

Dear Friends,

Praised be Jesus Christ!

As I write this letter I am filled with a mixture of emotions. I am writing this within the Octave of Easter, the eight days immediately following Easter Sunday. The whole celebration of Holy Week, the Triduum, and Easter Sunday was just beautiful. I went home on Easter Sunday joyfully. Then I woke up on Easter Monday to text messages from friends saying, "RIP Pope Francis". Still not totally awake, I started to scour news sources to see if this was true. It was. But how? He was just in St. Peter's Square hours before and gave the Easter Urbi et Orbi blessing. This leaves us saddened as we grieve the loss of our Holy Father. Indeed, this is a family loss.

It is no easy task to summarize a twelve-year pontificate in a few words. However, as I have read the memorials and watched tribute videos, what stands out to me was his desire to go to the margins. He said, famously, that we need to smell like the sheep. In other words, we do not stand on the sidelines at a distance. We get involved. He described the Church as a field-hospital for the sick and wounded. All beautiful imagery of what it means to be a disciple and the call to break out of our comfort zones. So many of his travels around the world were to countries that had never been visited by the pope. This was his way of telling the Church universal that these places are not forgotten. Sometimes he had even appointed Cardinals in places never considered before. I propose that if we wish to continue the legacy of Pope Francis then let us keep looking to the margins. If we want to honor his memory then we need to be at work in the field hospital caring for the sick and wounded.

I leave you with these two prayers. One, for the repose of the soul of Pope Francis. The other, for the conclave that is to come (or is underway).

O God, immortal shepherd of souls, look on your people's prayers and grant that your servant Pope Francis, who presided over your Church in charity, may, with the flock entrusted to his care, receive from your mercy the reward of a faithful steward. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Heavenly Father, we pray in union with the whole Church for the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Cardinals. May the Princes of the Church listen attentively to Your Spirit during the conclave. Almighty God, we pray that the conclave brings us a Pope who pleases You by guiding Your Church to grow in faithfulness to You. We pray together with the intercession of our Mother Mary and all the Saints. Please Lord, protect and guide your Church during this time of transition. Amen.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Rev. Aaron R. Laskiewicz

Pastor