

**STATEMENT OF ARCHBISHOP NELSON J. PÉREZ
REGARDING THE DEATH OF POPE FRANCIS**

Along with the people of the Church of Philadelphia and the entire Universal Church, I was deeply saddened to learn of the death of Pope Francis today.

In the midst of great sorrow, we also reflect on the gifts of the Holy Father's life and ministry with deep gratitude. He tirelessly served the Church for 56 years with great fidelity and zeal. As a Jesuit priest, university professor, local provincial superior, Archbishop of Buenos Aires, a member of the College of Cardinals, and Supreme Pontiff he exhibited selfless dedication on behalf of the souls entrusted to his care.

A man of prayer and intellect with a strong devotion to the Blessed Mother, Pope Francis entrusted the faithful to the mercy of Almighty God. He encouraged everyone to be an instrument of Christ's compassionate love by extending a kind and merciful hand to the marginalized and those most in need.

He challenged the Catholic Church throughout the world to respond to increasingly troubled times through genuine Christian encounter with the spirit of Missionary Discipleship. As a proponent of the synodal process, Pope Francis urged all Catholics to walk with one another on their faith journey with minds and hearts open to the movement of the Holy Spirit. His rich pastoral legacy is a blessing that leaves an indelible and profoundly positive mark on the life of the Church around the world.

Pope Francis will always hold a special place in the heart of the Philadelphia region. His visit to our city almost a decade ago for the World Meeting of Families—Philadelphia 2015 brought us immeasurable joy. That moment in time remains a precious gift that will not be forgotten.

From his many apostolic visits around the globe to be among his flock, to his inspiring teachings, to his consistent call for peace and social justice, Pope Francis invited all people to encounter the person of Jesus Christ fully and to serve their brothers and sisters with love and humility as instruments of grace. The life and Petrine Ministry of Pope Francis was a true blessing to the world. May his example bring us to embrace God's plan for each of us to serve Christ's Church on earth as Missionary Disciples.

I ask the people of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia to join me in offering prayers for the happy repose of Pope Francis' soul. May God grant him the gift of eternal life and bring comfort to a Church in mourning.