

## **POPE FRANCIS: A Magnificent Testament of Love for God and for Humanity**

Pope Francis has had — and will always have — a profound significance in my life!

His gentle and kind voice always impressed me, accompanied by messages of compassion and tenderness, even when addressing the most challenging issues. The sweetness and serenity with which he spoke to all of us deeply touched my heart.

In the most dramatic moments, however, he never lacked the energy and courage to denounce injustices and defend the poor and marginalized. The love he showed for the sick and the imprisoned vividly echoed the Lord's call: "I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to see me" (cf. Matthew 25:36).

His testimony of love for God and for divine mercy, through his total self-giving to humanity, was essential in making the Lord's call to love visible to the world. He lived humility as one who feeds on the bread of the saints. In this way, he became a living witness of his papal motto: "Miserando atque eligendo."

His devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary revealed a singular purity and tenderness, which seemed to make him even more human, with a heart both pure and deeply affectionate.

At the Pontifical Academy for Life, it was possible to witness the Holy Father's openness to scientific knowledge, always understood in the light of the primacy of human dignity. For him, the centrality of the human person reflected the living presence of the Risen Lord, who moved and stirred him.

But perhaps what most deeply touched me throughout his pontificate was his absolute surrender to God's will in the Petrine Ministry and his extraordinary sense of fraternity with each person who had the joy and privilege of encountering him. To the pastor passionately dedicated to the evangelizing mission entrusted to him by the Lord, Pope Francis added the universal brother — one whose presence transformed every meeting into a true embrace of souls. The brother-Pope was a remarkable experience for the history of humanity! His fruits, like those of the good tree, will surely multiply for the glory of God.

Praise be to God for the gift of the Holy Father, Pope Francis!

Thank you, Holy Father, for your love for all and for each one of us!

May you rest in the peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ!

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