



Catholic Diocese of Victoria

Office of the Bishop

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*"Blessed are those who die in the Lord; let them find rest from their labours
for their works accompany them." (Revelation 14:13)*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

With deep sorrow, we join the whole Church in mourning the passing of our beloved Holy Father, Pope Francis. His witness of faith, his tireless commitment to justice and mercy, and his humble service to the People of God have left an indelible mark on the Church and the world.

Pope Francis led with a heart modelled after Christ's own, calling us to walk together in faith, hope, and love. He was a man who led by his footsteps, walking the talk as a humble servant of the poor and the marginalized. His papacy was one of encounter, listening, and dialogue, urging us to care for our common home, to foster fraternity and social friendship, and to walk the path of reconciliation with humility and sincerity.

His letter, *Laudato Si'* (On Care for Our Common Home), resonated particularly with those of us who call Vancouver Island and the surrounding islands home. We live in the midst of such biodiversity and experience the ongoing challenges interconnected with land and water. Pope Francis' call to ecological conversion reminds us that we are stewards of creation, entrusted with the care of our forests, oceans, and wildlife. And at its heart, the encyclical invites us to care not only for the Earth, but for the human family who lives in the garden of creation.

The Holy Father's encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* (On Fraternity and Social Friendship) emphasized the importance of dialogue and social friendship, values that deeply resonate with the people of this Diocese. With the presence of the legislature and the government in the capital, the necessity of meaningful conversation and mutual understanding is ever-present. Likewise, Pope Francis' vision of fraternity speaks directly to our ongoing work of Reconciliation with the many local Indigenous people. His call to walk together in dialogue and respect challenges us to build bridges, seek justice, and foster a society rooted in compassion and shared humanity.

We will never forget his footsteps—or his wheelchair—rolling across Canada during his 2022 pastoral and penitential visit. His most memorable act here was his heartfelt apology for the Church's role in the abuse, cultural destruction, and forced assimilation of Indigenous Peoples. That visit was a profound witness to reconciliation in action. He carried with him not only words of apology, but a visible presence of humility and deep sorrow. His visit was a powerful affirmation of the path the Diocese of Victoria has long been walking: a path of healing, unity, and right relationship.

Pope Francis had an extraordinary sensitivity to human suffering. The son of immigrants himself, he never forgot the plight of the displaced. He wept for the migrants and refugees who perished at sea. He implored bishops and communities to do everything they could to support those who could not support themselves. His heart was always with those on the peripheries—those who the world overlooks.



We remember with gratitude his courageous leadership and prophetic voice, always reminding us of our call to accompany the marginalized, to seek justice for the oppressed, and to extend God's mercy to all. He embodied the Gospel's radical call to love, even in the face of great challenges, always inviting us to rediscover the joy of the Gospel.

As we commend Pope Francis to the loving embrace of our heavenly Father, let us take to heart his enduring legacy. May we continue his vision of building a Church that listens, a Church that heals, and a Church that walks together in faith and love.

I invite you to pray with me for the repose of his soul and for the Church he so faithfully shepherded:

God of endless love and mercy, we give you thanks for the life and ministry of Pope Francis. Welcome him into your eternal peace, and grant that his witness may continue to inspire us to live as true disciples of Christ. May his example of humility, compassion, and service remain with us, guiding us in the way of truth and love. Amen.

In Christ's peace,

Most Reverend Gary Gordon
Bishop of Victoria