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## REQUIEM MASS FOR POPE FRANCIS

Homily of the Right Reverend Dom Jean PATEAU  
Abbot of Our Lady of Fontgombault  
(Fontgombault, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
My dearly beloved Sons,

**A**S WE SING this morning a Requiem Mass for Pope Francis, it is outside our remit to make an assessment of his pontificate. Our remit is to pray for him, as he so often asked while he was alive, since he has just appeared before the just Judge.

Our remit is to give thanks for the fruits of the divine gifts, which from the very first years accompanied the Argentinian pope's life.

Among these gifts, we should mention the foundational experience he lived on the feast of St. Matthew in 1953. At that time, Jorge Bergoglio was 16 year old, and was following in a technical college a training in chemistry. As he went by the basilica of St. Joseph in Buenos Aires, a force compelled him to enter it. An unknown priest was there, hearing confessions. The Pope later acknowledged that he didn't know what had happened at that time, but that he had evidently "experienced Divine mercy", the loving presence of God, that he had felt "called", like

St. Matthew and St. Ignatius of Loyola, that he had been chosen by God to become a priest.

This great grace, received on the feast of St. Matthew, was an incitement to make a link with the call the soon-to-be apostle had received as he was sitting in his tax office. The evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke, tell us this episode. Jesus notices the man and invites him: “Follow Me.”<sup>a</sup> Such a call was totally unheralded, all the more as, due to his business, Levi, Matthew’s other name, was quite despised.

a. *Mt* 9:9; *Mk* 2:14;  
*Lk* 5:27.

What fascinated the pope was not so much the calling, as the look with which Jesus considered Levi; the very look with which Jesus considers each man, as a unique being; the look that on this day Jorge Bergoglio experienced. It is in this mystical experience that we may find the root of the call the Holy Father often renewed: allowing Christ to look at us, or acting under Christ’s eyes. The episcopal motto he had chosen, and which he kept as a supreme pontiff, bears witness to that fact.

*Miserando atque eligendo.* “Having mercy and choosing.” These few words are taken not from the Gospel, but from a commentary by a Benedictine monk, St. Bede, on the episode of Matthew’s calling:

b. *Hom.* 22;  
*PL* 94, 251 D.

Jesus saw a tax collector, and because He looked at him with mercy and chose him, He told him: “Follow Me.”<sup>b</sup>

Bede interpolates into the Gospel text two words expressing the feelings of Jesus’ heart when He sees Matthew sitting in his tax office and is going to call him.

Let us remark that the subject of the action is Christ Himself: He is the one who sees, who in His heart has mercy and chooses; last, He is the one who calls.

This motto invites us to hope in God’s mercy. Every man is the object of God’s mercy and is chosen by Him, were he even the most miserable of all men. He has received from God a right to existence, and is the object of a true love.

If such is the case, the look with which each man considers his neighbour should be a consistent reflection of God's look on this neighbour, and also an extension of God's look on ourselves. This most demanding motto invites us to beseech God to grant us the grace to consider and love each human being with the eyes and love of Christ on the Cross.

Pope Francis therefore wanted above all to be a shepherd, remaining at the same time at the head, at the tail, and in the midst of his fold, a shepherd with the smell of his sheep.

However, this does not mean falling into a moral relativism. Some had hoped for it. The pair *Misericordia et veritas*, "Mercy and truth," so often met in the Psalms, doesn't go this way. A mercy without truth will only be weakness and a mendacious covenant, whereas a truth without mercy will only be harshness.

The look with which Christ considers Matthew is a prelude to a call, "Follow Me." This call, while respecting the diversity of vocations and man's freedom, is universal. Therefore, the merciful look with which God considers each man expects an answer, and this answer is a look with which we consider Christ, and which incites us to imitate Christ. Christ's call then meets man's freedom. Besides the vocation of St. Matthew, there is Mary Magdalene. There is also the rich young man, who, after having met Christ, chooses not to answer His call.

Christ's look opens a path of conversion, that man must tread by becoming, according to the beautiful motto of Pope Benedict XVI, "Co-worker of the Truth". This truth is Christ Himself, Who is the Way, the Truth, the Life. Such is the path on which Jorge Bergoglio set out on the day of his calling, and kept treading until his death.

Proposing this look to our society of consumption and throwaway was something truly revolutionary. We are still at the beginning of a long road initiated by St. John Paul II.

Who better than the Blessed Virgin Mary could be our succour, our advocate, during these difficult times?

c. Jn 19:26-27

She is the one who, at the foot of the Cross, heard from her Son's very lips these words, addressed also to the apostle St. John: "Woman, behold thy son... Behold thy Mother."<sup>c</sup> The *Full of grace*, like a mother, accompanies every man on the road of his life, on the road leading towards God. Pope Francis showed his love of Mary from the very first moments of his election, at the beginning and at the end of each of his journeys, and even during the last weeks of his life, by having the icon *Salus populi romani* decorated with flowers, in the basilica of St. Mary Major. Today, he rests not very far from this icon.

May Mary keep watch over him.

Amen.

