



FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

The nonpartisan public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Florida

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Statement on the Death of Pope Francis

TALLAHASSEE, FL – The Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops joins with many others around the world in mourning the death of Pope Francis and reflecting on his life and ministry.

The Holy Father inspired us by his words and example. He continued in the footsteps of his predecessors, by consistently calling the human family to unity and solidarity motivated by the recognition of a shared dignity based on the intrinsic worth of each and every human person. He courageously called us to protect and uplift the most vulnerable, whether they be poor, sick, dying, the immigrant, or the unborn. By demonstrating love for those on the margins through such actions as his own personal outreach to the poor and his many visits to those who are imprisoned, he provided us concrete examples of how to love our neighbor.

In his encyclical letter, *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis exhorted the Church and the faithful to bring the message of Christ's love to the world by relating to one another through encounter, accompaniment, and patient and generous dialogue. It is this call to fraternity and fruitful exchange that guides our work as we seek to advance public policies that benefit all Floridians and build a society in which all can flourish. "Unlike disagreement and conflict, persistent and courageous dialogue does not make headlines, but quietly helps the world to live much better than we imagine." (no. 198)

Extolling Catholics to civic virtue, he urged the faithful to immerse themselves in politics and appealed for a renewed appreciation of politics as "a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good." (*Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 205) Yet, he called us to a better kind of politics, one that consistently sees the inherent dignity in others and is based on the practice of social friendship. He urged a healthy politics that is capable of reforming and coordinating institutions and of inspiring new ways of approaching the problems of today's world.

Pope Francis reminded us, "Today we have a great opportunity to express our innate sense of fraternity, to be Good Samaritans who bear the pain of other people's troubles rather than fomenting greater hatred and resentment." (*Fratelli Tutti*, no. 77). On this occasion of his death, let us honor the Holy Father by embracing this opportunity to encounter our brothers and sisters in a spirit of love and openness.

Please join us in prayer for the repose of the soul of Pope Francis. May he rest eternally in the peace of Jesus Christ whose love and mercy he proclaimed in word and deed.

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The Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops is an agency of the Catholic Bishops of Florida. It speaks for the Church in matters of public policy and serves as liaison to the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government. The archbishop and bishops of the seven (arch)dioceses in Florida constitute its board of directors.