

PASTOR'S THOUGHTS

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Pope Francis Dies at 88; World Mourns a Humble Shepherd

Pope Francis, the first Jesuit and the first Latin American pope, died peacefully on Monday at the age of 88. His passing at the Vatican marks the end of a historic papacy known for its focus on mercy, humility, and outreach to the poor and marginalised.

Born Jorge Mario Bergoglio in Buenos Aires, Francis became a transformative figure in the Catholic Church, championing dialogue, climate action, and social justice. His simple lifestyle and deep compassion earned him admiration across religious and political divides.

Thousands have gathered in St Peter's Square, where his body lies in state inside the Basilica. Mourners are paying tribute to a leader who called for a "revolution of tenderness" in a wounded world. His funeral Mass will be held on Friday, led by the College of Cardinals, with global leaders and faithful pilgrims expected to attend.

In accordance with tradition, the Pope's Fisherman's Ring has been destroyed, symbolising the end of his authority. Pope Francis will be laid to rest in the Vatican Grottoes beneath St Peter's Basilica.

The Church now enters a period of mourning as preparations for the next conclave begins. Pope Francis leaves behind a legacy of mercy, inclusion, and hope for the Church's future.

Prayers for the leadership of our churches is essential and is also biblical. *1. I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; 2 For kings,*

and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. 1 Timothy 2:1-2.
