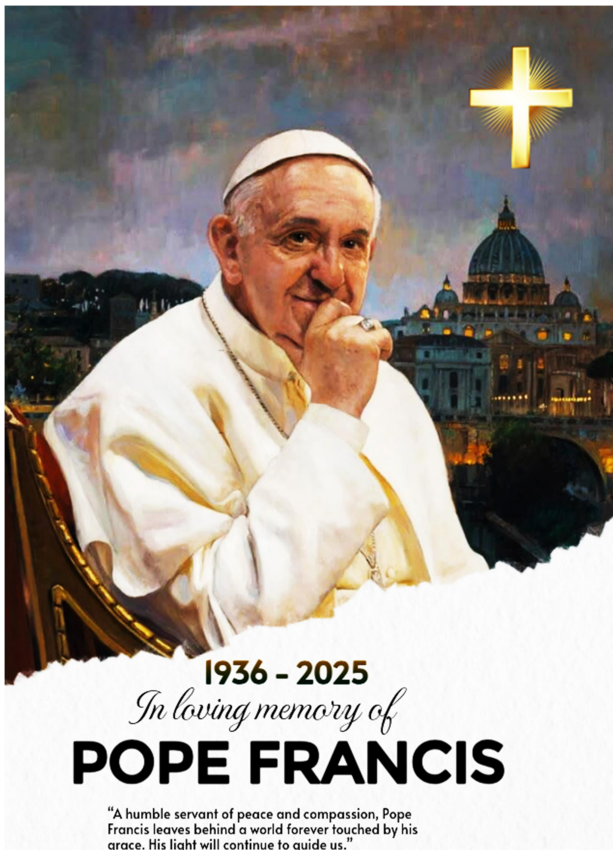


Interfaith Memorial Service of Pope Francis

Pope Francis dedicated much of his papacy (2013–2025) to interfaith harmony and global peace, emphasizing unity, compassion, and the dignity of every human being regardless of religion, ethnicity, or nationality. His efforts resonated across nations and faiths, earning him widespread respect as a moral leader and advocate for global fraternity.



On May 6, 2025, the Peace Center Lahore and Interfaith Council for Peace and Harmony hosted Interfaith Memorial Service to honour the legacy of Pope Francis. The event, organized by Fr. James Channan OP, Director of the Peace Center, and Maulana Syed Muhammad Abdul Khabir Azad Chairman Interfaith Council for Peace and Harmony took place at 125-B Pak Arab Housing Society, Lahore.

The memorial brought together religious leaders and community members from diverse faiths, including Muslims, Christians and Sikhs. More than 70 Interfaith leaders gathered to pay tribute to Pope Francis's enduring commitment to interfaith dialogue, peacebuilding, and compassion for marginalized communities.

In this Interfaith Memorial Service several prominent Muslim, Christian and Sikh leaders participated including; Fr Pascal Palus OP, Bishop Nadeem Kamran, Maulana Abdul

Khabir Azad, Rev Amjad Niamat, Qazi Abdul Ghafar Qadri, Fr Akhtar Naveed OP, Sardar Sikandar Singh, Fr Adil Ambrose OP, Fr John Joseph OFM Cap, Pastor Samuel Ahsan, Rev Dr Majid Abel, Rev Emmanuel Khokhar, Prof. Mehmood Ghaznavi, Samuel Payara, Sr Genevieve Ram Lal, Dr. Badar Munir, Allama Kazim Raza Naqvi, Dr, Saleem Massey, Asif Joseph, Iqbal Sani, Dr Abdul Ghaffar Randhawa, Chaudhry Zubair Ahmed Farooq, Allama Muhammad Abdul Rasheed Turabi, Mufti Ashiq Hussain, Pastor Nasir, Pastor Asif Khokar, David Sandhu, Allama Muhammad Arshad, Dr Zubair Ahmed, and several others.

Interfaith Memorial Service Opens with Prayers and Reflection on Pope Francis' Life

The Interfaith Memorial Service in honour of Pope Francis commenced with a solemn and spiritually enriching invitation by Mr. Asher Nazir, Executive Secretary of the Peace Center Lahore, who welcomed esteemed religious leaders to offer interfaith prayers.

Mr. Asher Nazir invited. Fr. Akhtar Naveed OP to lead the Christian prayer from Holy Bible, Mufti Muhammad Shafique for the Muslim prayer from Holy Quran and Sardar Sikandar Singh for the Sikh prayer from Guru Granth Sahib. Each leader offered heartfelt prayers from their respective traditions, creating a powerful moment of unity, reflection, and reverence that set the tone for the service. The diversity of voices echoed the very values Pope Francis championed—dialogue, fraternity, and peace among religions. Following the interfaith prayers, Fr. James Channan OP shared brief but moving words about the life and legacy of Pope Francis, highlighting his unwavering commitment to interreligious harmony, care for the poor, and global peace. He reflected on the Pope’s role as a global moral voice and bridge-builder, saying: “Pope Francis was not only a spiritual leader for Catholics, but a true advocate of interfaith dialogue and compassion. He taught us how to listen to one



another, to serve humanity, and to love beyond boundaries.” The event continued in an atmosphere of mutual respect and unity, celebrating Pope Francis’ enduring message of hope and reconciliation.

All Speakers admired the simplicity of Pope Francis, his love for the poor, needy and down trodden, refugees, and appeals for world peace, ceasefire and care of the nature and ecology and in fact advocated care and respect for the entire humanity and universe. Pope Francis was a true and humble servant of God. The legacy of Pope Francis will remain for ever. Towards the end of the service All participants prayed and thanked Pope Francis with lighted candles in hands. All Interfaith Leaders shared in their views that we are deeply saddened by the passing of Pope Francis. His loss is felt not only by the global Catholic community but also by people of all faiths and backgrounds who were inspired by his example of compassion, humility, and a commitment to justice and peace. Throughout his papacy, Pope Francis showed a deep commitment to the values at the heart of Interfaith harmony, ending violence, and building a more just and peaceful world. His voice was a beacon of unity in times of division, and he worked tirelessly to build bridges between people of different religions and beliefs and advocated for the most vulnerable among us. His legacy and his deep commitment to interfaith dialogue and understanding will continue to inspire our work for peace, Interfaith harmony, justice, and cooperation across all lines of difference.



Pope Francis was widely recognized for fostering Christian-Muslim understanding and promoting human fraternity. His historic visits to the United Arab Emirates and Iraq, as well as his co-signing of the Document on Human Fraternity with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, exemplified his dedication to bridging divides between faith communities.



Maulana Syed Muhammad Abdul Khabir Azad shared in his views that the passing of Pope Francis on April 21, 2025, Muslim religious leaders in Pakistan expressed deep sorrow and paid heartfelt tributes to his legacy of peace, compassion, and interfaith dialogue.

He said that President of Pakistan Mr. Asif Ali Zardari said that Pope Francis would be remembered for his efforts in promoting peace, social justice, interfaith dialogue, and the well-being of vulnerable communities worldwide. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif described him as a strong advocate of harmony and peace.

Globally, Muslim leaders recognized Pope Francis's dedication to interfaith harmony. Ahmed el-Tayeb, Grand Imam of al-Azhar, referred to him as his "brother in humanity," praising his support for the weak and promotion of dialogue among religions and cultures. Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani of Iraq acknowledged the Pope's high spiritual status and global respect, recalling their meeting in Najaf.

Fr. Pascal Paulus OP shared that Pope Francis will be remembered as a bridge-builder between religions, a tireless advocate for the marginalized, and a global moral voice for peace and justice. His leadership transformed interfaith relations and set a foundation for continued dialogue and cooperation among world religions.

