



## **Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference**

**23 APRIL 2025**

### **PRESS STATEMENT ON THE DEATH OF POPE FRANCIS**

#### **A Disciple of Christ to the End**

The Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC) joins the universal church in mourning the death of Pope Francis, who passed away peacefully on Easter Monday. In a moment heavy with sorrow yet imbued with the hope of the Resurrection, we remember him not merely as a pontiff, but as a man who lived—and died—as a humble disciple of Christ.

We are deeply grateful to God for having given us such a strong, deeply spiritual leader—a man rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ, grounded in the Gospel.

His death came a day after he once again urged the world to seek peace—a fitting final public message for a man whose papacy was defined by his tireless call to return to our humanity. Throughout his life and ministry, Pope Francis called the Church and the world to open their hearts to the poor, the broken, the displaced, and the excluded.

He was unafraid to inhabit the spaces no one wanted to enter. Whether sitting with young offenders, washing the feet of refugees, or challenging powerful world leaders, Pope Francis consistently led from the margins, standing with those who had been forgotten.

Above all, he showed the Church how to listen.

In his discipleship, he promoted and encouraged the Church to be a Listening Church—a Synodal Church. To listen one must be willing to step into places that you are not comfortable being in. For Pope Francis, listening was not weakness but strength—it was the pathway to healing, justice, and inclusion.

His papacy embodied the radical simplicity of the Gospel. It is in his simple sharing of himself—the man with one pair of shoes—that he reminded us of the reality of God present who sends all disciples out without extra shoes to just get on with the job.

Francis also held a special love for Africa. In his numerous visits to the continent and his global advocacy for the Global South, he lifted up African voices and highlighted the dignity, resilience, and beauty of its people. He challenged systems that exploit the vulnerable and stood against the dictatorship of money, always pointing instead to our shared dignity in Christ and our responsibility to care for our common home.



## **Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference**

Even in his final days, frail in health but unwavering in spirit, Pope Francis continued to speak with clarity and compassion. Let us imitate his inner strength, his perseverance, and his refusal to let illness silence his voice, the Church in Southern Africa urges.

As we commend him to the loving judgment of God, we remember his legacy: peace over power, mercy over judgment, and simplicity over prestige. Pope Francis lived his life for this moment—this encounter with Christ.

May his soul rest in the peace he so passionately pursued. And may we, the Church he led, carry forward his message with courage, compassion, and joy.

**SACBC President**

**Cardinal Stephen Brislin**