



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

With deep sorrow, we join the universal Church in mourning the passing of our beloved Holy Father, Pope Francis. His Holiness has now entered eternal rest, leaving a profound legacy of faith, love and service to God's people. And for that, we are grateful.

Pope Francis was a beacon of hope in troubled times, a voice for the voiceless and a tireless advocate for the dignity of every human person. He proclaimed 2025 a Holy Year of Jubilee, aptly themed "Pilgrims of Hope." He shared with us his ideas for this year, saying, "For all of us, may the Jubilee be an opportunity to be renewed in hope. God's word helps us find reasons for that hope."

Through his teachings, writings and personal witness, Pope Francis demonstrated this hope by showing us the path of discipleship—one that is rooted in prayer and nourished by the sacraments. He constantly reminded us of our call to be instruments of peace and mercy.

In the coming days and weeks, we will share opportunities to come together to pray for the repose of his soul. And as we prepare to welcome our next Holy Father, let us also commit ourselves to living out Pope Francis' vision of a Catholic Church that goes forth, reaching out to all with the tender love of Christ.

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Lawrence T. Persico

The Most Reverend Lawrence T. Persico, JCL
Bishop of Erie