Bishop Nadeem Kamran said that Pope Francis is remembered as a revolutionary pontiff who prioritized mercy over doctrine, compassion over rigidity, and who redefined papal leadership in modern times. His outreach to other faiths, environmental leadership, and commitment to the poor left an indelible mark on both the Church and the world.

Hafiz Kazam Raza Naqvi, remarked, "We are saddened by the Pope's death. He always worked for peace in the world; he was a great leader of humanity and will always be remembered." **Sardar Sikandar Singh** added that Pope Francis's service to Christian-Muslim relations was significant and unforgettable.



Qazi Abdul Ghafar Qadri praised Pope Francis for his soft heart and kindness, highlighting his ability to uplift peace flags and bring joy to Christians, Muslims, and other nations, highlighting his impact on peace.

Rev. Amjad Nimat expressed gratitude to God for Pope Francis' life and expressed happiness that different faiths and religious leaders remember the best Pope Francis gave the world.

Fr John Joseph OFM Cap expressed joy and feel pride in speaking about Pope Francis, stating that he showed the face of resurrected Jesus Christ globally.

Sr Genevieve Ram Lal expressed excitement about Pope Francis, stating that he presented a true picture of Jesus Christ through his work, deeds, and actions, and that his jubilee year theme, “Pilgrims of Hope,” will continue to resonate. Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* (2020): A call for universal brotherhood, social friendship, and nonviolence as solutions to growing division and conflict. Migration and Refugees: He championed the rights of displaced people, urging nations to welcome migrants with dignity and solidarity. Climate Action: Through *Laudato Si’* (2015), he united environmental concern with spiritual responsibility, appealing to people of all faiths.

Allama Badar Munir The speaker expressed his admiration for Pope Francis, stating that his death signifies not only the loss of Christianity but also humanity, emphasizing the importance of peace.

Sardar Sikandar Singh expressed sorrow over Pope Francis’ death, citing his example of love and peace, and his love for all religions.

Dr Abdul Ghaffar Randhawa: He is poet. The poet reminisces about Pope Francis's life and services through his poetry, offering a sincere tribute to him.

Dr Majid Abel expressed gratitude to God for Pope Francis' blessed life and emphasized his role as the Champion of humanity.

Rev Emmanuel Khokhar said that we are thankful to the services of Pope Francis and shared that Pope Francis contain many values like sharing, care and love. He always remains through his moral values.

Words of Gratitude from Fr. James Channan, OP
On the Occasion of the Interfaith Memorial Service for Pope Francis In the spirit of peace, love, and mutual respect, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the esteemed interfaith leaders who joined us today to honour the life and legacy of **His Holiness Pope Francis** in this sacred Interfaith Memorial Service. Your presence here is a powerful testimony to the unity that Pope Francis so deeply cherished a unity that transcends borders, beliefs, and backgrounds. Through his tireless efforts, he reminded the world that **we are all children of the same God, called to walk together in solidarity and compassion.**

The Peace Center, established in 2010 as a Dominican-led initiative for interreligious harmony, has a longstanding tradition of promoting unity among faiths in Pakistan. The memorial service for Pope Francis was a continuation of this mission, reflecting the deep respect held for the late pontiff across religious lines.

Your participation today not only pays tribute to his memory, but also continues his mission of building bridges of understanding between

peoples of different faiths and cultures. Let us carry forward his legacy by deepening our commitment to peace, dialogue, and service to humanity. May this moment strengthen our shared journey toward a world marked by justice, love, and harmony.

These tributes underscore the profound impact Pope Francis had on fostering interreligious understanding and his enduring legacy as a champion of peace and unity across diverse communities.

From the depths of my heart—**thank you.** May the soul of Pope Francis rest in eternal peace, and may our unity be a light in these times.

Closing Prayer by Bishop Nadeem Kamran

For the Soul of Pope Francis and for Peace and Unity Among Religions and Nations

Reported by:

Asher Nazir
Executive Secretary
Peace Center, Lahore

