



## OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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### **The Statement of The Most Reverend Salvatore R. Matano, Bishop of Rochester, upon the Death of His Holiness, Pope Francis April 21, 2025**

It is with great sadness, but also with joyful hope in the merits won by Christ's glorious resurrection, that the Diocese of Rochester joins with the Universal Church in praying for the repose of the soul of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, who returned home to the Good Shepherd, the Eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ, on April 21, 2025.

Pope Francis' motto on his coat of arms, "*miserando atque eligendo*," is taken from the homily given by Saint Bede, an English eighth-century monk and now a Doctor of the Church, who was commenting on the call of Saint Matthew. It translates to "having mercy, he called him." Pope Francis constantly called us to mercy. In his Apostolic Letter, *Misericordia et misera*, (*Mercy with misery*), written at the conclusion of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, on November 20, 2016, the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, he penned these words:

*"This is the time of mercy. Each day of our journey is marked by God's presence. He guides our steps with the power of the grace that the Spirit pours into our hearts to make them capable of loving. It is the time of mercy for each and all, since no one can think that he or she is cut off from God's closeness and the power of his tender love. It is the time of mercy because those who are weak and vulnerable, distant and alone, ought to feel the presence of brothers and sisters who can help them in their need. It is the time of mercy because the poor should feel that they are regarded with respect and concern by others who have overcome indifference and discovered what is essential in life. It is the time of mercy because no sinner can ever tire of asking forgiveness and all can feel the welcoming embrace of the Father."* (No. 21).

These works characterized the Petrine ministry of Pope Francis. Like Jesus, he reached out to the poor, the forgotten, the estranged, the foreigner, those on the fringes of

society. Motivated by the love of Christ Jesus, he reminded us recently that “*Dilexit nos,*” “*He loved us,*” (Encyclical Letter, *Dilexit Nos*, on the Human and Divine Love of the Heart of Jesus Christ, October 24, 2024) and Pope Francis wanted this love to extend to all God’s People. In this Encyclical Letter, he begins with these words:

“‘HE LOVED US’, Saint Paul says of Christ (cf. *Rom* 8:37), in order to make us realize that nothing can ever ‘separate us’ from that love (*Rom* 8:39). Paul could say this with certainty because Jesus himself had told his disciples, ‘I have loved you’ (*Jn* 15:9, 12). Even now, the Lord says to us, ‘I have called you friends’ (*Jn* 15:15). His open heart has gone before us and waits for us, unconditionally, asking only to offer us his love and friendship. For ‘he loved us first’ (cf. *1 Jn* 4:10). Because of Jesus, ‘we have come to know and believe in the love that God has for us.’” (*1 Jn* 4:16). (No. 1).

Imitating the love Pope Francis had for us, we now offer our heartfelt prayers, commending Pope Francis to the love and mercy of God as he crosses over the threshold from this life to eternal life. United to the See of Peter by the bonds of faith, hope and charity, we offer to God this successor to Saint Peter asking that he be welcomed into eternity by the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and that the Lord will bestow upon him the mercy and love that our Holy Father, Pope Francis, preached, cherished and lived.

We pray now for the College of Cardinals, representing the universality of the Church, that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit they elect a successor to Pope Francis to continue the Petrine mission of the Church entrusted to her by her founder Jesus Christ, the cornerstone of the Church. As the Vicar of Christ on earth, this new pontiff will be called upon to confirm and strengthen his brothers and sisters in the faith. (Cf. *Luke* 22:32).

Once more we are at the Sea of Tiberias and the words Jesus addressed to the first Pope, Saint Peter, will be addressed to Pope Francis’ successor: “Feed my sheep.” (Cf. *John* 21:17).

How blessed many of us have been to live during the pontificates of such faithful popes: John XXIII, who embraced the whole world in his universal call for renewing the faith in Christ; Paul VI, who gave his life to the Church with an undivided heart and never faltered under or feared the weight of the cross; John Paul I, whose humble and gentle manner in a time so brief revealed the heart of the Good Shepherd; John Paul II, whose charisma and dynamic personality captured the hearts of believers and non-believers alike; Pope Benedict XVI, the scholar, the theologian, the teacher, but above all that holy man who helped us in clear and simple terms to understand the mystery of God, the mystery which enveloped his life in his intimate communion with the Lord; and now Pope Francis, the apostle of mercy, the messenger of hope, the shepherd who sought out that lost sheep, the one who united his heart to the heart of Christ.

May the soul of Pope Francis, and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

*A Solemn Mass for the repose of the soul of Pope Francis will be offered on Friday evening, April 25, 2025, at 7:00 p.m., at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Rochester, New York.*