sadness is our human reaction to the death of a much-loved father.

As Christians we celebrate death believing in the mercy and love of God, especially in this time of Holy Pascha when celebrating Christ's conquering "Death by Death" by His resurrection. We pray that Pope Francis, of blessed memory, will hear the words of Christ "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master." (Matt 25:23)

On 7<sup>th</sup> December 2024, when I was raised to the College of Cardinals, I asked the Holy Father to pray for Ukraine, to help free stolen Ukrainian children and to pray for me in my new mission as an Australian – Ukrainian Cardinal. I now pray, that Pope Francis may intercede before Christ for the people of Australia and Ukraine and that God may grant me the grace to live my mission as a Cardinal of the Catholic Church.

Each Pontiff imparts his own personal character on the Church. The Holy Father Francis was a Pope for the marginalised and those on the periphery. He was a man of simple piety who strove to bring the church closer to people. He gave freely of his gifts and had a unique personal approach to all he met. He lived according to his motto *Miserando atque Eligendo* ("Lowly but chosen").

Pope Francis was a Pope of peace. In a world devastated by war he called for peace and justice. I am grateful for the late Holy Father's frequent appeals for a just peace in Ukraine and for the efforts of the Holy See that he oversaw, known and secret, that in some way helped bring relief to the imprisoned and suffering.

The Holy Father was a strong defender of life and the dignity of every person. He worked for the healing of divisions between East and West and for a greater understanding of other faiths, building on that which we have in common rather than our differences.

Building on the work of his illustrious predecessor Benedict XVI of blessed memory, Pope Francis apologised to survivors of abuse and set in place simpler procedures to deal with perpetrators. He began to implement a culture of safeguarding for the most vulnerable. Work that must continue into the future.

I ask all Catholics and people of good will to pray for the eternal repose of the late Holy Father giving thanks for his life and the gifts that he freely shared.

I also ask for your prayers for the Cardinal Electors that will be meeting in Conclave, that the Holy Spirit may enlighten our hearts and minds that we may choose a worthy candidate as the 267<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Rome and Successor of Saint Peter.

I am currently on my way to the Holy Land on a pilgrimage. I will depart for Rome as soon as practical to take part in the funeral rites for Pope Francis and to remain in the Eternal City to participate in the Conclave that will elect his successor.

**ENDS**

**PLEASE NOTE: Cardinal Bychok is unable at this stage to make any further statements as he is enroute to the Holy Land. Further information will be provided in due course.**

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