

POPE FRANCIS 'HUMANISED THE PAPACY' SAYS BISHOP OF PORTSMOUTH IN MESSAGE OF CONDOLENCE FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF THE POPE

The Bishop of Portsmouth has expressed his sorrow following the death of Pope Francis and recalled how the late Holy Father 'humanised' the papacy.

Bishop Philip Egan issued a heartfelt statement earlier today, following the Vatican's announcement that the Pope had died in Rome on 21 April 2025.

Bishop Egan said: "I am truly saddened to learn of the death of our Holy Father, Pope Francis. The Church and the world have lost a man who has worked so hard to 'humanise' the papacy, calling us all back to what is truly important in life: the love of God, the service of people, especially the poor and needy, the care of the marginalised and the care of creation.

"Throughout his pontificate, as much as any Pope before him, if not more, Francis spoke out against the injustices of our time, calling for an end to the war in Ukraine and for the care of migrants and refugees. He worked tirelessly for human fraternity and for peace. This was the Pope who famously washed the feet of convicts in Regina Caeli prison, and who moved the world when in St Peter's Square he tenderly embraced a young boy with cerebral palsy.

"He also promoted the internal reform of the Church, calling for an end to clericalism and abusive forms of authority and for a more synodal Church in which every member of the Church has a wider role in decision-making and planning.

"Today, we give thanks to God for this great man and for his contribution to the Church and to society. Let us pray for his well-earned repose. Let us commend him to the prayers of Our Lady, the *Salus Populi Romani*, ('The Salvation of the Roman People') to whom he had a great devotion, and to his patrons, St. Ignatius Loyola and St. Francis of Assisi. May he hear the Lord Jesus say to him: 'Well done, good and faithful servant; come and join in your Master's happiness.'"

In a statement which has captured the attention of the whole world, a spokesperson for the Vatican said: "He taught us to live the values of the Gospel with fidelity, courage, and universal love, especially in favour of the poorest and most marginalised. With immense gratitude for his example as a true disciple of the Lord Jesus, we commend the soul of Pope Francis to the infinite merciful love of the One and Triune God."

The Diocese of Portsmouth will release a prayer card this week, inviting all the faithful to unite their prayers for the Pope's eternal rest. It will read:

"We bid farewell to Pope Francis, commending his soul with much gratitude to the mercy of the Lord. O God, faithful rewarder of souls, grant that your departed servant Pope Francis whom you made successor of Peter and shepherd of your Church, may happily enjoy forever in your presence in heaven the mysteries of your grace and compassion, which he faithfully ministered on earth. Through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever."