

# Piccola Opera della Divina Provvidenza - Don Orione -

Figli della Divina Provvidenza  
Piccole Suore Missionarie della Carità  
Istituto Secolare Orionino  
Istituto Secolare Maria di Nazareth  
Movimento Laicale Orionino

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## **Dearest Brothers, Sisters, and Lay Members of the Orionine Charismatic Family**

We have received with profound sadness the news of the passing of our Holy Father, Pope Francis.

Only a few weeks ago, we all held our breath, glued to our screens, closely following updates on his health condition. It seemed the burden of illness might prevail, yet, somewhat unexpectedly, there was a remarkable improvement: we saw him rise again, reconnect with his people, return to St. Peter's Square and Santa Maria Maggiore, and finally appear from the pontifical loggia for the Easter blessing. That blessing felt like his final gift, brimming with light and hope.

A few hours later, his body succumbed. Yet his spirit lives on, resting now in the peace of God. We can confidently affirm that he fulfilled his ministry as the Vicar of Christ right to the very end, tirelessly serving with the dedication of a good and faithful servant.

We grieve, yet our hearts overflow with gratitude. For twelve years, the Lord blessed us with Pope Francis. Through him, we understood afresh and deeply many teachings of our Founder. Numerous connections between their hearts were evident, as Pope Francis often reminded us in his messages. Truly, he was an "Orionine" Pope—a heart without boundaries, aflame with love for God and humanity.

He began the courageous process of Church reform, continuing the path laid by the Second Vatican Council. Although unable to complete it himself, he clearly marked out the route. It will now be the responsibility of his successor to continue this work, and our duty to walk alongside him, in filial spirit, as Don Orione taught us.

He returned the Gospel to the very centre of Christian life, particularly through his ordinary Magisterium. The Word of God, drop by drop, can penetrate human hearts, compelling them to commit fully to the Gospel. Pope Francis was prophetic precisely because he reminded us that the Church must either return to the Gospel or risk a widening gap between itself and the people. Don Orione, describing the purpose of our religious family, expressed it thus: "Its yearning is the spread of the Gospel among the people, love for the 'sweet Christ on earth,' and a livelier, greater spirit of fraternal charity among men, aiming to elevate, both religiously and socially, the working classes, to rescue the disenfranchised from destructive ideologies, and to build and unite peoples in Christ."

Throughout his pontificate, Francis elicited strong reactions, as any true prophet does. Those who courageously proclaim the Gospel without compromise often encounter misunderstanding and opposition, especially from the powerful. He never feared losing popularity or reputation; he spoke and acted freely, knowing the message he delivered was not his own, but God's.

He was the Pope of simple people, the poor, the marginalised, the peripheries of the world and of the soul. To them, he dedicated both words and concrete actions. How many charitable works he inspired, and how many Christians—particularly church leaders—he

challenged to do likewise. His strongest messages came from the smallest, most forgotten places, where the world rarely looks. He chose the peripheries as the heart of his ministry. Don Orione, speaking about the Pope, said: "Our very special task is to make him known and loved, especially by the people and the children of the people."

For Pope Francis, no one was excluded from God. Christ died for everyone; his Gospel of love and hope was meant for all. "In the poorest of men shines the image of God."

He was the Pope of unconditional dialogue, of encounters without barriers. He gave no room to fundamentalism or sterile rigidity. Like the father of the prodigal son, he extended his arms towards everyone, opening dialogue with every religion, social group, and category of people.

In a world marred by war, he proclaimed peace. In a society marked by selfishness, he preached openness and acceptance. In a culture obsessed with power, he exemplified humility and service. "Our lives and our entire Congregation must be a hymn and simultaneously a sacrifice of universal fraternity in Christ, seeing and feeling Christ in every human being."

He reminded us of the task our Creator entrusted us from the very beginning: caring for creation. This earth is the home where we all live and where everyone can find what they need. It is not a workshop to be exploited to satisfy the greed and comfort of a few.

Finally, Pope Francis was the Pope of synodality. This was his ultimate gift to the Church. In Christ, we are all one family, called to journey together responsibly, caring for one another.

Thank you, Pope Francis.

You have guided us prophetically, urging us to walk courageously through this confused society. Now intercede for us, that we may confidently continue on the path you have shown us, without fear.

Two words remain with us as your legacy: the joy of being Christian—the theme you chose at the start of your pontificate—and "hope," the theme you invited us to embody during this jubilee year.

Here on earth, you inspired us; now from heaven, accompany and protect us, in the company of the Most Holy Mother and Saint Luigi Orione.

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