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‘We have fond and enduring memories’: Jewish groups respond to Pope Francis’ death

“May the memory of Pope Francis be for a blessing,” said the American Jewish Committee.

By [Grace Gilson](#) April 21, 2025



Michael Weinstock, running for Congress in New York's 3rd District, meets Pope Francis at the Vatican on February 20, 2019. (Courtesy Michael Weinstock)

Jewish groups and leaders are voicing their grief and condolences after the [passing of Pope Francis](#), the leader of the Catholic church who addressed interfaith relations during his tenure.

Francis, who became pope in 2013, frequently met with Jewish leaders in an effort to strengthen relations between the Catholic church and Jewish community. He also often cited [Nostra Aetate](#), issued by Pope Paul VI in 1965 as part of Vatican II, which ushered a new era in Jewish-Catholic ties. And in the wake of Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel, Francis decried antisemitism and called for the release of the hostages held by Hamas while also increasingly criticizing Israel's conduct in Gaza — which drew criticism from Jewish leaders.

Here's what Jews and Jewish organizations are saying about Francis today on the occasion of his death:

Israeli President Isaac Herzog: "I send my deepest condolences to the Christian world and especially the Christian communities in Israel — the Holy Land — on the loss of their great spiritual father, His Holiness Pope Francis. A man of deep faith and boundless compassion, he dedicated his life to uplifting the poor and calling for peace in a troubled world. He rightly saw great importance in fostering strong ties with the Jewish world and in advancing interfaith dialogue as a path toward greater understanding and mutual respect."

Jewish Federations of North America: "Jewish communities will mourn the loss of Pope Francis, who leaves behind a legacy of friendship to our communities, condemned antisemitism as a 'sin' and reaffirmed the centrality of 'Nostra Aetate,' which transformed Jewish-Catholic collaboration 60 years ago," said Rabbi Josh Stanton, the associate vice president of interfaith and intergroup initiatives.

Anti-Defamation League: "We send our deepest condolences to the global Catholic community on the passing of Pope Francis. His Holiness was dedicated to advancing Jewish-Catholic relations and repeatedly condemned the rise in antisemitism and extremism. May his memory be a blessing."

American Jewish Committee: "In this sixtieth anniversary year of Nostra Aetate, as we celebrate the positive transformation of Catholic-Jewish relations and AJC's unique leadership on that path, we must also address the challenges that lie ahead. In that spirit, we are grateful for Pope Francis's indispensable leadership and contributions in this shared journey," said Rabbi Noam Marans, the American Jewish Committee's director of interreligious affairs. "May the memory of Pope Francis be for a blessing."

World Jewish Congress: "While there were moments of difficulty, particularly in recent months, I remain deeply appreciative of his warmth, humility and unwavering dedication to meaningful engagement between faith communities. On behalf of the World Jewish Congress and the more than 100 Jewish communities around the globe, I extend my deepest condolences to all those who were touched by his remarkable spirit. May his memory be a blessing and an inspiration to us all," said World Jewish Congress President Ronald S. Lauder in a statement.

European Jewish Congress: "We have fond and enduring memories of our audiences with the late Pope and his deep commitment to fostering dialogue with Jewish communities and fierce opposition to antisemitism" said EJC Executive Vice-President Raya Kalenova.

Jewish Council for Public Affairs: "We join the world in mourning the passing of Pope Francis. May his memory be a blessing, and may his vision for peace and unity continue to

inspire us all. Our thoughts and prayers are with our Catholic friends and all those grieving this profound loss.”

Union of Reform Judaism: “The relationship between the Catholic and Jewish communities flourished under Pope Francis’ guidance. He honored the shared heritage of our faiths and took meaningful steps to heal historical wounds, reinforcing a path toward mutual respect and collaboration. We especially appreciated Pope Francis’s consistent calls for dialogue and mutual respect between Israelis and Palestinians, emphasizing the necessity of a two-state solution that ensures security and self-determination for both peoples,” President Rabbi Rick Jacobs said in a statement.

Park East Synagogue: “I will forever remember his profound messages of hope, including one delivered at the Rome Synagogue, demonstrating his unwavering belief that faith and compassion can bridge even the greatest divides,” said Rabbi Arthur Schneier, senior rabbi of the Park East Synagogue, who [received the papal knighthood honor](#) from Francis in New York in 2015. “Pope Francis was a beacon of light in a world too often torn apart by division and conflict, and his legacy of peace and harmony will continue to inspire generations to come.”

International Network of Children of Jewish Holocaust Survivors: “Pope Francis, who passed away today, was, without question, the most important and most influential religious and theological figure of the 21st century, not just for Roman Catholics, not just for Christians, but for Jews as well. He was the human face of true faith in and commitment to the human and humanitarian values of nonsectarian monotheism writ large, and he embodied a compassion and empathy that reached far beyond his flock to encompass humankind as a whole,” Menachem Rosensaft, the group’s founding chairman, wrote in an op-ed for the [Times of Israel](#).