



Bishop's House
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23 April 2025

My dear young friend,

It is with a deep sense of sorrow that I write to you following the death of our Holy Father, Pope Francis. As the Bishop of our diocese, I want to express not only my own sadness, but also the love and prayers of the whole Church at this time.

Pope Francis served as our supreme shepherd with a heart full of compassion, humility, and courage. He reminded us that each of us is loved by God beyond measure, and he constantly called the Church to go out to the margins, to care for the poor, the lonely, and the forgotten. Through his words and his example, he showed us what it means to live the Gospel with joy and mercy.

Some of you may remember his visits to young people around the world—his gentle smile, his powerful challenges to live life generously, and his encouragement to be "builders of a better world." He often said that young people are not just the future of the Church, but its present. You are part of that present, and I encourage you to honour Pope Francis by continuing to walk the path he showed us: a path of faith, hope, and love.

We now pray for the repose of his soul. May he rest in the peace of the Lord whom he served so faithfully. And let us pray too for the Church as we await the election of a new pope, that the Holy Spirit may guide and bless those entrusted with this great responsibility.

In your schools and homes, I invite you to take a moment to reflect on Pope Francis' life, perhaps by sharing a memory or a quote of his that inspired you. Above all, let us remember that we are part of something bigger than ourselves—a worldwide family of faith, united in love, and always led by Jesus Christ, our Good Shepherd.

May Mary, Mother of the Church, intercede for Pope Francis and for us all.

Yours devotedly in Christ,

✠ David Oakley
Bishop of Northampton