



**Office of the Bishop**  
Roman Catholic Diocese of Lubbock

**REFLECTION FROM BISHOP ROBERT M. COERVER  
ON THE DEATH OF POPE FRANCIS**

April 23, 2025

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I'd like to share with you a few reflections regarding the death of our beloved Pope Francis.

When Pope Francis was presented to the crowd gathered in Saint Peter's Square, after his election on March 13, 2013, the world knew that change was at hand. A Jesuit from South America elected pope — that seemed unthinkable.

I was intrigued by his election, but he looked unsure and almost afraid, but then he asked for a moment of prayer and silence fell upon the square as I watched on television. And he set the stage for his own style of humble, spiritual, and pastoral leadership.

In the first weeks of his papacy, I was struck by his practical preaching — his clear eyes bulging as he preached— and his wry smile. In his role as Pope, he proved early on to be unafraid to speak out, especially on behalf of the poor and marginalized.

He encouraged the Universal Church, the Body of Christ on Earth, to exercise the very mercy Christ manifested in His life and ministry. He encouraged the Church to be more welcoming and outward focused, not so concerned about internal hierarchical affairs, but instead to reach out to those on the peripheries and to widen the space of its tent on behalf of welcome, inclusion, and unity.

I feel a personal closeness to this particular Bishop of Rome. He is responsible — for some inexplicable reason— for appointing me the third Bishop of Lubbock in September 2016.

I was blessed to meet him personally in September of 2017, when I was in Rome for the annual gathering of new bishops appointed in the past year. When I shook his hand on that occasion and mentioned being from Texas, he showed knowledge of tragic flooding, which had recently occurred in the Houston area a few weeks before.

Then in January of 2020, I was with the bishops of Texas Oklahoma in Arkansas when we gathered in Rome for our mandatory periodic meeting with the Pope and the Vatican departments. On that occasion, the Pope visited with us for 2 1/2 hours and engaged with us in open dialogue and allowed us to ask him any question we wanted to pose.

I actually expressed gratitude to him for his refreshing openness and then encouraged continuing dialogue on several issues active in the church at the time. He, then, shook hands with each of us, smiling and looking each of us squarely in the eye.

*-Continues-*

I believe Pope Francis will be remembered for his focus on mercy, calling us to be pilgrims of hope during this jubilee year, wishing that our faith in Jesus Christ and the life of the Church be marked by joy – the joy of the Gospel.

He encouraged encounter with the person of Jesus and encounter with all our brothers and sisters of whatever opinion, lifestyle, ethnicity, or religious background. His wish was that relationship among all people be marked by interpersonal closeness.

He consistently reminded all people of our need to be responsible as stewards of our common home, the Earth. And he was a constant advocate for the unity of all people because we are all brothers and sisters.

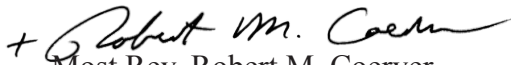
His final words in his Easter Sunday blessing to Rome and to the world were poignant, I believe.

“In the Lord’s Pascal Mystery, death and life contended in a stupendous struggle, but the Lord now lives forever. He fills us with 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.

His last words before saying, “Happy Easter to you all.”

And so now, friends, we entrust our beloved Pope Francis to the Lord. May he rest in peace, and may we, the Church, entrust ourselves to the Lord that in the discernment regarding His Successor to the Chair of Saint Peter, be guided powerfully and prayerfully by the Holy Spirit, so that, following the example and spirit of Pope Francis, all things will be made new by the grace of God.

God bless you, and let us pray for the repose of the soul of Pope Francis.

  
+ Robert M. Coerver  
Most Rev. Robert M. Coerver  
*Bishop of Lubbock*

---

**Most Reverend Robert M. Coerver, Bishop of Lubbock**

4620 Fourth Street  
Lubbock, TX 79416

(806) 792-3943  
rcoerver@catholiclubbock.org

Judy Leos Rodriguez, Executive Assistant  
jlrodriguez@catholiclubbock.org