



THE ASSEMBLY OF CATHOLIC ORDINARIES OF THE HOLY LAND
Latins, Melkites, Maronites, Syrians, Armenians, Chaldeans, Custody of the Holy Land

Prot. (3) 12/2025

Pope Francis returns to the Father's house

The Assembly of Ordinaries of the Holy Land raises its prayers to the merciful God to receive in his arms the soul of our beloved Pope Francis called to return from this world to the Father. In recent times he taught us by his example to carry the cross of Christ during illness. Now the Father has called him to celebrate the heavenly Passover.

From the beginning of his pontificate Pope Francis encouraged the Church “to continue, with joy, fidelity and enthusiasm, experiencing the richness of God’s mercy”¹. He warned us that “The great danger in today’s world, pervaded as it is by consumerism, is the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures, and a blunted conscience”. However, “the joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus”².

In his numerous apostolic journeys, he was a tireless preacher of peace and fraternity, recalling that “We are brothers and sisters, born of one and the same Father. With different cultures and traditions, but brothers and sisters all. And it is in respect of our different cultures and traditions, of our different citizenships, that this fraternity needs to be built”³.

Pope Francis pushed the Church to move fearlessly along the path of synodality, because “The world in which we live, and which we are called to love and serve, even with its contradictions, demands that the Church strengthen cooperation in all areas of her mission. It is precisely this path of *synodality* which God expects of the Church of the third millennium”⁴.

We remember with gratitude the love he showed for the Holy Land and its inhabitants during his apostolic visit in 2014. He came “to confirm in faith the Christian communities, who suffer so much, and to express the gratitude of the entire Church for the presence of Christians in that region and in the entire Middle East”⁵. The visit was on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the meeting between Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras in Jerusalem. In front of the Holy Sepulcher and in the presence of His Holiness Bartholomaios, he evoked the “prayer which we ourselves in humility never tire to make our own: “that they may all be one... that the world may believe” (*Jn 17:21*).

During the violent war raised from October 2023, Pope Francis showed in many ways his closeness to all those who suffer in this Land, especially to the Christians of our parish in Gaza, calling them daily by phone.

¹ Apostolic Letter *Misericordia et misera*, n.5.

² Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, nn. 1-2.

³ Video Message of His Holiness Pope Francis, First International Day of Human Fraternity, 4 February 2021.

⁴ Address of his Holiness Pope Francis Paul VI Audience Hall Saturday, 17 October 2015.

⁵ General Audience, St. Peter's Square Wednesday, 28 May 2014.



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Pope Francis guided the Church into the Jubilee Year 2025 with the apostle's words: 'hope does not disappoint' (Rm 5,5) encouraging us to be pilgrims of hope, in a world in which we walk between joys and sorrows.

Just as Pope Francis asked us to pray for him at the beginning of his Pontificate, so we also implore God for his eternal rest, now that he has finished his mission as a Pastor on Earth. May the Virgin Mary, *Salus Populi Romani*, whom he tenderly loved, welcome him into her maternal embrace.

Jerusalem, 22 April 2025

