



DIOCESE OF SAINT JOHN

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Office of the Bishop

“The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew.” (Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium)

April 21, 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today we join with the universal Church in commending the soul of Pope Francis to the infinite mercy of God. His pontificate has been one marked by mercy and evangelization. His apostolic exhortation touched me so deeply that I adopted its title, *Evangelii Gaudium – the Joy of the Gospel*, as my episcopal motto.

For Pope Francis, a renewed encounter with Jesus was primary. His legacy will be one of seeking out the lost, sending us to the peripheries and finding Jesus in the poor, the marginalized and the forgotten. My most memorable encounter with the Holy Father was during my Ad Limina visit to Rome in 2017, where he asked the bishops to prioritize two things – prayer and sharing the Gospel. As we reflect on his life and ministry to the Church as a successor of Peter, what better way to honor his legacy than to embrace our baptismal call as missionary disciples sharing the hope that does not disappoint (c.f. Romans 5:5).

I would like to invite you to Holy Hour Vigil at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on Friday April 25, 2025 at 7:00 pm, as faithful throughout the world anticipate the funeral Mass for Pope Francis on Saturday April 26, 2025 in Rome. On Tuesday, April 29, at 7:00 pm there will be a Memorial Mass for Pope Francis at the Cathedral that I will preside. I encourage you to participate in any other prayers and devotions that are being offered in your parish.

With deep confidence that the Lord turns all sorrow into joy, we give thanks for the gift of Pope Francis to the Church and pray that he will be hastily received into the arms of the Father whom he loved so dearly in life. May the words of his final Urbi et Orbi message bring us comfort: “In the Lord’s Paschal Mystery, death and life contended in a stupendous struggle, but the Lord now lives forever. He fills us with the certainty that we too are called to share in the life that knows no end, when the clash of arms and the rumble of death will be heard no more. Let us entrust ourselves to him, for he alone can make all things new (cf. Rev. 21:5)!” (April 20, 2025).

In the mercy of the Risen Jesus, and Mary, Mother of Hope,

✠ Christian Riesbeck, CC
Bishop of Saint John