

Words of Thanks at the conclusion
of the Requiem Mass for H.H. Pope Francis
24 April 2025
Msgr. Jan T. Limchua

Your Excellency, Bishop Johannes van den Hende, Bishop of Rotterdam, and
President of the Dutch Episcopal Conference
Your Excellencies,
Your Royal Highness, the Duke of Parma
Honourable Grandmaster of the Royal Household of King Willem-Alexander,
Mr. Chris Breedvelds, Representative of His Majesty the King,
Distinguished Members of Government and the Diplomatic Corps,
Dear Fellow Workers in the Lord's Vineyard,
Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Since the news of the passing of our beloved Pope Francis on April 21, the world has been wrapped in a profound sense of sorrow and mourning. We grieve the loss of a shepherd who, over the past twelve years, made visible the face of the merciful Lord in a world often scarred by hatred, division, indifference, and war. That his earthly journey concluded in this Octave of Easter—when we celebrate the triumph of Christ over death, light over darkness, and love over hatred—is itself a poignant sign of the hope to which we are all called: the hope that springs from the Paschal Mystery, where life has forever conquered death.

In my capacity as Chargé d’Affaires of the Holy See here in the Netherlands, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to each of you gathered here this evening, as well as to all those who have offered—and will continue to offer in the days to come—heartfelt expressions of sympathy and condolence from every walk of life: representatives of government, ecclesial communities, institutions, the diplomatic corps, and countless men and women of goodwill and faith, including people of different religious creeds and cultural backgrounds. Your presence and solidarity at this moment of remembrance are deeply moving and profoundly appreciated.

I would like to extend a special word of thanks to His Majesty the King, who not only personally conveyed his condolences, but has also graciously sent his personal representative for this evening’s commemoration in the person of the Honourable Grandmaster of the Royal Household, Mr. Chris Breedveld. This thoughtful gesture of solidarity is deeply appreciated and reflects the enduring and profound bond between this country and Pope Francis—a bond rooted in shared values of compassion, openness, hospitality, and peace.

I am also most grateful to His Excellency Bishop van den Hende, Bishop of Rotterdam and President of the Dutch Bishops Conference, and the entire people of God in the Diocese of Rotterdam for so generously hosting us in this

beautiful church, and for welcoming us into this sacred space of prayerful remembrance for the life and legacy of His Holiness.

Pope Francis lived his mission with the heart of a shepherd—fearless in truth, tender in compassion, and tireless in his closeness to the poor, the suffering, and the forgotten. His ministry extended far beyond the walls of the Church: he walked through refugee camps, hospitals, prisons, and struggling communities, always seeking to meet the face of Christ in others. Through the Synodal path he initiated, he called the Church to listen more deeply, to walk together in communion, and to discern the voice of the Spirit in the life of the faithful.

In his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, he taught us that care for our common home and care for the vulnerable are inseparably linked. He urged us to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor as one and the same call to conversion and justice. In *Fratelli Tutti*, he broadened this vision of solidarity even further—inviting us to rediscover our shared humanity. There, he called on us, men and women of goodwill regardless of race or religion, to reject the culture of exclusion and indifference, and to build a universal fraternity rooted in the recognition that we are all brothers and sisters, created in the image of God. He asked us not to remain passive before the wounds of the world, but to become neighbours—like the Good Samaritan—to those abandoned along the roadsides of life.

Pope Francis was also a fervent advocate for interreligious dialogue, believing that such conversations are key to fostering peace and unity in our world. His meetings with leaders of different faiths reflect his commitment to promoting mutual respect and understanding, and his conviction that we all share the moral responsibility to build a more peaceful world. He saw interreligious dialogue not merely as a tool for cooperation but as a pathway to healing the divisions that have so often plagued humanity.

As we honor Pope Francis today, we are not merely looking back at a remarkable life—we are taking up the vision and dream he left us. His legacy urges us to build bridges where walls still stand, to choose dialogue over division, and to walk humbly in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd, on the path of peace and solidarity. Especially in this Jubilee Year, let us move forward as pilgrims of hope—united in prayer, strengthened in service, and faithful to the Gospel's call to love without limits.

We can still picture that unsuspecting final farewell, when, on Easter Sunday, he waved goodbye to the world—offering a simple gesture, full of light and trust, as if quietly entrusting all of us and the Church into God's hands. It was a wave that now echoes with deeper meaning: a final blessing from a pastor who gave everything to the mission entrusted to him.

In his last message to the world—his *Urbi et Orbi* address delivered last Sunday—Pope Francis left us with these words of Easter hope:

“In the Lord’s Paschal Mystery, death and life contended in a stupendous struggle, but the Lord now lives forever (cf. Easter Sequence). He fills us with the certainty that we too are called to share in the life that knows no end, when the clash of arms and the rumble of death will be heard no more. Let us entrust ourselves to him, for he alone can make all things new (cf. Revelation 21:5)!”

These words, which might be considered his last testament, reflect the very essence of Pope Francis’s life—a life poured out in love and service, shaped by deep interiority and a tireless longing to make Christ known in every corner of the earth. In all he said and did, he pointed us back to Christ crucified and risen—the wellspring of our hope and the beating heart of the Church. His final Easter message was more than a farewell; it was a final witness to the Paschal Mystery he had preached through his life.

At this transitional moment for the Church, we pray with fervent hope and with one heart that the Lord may guide us and grant us a new pastor—a shepherd after His own heart—who will lead us into the next chapter of our journey as pilgrims of faith.

May the Lord welcome Pope Francis into the eternal joy prepared for His faithful servants. And may we, following the spirit of his example, continue to carry forward in bringing Christ’s mercy and the “weapons of peace”—justice, compassion, and dialogue—to a wounded world in need of healing.

May God bless you all.