



OFFICE OF THE VICAR GENERAL  
ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK

MEMORANDUM

To: Brother Priests  
From: Joseph P. LaMorte  
Date: February 22, 2025  
Subject: Prayers for Pope Francis

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Grace to you and peace as we keep prayerful vigil for Pope Francis.

Catholic bishops throughout the country are calling on the faithful to pray for the Holy Father, now in critical condition in Rome's Gemelli hospital amid a week-long battle with respiratory illness.

As Jorge Mario Bergoglio nears the end of his earthly journey, it is a very old tradition that when asked to pray for someone, we offer an *Our Father*, a *Hail Mary* and a *Glory Be*. So, join people around the world in those three prayers for the His Holiness.

The Church in New York will observe the passing of his life in many prayerful ways. For now, here are some things to keep in mind.

- Upon hearing of the death of the Pope, church bells may be rung 88 times, the number of years the pope has lived.
- The intention of the Pope would be included in regularly scheduled Masses.
- There are three Mass formularies for a deceased Pope (*IV. Various Prayers for the Dead, 1. For a Pope*) which may be used during the nine-day period of mourning. These Masses “on the occasion of news of a death” would not normally be permitted on Sundays or feasts, but the cardinal archbishop, as chief liturgist of the archdiocese grants his consent for these prayers to be used on days marked R2 or R3 in the *Ordo Missae*.

- A memorial space could be established in an area of the church that does not compete or conflict with the significance of the altar, ambo, presider's chair, and tabernacle; it may include the lighted paschal candle, a picture of the Pope, a kneeler, candles to be lighted as part of prayer, and a book in which people may write prayer intentions.
- A spray of flowers or fabric draping could be used to decorate the exterior of churches. You may be able to borrow this from your local fire house. Black bunting is used on doors to mourn, and then be replaced with white and gold bunting after a new pope is elected.
- During the *novendiale*, requiem Masses may be celebrated in each parish or within a deanery. Before His Eminence departs to join the other cardinals in Rome, he will offer a Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral.
- The office of the superintendent of schools and the office of youth faith formation will be coordinating religious activities for the students of our parish and regional schools and high schools, and our religious education programs. Pastors, principals, and parish catechetical directors may meet now to prepare for these events.

More will be forthcoming as things develop.

*Heavenly Father, giver of life and health: comfort and relieve your sick servant,  
Francis and give your power of healing to those who minister to his needs,  
that he may be strengthened in his weakness and have confidence in your loving  
care. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.*