



PRESS STATEMENT

CWC Mourns the Loss of Pope Francis, Champion of Inclusivity and Church Reform

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The Catholic Women's Council (CWC) joins the global community in profound grief as we mourn the passing of Pope Francis. His death marks the end of a transformative papacy that brought renewed hope to women, marginalized communities, and all who yearn for a more inclusive and compassionate Church.

As a global coalition of Catholic women's organizations advocating for the full participation and equality of women in the Church, we recognize Pope Francis as a pivotal figure who opened doors that had remained closed for centuries. His historic reform of the Roman Curia, allowing lay men and women to lead Vatican offices—positions traditionally reserved for cardinals and bishops—was an important first step in creating a truly synodal Church where all baptized faithful share in its mission and governance. We especially honour his groundbreaking convocation of the Synod on Synodality, where for the first time in Church history, women, lay men, and bishops deliberated and made decisions together was a promising beginning moving the Church towards creating a new model of inclusive ecclesial discernment that will shape the Church for generations to come.

Francis was the first to acknowledge the blame placed on the patriarchal system for evils such as human trafficking and gender-based violence. He also fought to reform corruption within the Church and the abuses caused by clericalism. Francis understood that the Church is impoverished when it fails to recognize the gifts, talents, and leadership of women. His reforms were not merely organizational changes but profound statements about the nature of the Church as the People of God journeying together.

His famous words, "Who am I to judge?" and his insistence on respecting the dignity of every person created a space for dialogue and healing where previously there had been only judgment and exclusion.

CWC recognises the powerful symbolism when Pope Francis broke with tradition to wash the feet of women prisoners during a Holy Thursday in 2013. This gesture, challenging centuries of exclusionary practice, spoke more eloquently than words about his vision for a Church that recognizes the equal dignity of all baptized persons.

While celebrating these significant steps forward, the Catholic Women's Council also acknowledges that the journey toward full equality for women in the Church is in its earliest stages. If the Church has to realize the Gospel vision of becoming an inclusive and egalitarian community in today's world, then structural changes are imperative. Inspired by Pope Francis' legacy, we commit ourselves to continue to work for a Church where women's full equality is achieved.

We call upon all members of the Church to honour Pope Francis's memory by renewing our commitment to the synodal path where women, lay men, and bishops walk together in listening, dialogue, and shared decision-making. This inclusive approach to Church governance, embodied in the historic Synod on Synodality, must continue to evolve as his most enduring legacy.

About the Catholic Women's Council:

The Catholic Women's Council (CWC) is a global umbrella coalition of over 44 Catholic women's organizations advocating for the equal dignity and rights of women within the Catholic Church. CWC works toward shared decision-making and leadership roles for women, promotes gender equality in Church structures and ministries, supports women's theological voice in Church reforms, and builds solidarity among Catholic women worldwide.

For more information:

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