

29/10/2024

MESSAGE FROM BISHOP KEN HOWELL UPON THE DEATH OF POPE FRANCIS

Together with the priests, religious and lay faithful of the Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba I join my prayers upon learning the sad news of the death of the Holy Father, Pope Francis. His Holiness dedicated his life to serving God and the Church with unwavering faith, compassion, and humility. As we mourn this great loss, let us also celebrate his remarkable legacy not just as the head of the Catholic Church, but as a world leader. May we find comfort in our shared faith and the hope of eternal life.

I find myself this morning remembering my two meetings with Pope Francis. The first was as a newly ordained bishop in 2017 attending a program of formation in Rome following my ordination. The Pope spoke briefly with us all and met us with warmth and great interest. The second was the occasion of the Australian Bishops' visit to Rome in 2019. The Pope spoke with us for almost two hours where we discussed many matters with him in a very casual and relaxed meeting.

This is a great example of his style as Pope. He welcomed every person he met with warmth and with a deep respect of the dignity of every human person. It was here that his light shone out, especially in his respect and care for the marginalised. He preached that Christ came for all people, especially those on the peripheries of society, and it was here that he showed particular care and deep interest in their lives.

Pope Francis was obviously deeply moved by some of the terrible conflicts happening in our world. He regularly called for peace, and we could tell that his heart was broken by the senseless killing of the innocent, and the destruction of their homes and family lives.

So much can be said about this humble and sincere servant of Christ. Pope Francis showed us how to be "holy" in the very best sense of that word. He was deeply in love with Jesus whom he served with great devotion, and he showed this in the way he loved the Church and worked tirelessly to share the fullness of the Gospel message.

May he rest in the peace of the Christ whom he both loved and served with energy and devotion.

IMAGE:

Pope Francis w Bishop Ken Howell.jpg – Pope Francis with Bishop Ken Howell on the occasion of the Australian Catholic Bishops' visit to Rome in 2019. Picture supplied by Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba

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