

Pope Francis Has Died. Minister Crosetto: "We Offer Him Our Prayer, That of the Entire Defense Family"

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The entire world learns today of the passing of **Pope Francis**, Pontiff and spiritual leader of millions of faithful. His death leaves a void in the Catholic Church, but also among those who, even if not believers, have always admired his **moral strength, consistency, simplicity, and tireless commitment to peace**.

At the very beginning of this month, the Holy Father had appointed **the new Military Ordinary for Italy**, entrusting **Archbishop Gian Franco Saba** with a role of great spiritual and pastoral significance, at a time when the Church is called to reflect on its role in the most complex realities, often distant from traditional ecclesiastical structures.

Pope Francis has repeatedly demonstrated, during his pontificate, a **sincere and tangible closeness to men and women in uniform**. Unforgettable was the moment when, exactly a year ago, in April 2024, he received in audience a representation of the military engaged in

Operation **Strade Sicure**. On that solemn occasion, he was awarded the **Paratrooper's brevet ad honorem**, a gesture that symbolized a special bond between the Pontiff and the Italian Airborne Troops, recognizing in him a man of courage and determination.

A Revolutionary Pope, Even in the Church's Internal Debate

Pope Francis was a **revolutionary pontiff**, capable of shaking not only the world's consciences but also the foundations of more traditional Catholic thought. His choices, direct tones, and insistence on themes such as the environment, inclusion of the weakest, welcoming migrants, and rejection of clericalism often generated **heated debates** even **within the Church itself**.

Some of his statements and openings — from mercy towards remarried divorcees to dialogue with other religions and even with non-believers — **were not always welcomed by the entire Catholic world**, sparking criticism from conservative circles.

Yet, **with courage and determination**, Pope Francis continued to propose **a Church that steps out of the sacristies to be among the people**, faithful to the Gospel, but capable of reading the signs of the times. His strength was in **not fearing confrontation**, always remaining a shepherd, never a judge.

The Defense's Condolences

Among the first institutional messages, the touching words of the Minister of Defense, **Honorable Guido Crosetto**, who expressed his condolences as follows:

"*On behalf of the entire Italian Defense, confident in interpreting the feeling of pain and sadness that every man and woman in uniform, believer and non-believer, experiences today, I express my deepest and most sincere condolences for the passing of His Holiness Pope Francis. A sure guide and good shepherd of the Catholic Church, a courageous and strong witness of the evangelical message, he was an indefatigable promoter of the values of Peace, brotherhood, and tolerance on a universal level, appreciated by the entire international community, by all faiths and religions, by believers and non-believers. His reassuring presence, even in physical suffering, his teachings, his living magisterium, even in suffering, simplicity, and humility, are among the greatest legacies he leaves us. We offer him our prayer, that of the entire Defense*

family".

The Pope of All, Believers and Non-Believers

In this moment of great mourning, we join in prayer and gratitude for the life and pontificate of Pope Francis. **A Pontiff and Head of State** who knew how to speak even to the hardest hearts, always carrying with him a **message of hope, sacrifice, universal love, and global responsibility**. His voice was able to cross borders and cultures, calling all humanity to solidarity, the dignity of the person, and the protection of peace. His example will remain etched in the collective memory as a moral and spiritual guide for believers and non-believers.

Rest in peace, Holy Father.