



Te Huinga o ngā Pihopa Katorika o Aotearoa

New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference

MEDIA RELEASE April 21, 2025

New Zealand Catholics mourn death of Pope Francis

Auckland Bishop Steve Lowe said Catholics across New Zealand are praying for the repose of the soul of Pope Francis and in thanksgiving for his servant leadership.

Pope Francis, who was elected Pope in March 2013, died on Monday evening New Zealand time. He became the first Pope from outside Europe in 1200 years and the first Pope from the Southern Hemisphere.

“While he didn’t set foot on our shores, we know the deep love that Pope Francis had for the Catholic faithful scattered across the world,” said Bishop Lowe, who is president of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference.

“Through his visits to places like Papua New Guinea, Mongolia and Indonesia, Francis knew the appeal and the impact of the papacy in all corners of the globe.”

Bishop Lowe said one of Pope Francis’ lasting legacies will be his encouragement for the Church to be a place of listening, of dialogue and of discernment.

“The Holy Father reminded us of the importance of walking together as the entire People of God – lay people, religious women and men, and clergy – following the path of Jesus,” he said.

“New ways of engaging with one another and new styles of leadership have emerged and are emerging, and we will have Pope Francis to thank for much of that renewal.”

Bishop Lowe said Catholic communities across New Zealand will be holding special Masses to allow people to pray for Pope Francis.

“There is an obvious and an enduring connection that we Catholics have with Pope Francis, but we invite our Christian brothers and sisters, other people of faith and people who are searching to join us in lifting up our departed brother in prayer,” he said.

“In that sense, we are following the Church’s practice of praying for any person who has died – albeit a Pope on this occasion.”