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## Global Mourning as Pope Francis passes away at 88



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The world's 1.3 billion Catholics are in mourning following the death of Pope Francis, who passed away at the age of 88. The first Jesuit and the first Latin American to lead the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Francis leaves behind a legacy marked by humility, compassion, and a strong voice for the poor and marginalized.

Born Jorge Mario Bergoglio in Buenos Aires, Argentina, he became the 266th pontiff in 2013,

succeeding Pope Benedict XVI. Throughout his papacy, Francis championed reforms within the Church and sought to modernize its image. He was widely respected for his efforts to promote interfaith dialogue, address climate change, and support migrants and refugees.

His simple lifestyle, refusal to live in the ornate papal apartments, and messages of inclusion won admiration across the globe. He consistently advocated for peace, justice, and mercy, often challenging global leaders on moral grounds.

In the Vatican, flags have been lowered to half-mast as faithful gather in St. Peter's Square to pray and pay their respects. World leaders, religious figures, and communities across all continents have expressed their condolences, reflecting the profound impact of his spiritual leadership.

The Vatican has announced that funeral arrangements will follow traditional protocols, with ceremonies expected to draw millions of mourners, including heads of state and religious dignitaries.

Pope Francis' passing marks the end of a transformative era for the Catholic Church. As preparations begin to elect his successor, the Church faces the challenge of continuing his legacy of inclusivity, environmental stewardship, and social justice.

His words, "The Church is a field hospital after battle," will long resonate as a symbol of his mission to heal, serve, and bring hope to humanity.