



In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

"We all belong to God, and to Him, we shall return." (The Holy Qur'an 2:156)

With a heavy heart and deep sorrow, we received the news of the passing of His Holiness Pope Francis. He was a man of God, a great leader of the Roman Catholic Church, a brother to fellow religious leaders, and a father to all—especially the deprived and the oppressed.

The world has lost a luminous soul and a tireless advocate for universal fraternity, peace, and justice. Pope Francis embodied a rare depth of compassion and an unwavering commitment to human dignity and fellowship. His gentle yet resolute voice resonated across faiths, cultures, and nations, reminding us of our shared responsibility to care for one another and to protect the most vulnerable.

He was one of the living treasures of our time, whose presence gave us a deep sense of hope, purpose, and continuity. He reminded us that faith is inseparable from benevolence, and that wisdom flourishes only through humility and respect for others. He was a man of prayer who firmly believed in the value of prayers offered by people of all faiths.

Pope Francis taught us, in both words and actions, that bridges are stronger than walls and that the human spirit thrives in unity, not division. His historic visit to the holy city of Najaf and his meeting with His Eminence Grand Ayatollah Sistani "did good to his soul" and to all of ours. That moment, in a time of great challenge, marked a turning point. We pray for the day when such meetings are no longer extraordinary, but rather natural and frequent, where Popes, Grand Ayatollahs, and other faith leaders come together regularly and work closely in response to God and service of humanity.

To my dear Catholic brothers and sisters, I and other Shi'a members of Catholic-Shi'a dialogue, Wings of Unity and our interfaith network offer our heartfelt condolences. We grieve together, sharing the sorrow of this loss. Yet we remain grateful for the gift we received in Pope Francis and hopeful that his vision of a world rooted in understanding and love will endure, and that his successor will carry forward this noble path.

May his soul find eternal peace, and may his example continue to guide us toward a brighter and more compassionate future.

Mohammad Ali Shomali

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