

## Requiem Mass Homily for Pope Francis

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Just one week ago, we stood together at the foot of the Cross. Good Friday—heavy with sorrow, shadowed by suffering. We remembered Jesus, abandoned and broken, taking upon himself the weight of the world's sin. And yet, in that place of darkness, we witnessed something deeply profound: a love that did not run away. A love that embraced suffering. A love that trusted in the Father even when the way forward seemed impossible. Jesus, our Lord, placed his life into the hands of his Father and believed—believed that God still had a plan.

And today, one week later, we stand in the light of the Resurrection. Hope has broken through the darkness. Death was not the end. The stone has been rolled away. In our Gospel today Jesus now sits with his disciples, eating with them, speaking peace to them, restoring them. What once seemed hopeless has now become the foundation of everlasting hope.

It is in that light that we gather today—on this Anzac Day of all days—remembering the sacrifice of many, and now mourning the death of one. We come to commend our beloved Holy Father, Pope Francis, to the mercy and love of God.

Pope Francis, like the Lord he followed, did not run from suffering. He too embraced the trials of this life. He trusted—often with no clarity of where the path would lead—in the hope that God still had a plan.

I remember vividly being in St. Peter's Square the night he was elected. The world waited in silence, and then—there he was. A simple man standing before us. No grand proclamation. No long speech. Just a gentle greeting: “*Buona sera... Good evening.*” And then, astonishingly, he asked **us** to bless **him**. The man who had just become the Vicar of Christ on earth—bowing before the people of God, asking for their prayer.

Not long after that, I met an Argentinian priest who knew him well from Buenos Aires. He was amazed in the transformation of his Cardinal. “What has happened to him?” he asked. “Where is the tired, aging cardinal who was ready for retirement?” Jorge Mario Bergoglio had his plans. He even knew which retirement home he would go to. But as he himself would later say, “God had another plan... and gave me a new lease on life.”

There is no instruction manual for how to be Pope. Instead he took the name and example of a humble friar who gave his life in service of the poor, St Francis of Assisi:

**Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.**

*Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
and where there is sadness, joy.*

Over thirteen years of faithful service Pope Francis allowed the Holy Spirit to lead him, to shape him, and to guide our Church. He lived not by a blueprint but by a trustful openness to God's surprising call.

He became a **pilgrim of hope**.

An early and striking example of this came shortly after his election. Vatican officials began requesting state visits, diplomatic trips, grand appearances. But Pope Francis had something else in mind. He wanted to go to Lampedusa—a small island off the coast of Sicily, where desperate migrants and refugees from Africa were being held in refugee camps. The officials said it was impossible. Soon after, Air Italia called the Vatican to confirm a curious booking: a man named Jorge Bergoglio had made a booking to Lampedusa. The Vatican officials responded quickly to arrange a more formal booking.

This was the first visit of 53 Papal visits he would make throughout his pontificate. It became a defining moment. He stood before the world and said, “I come as a pilgrim of hope and peace.”

Pope Francis lived for 88 years. He experienced hardship in all its forms. He served in the slums of Buenos Aires, washed the feet of prisoners, and called the Church to care for the earth as our common home. He lived through economic crisis, pandemic, and chronic ill health. And yet—*he remained full of hope.*

In the face of poverty, hatred, war, and despair, Pope Francis never gave up. Speaking on a visit to a war-torn nation in Africa, he said: **“We need to keep hope alive. And we need to give hope. Being a pilgrim of hope means choosing not to give in to despair.”**

In the last year we have witnessed his strength ebbing away and his body failing him as he struggled under the burdened by years of illness and age. In the face of this suffering, Pope Francis has lifted his voice one more time to the world, by proclaiming a Jubilee Year of Hope—a bold cry from a weary shepherd, calling all people to return to the heart of God, the God whose mercy who has no limits and whose love never fails.

This ANZAC Day, we also remember the great sacrifices made by others who journeyed into darkness for the sake of light. Who, like Pope Francis, were pilgrims of hope. Their courage, their self-giving, their vision for a better world—it echoes in his legacy.

Like our fallen service men and women gone before us, Pope Francis too has finished his race. The pilgrim has reached his destination. He has walked through this life as a messenger of mercy, a prophet of peace, a man of hope.

In the hope of the resurrection we pray, may our risen Saviour now greet Pope Francis, as we hope He has greeted all who have given their life in service of others: **“Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Master.”**