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FRANCIS ACROSS THE AGES: A LEGACY OF HUMILITY,  
PEACE, AND SERVICE. ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI AND POPE  
FRANCIS IN LIGHT OF MEDIA REPORTS IN 2025

INTRODUCTION

In the history of the Catholic Church, the name “Francis” has gained special significance – first as a symbol of the radical poverty and brotherhood of St. Francis of Assisi, and later as the spiritual program of Pope Francis, elected to the Papal See in 2013. When Jorge Mario Bergoglio announced that he was taking the name of the Poor Man of Assisi, he explained: “Then I thought of St. Francis of Assisi – a man of peace, a man of poverty, a man who loved creation.”<sup>1</sup>

This choice was not coincidental or merely symbolic, but it was the beginning of a profound pontificate deeply rooted in Franciscan spirituality. In the following years, the actions of Pope Francis – from his gestures towards the marginalized to documents on ecology and fraternity – confirmed

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, *Audience to Representatives of the Media* (16.03.2013), [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/march/documents/papa-francesco\\_2013\\_0316\\_rappresentanti-media.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/march/documents/papa-francesco_2013_0316_rappresentanti-media.html) [accessed: 24.05.2025].

that the choice of name truly became a choice of program and style for the pontificate of the “Pope from the Ends of the Earth.”<sup>2</sup> This is how Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio from Argentina described himself when he greeted the faithful gathered in St. Peter’s Square, who enthusiastically received the news that in 2013, the first successor of St. Peter had chosen the name: “Francis”. At that time the world’s media in reports from the Vatican recalled and repeated the medieval story of the Poor Man of Assisi.

St. Francis of Assisi was a man of transformation and change – he was not only a mystic and poet [Peterson 2018; Sing 1985; Bodo 2015] but also a reformer who rebuilt the Church from the “bottom up” through living among the poor, encountering lepers,<sup>3</sup> and engaging in a fearless dialogue with the sultan.<sup>4</sup> Pope Francis has not merely repeated this model but has brought it into the realities of the modern world: a Church grappling with clericalism, global crises, and social exclusion.

The aim of this article is to illustrate the spiritual kinship between St. Francis of Assisi and Pope Francis, with a particular focus on five key analogies: the name as a spiritual program, integral ecology, spiritual renewal of the Church from the bottom up, building bridges of peace, and a lifestyle close to people. This analysis will be conducted not only based on papal documents and statements but also considering the media narratives that accompanied Pope Francis’s death in April 2025 – a moment when his spiritual legacy encountered the memory of the saint whose name he bore.

The content analysis of media reports focused on Polish media coverage of Pope Francis’s life and legacy, as it was reported after his death and in the context of Saint Francis of Assisi. The analysis included 79 publications from April 21 to April 26, 2025, spanning the period from the announcement of Pope Francis’s death to his funeral. The sources included online editions of daily newspapers such as *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita*, weekly

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<sup>2</sup> Idem, *Apostolic Blessing “Urbi et Orbi”* (13.03.2013), [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/march/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130313\\_benedizione-urbi-et-orbi.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/march/documents/papa-francesco_20130313_benedizione-urbi-et-orbi.html) [accessed: 24.05.2025].

<sup>3</sup> “[...] for when I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I showed mercy to them. And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body. And afterwards I delayed a little and left the world,” see Saint Francis of Assisi, *The Testament* (1226), <https://www.ofmconv.net/en/san-francesco-dassisi-3> [accessed: 23.05.2025].

<sup>4</sup> In 1219, as the Fifth Crusade was being fought, Francis crossed enemy lines to gain an audience with Malik al-Kamil, the Sultan of Egypt [Moses 2009].

magazines like *Tygodnik Powszechny*, *Gość Niedzielny*, *Przegląd Katolicki*, *Polityka*, and *Newsweek*, along with television broadcasts of the Pope's funeral, including comments from guests and experts across various stations, such as TVN 24, Polsat News, BBC, CNN, and Sky News. The analysis aimed to identify key themes and narratives emerging in the media regarding Pope Francis's legacy, especially in relation to the spirit and example of Saint Francis of Assisi. The preliminary conclusions highlight the most prominent motifs in the media portrayal of Pope Francis's passing in April 2025 [Hodalska and Buksa 2025], viewed through the lens of his connection to the spirituality and message of the Poor Fellow of Assisi.

## 1. NAME AS A SPIRITUAL PROGRAM OF THE PONTIFICATE

The choice of the name "Francis" by Jorge Bergoglio in 2013 was a symbolically significant and groundbreaking moment, both from a theological and communicative point of view. As the Pope himself recalled, when he was elected, Cardinal Cláudio Hummes said to him: "Do not forget the poor!" He added: "Those words came to me: the poor, the poor. Then, right away, thinking of the poor, I thought of Francis of Assisi. [...] Francis is also a man of peace."<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, the name became not only a tribute to the Poor Fellow of Assisi, but also an announcement of a pontificate focused on the poor, marginalized, and excluded – those whom the Church too often neglected in its care. The choice of this name, as the first Francis in the history of the papacy, was immediately understood as a signal of change – a "pope from the end of the Earth" bringing the voices of the periphery to the heart of Church.

The identity of Pope Francis as the "Pope of the poor" [Pullella and Hornby 2013; Schmalz 2025] and the "Pope of the people" [Kokot 2025] has been confirmed not only through his pastoral decisions but also through his lifestyle and gestures, which consistently avoided splendor. Journalists recalled that "Francis remained simply himself, the same man who, as a cardinal, commuted by tram in Buenos Aires every day" [Kucharczyk 2025] and that "from the very first moments of his pontificate, he sought to minimize everything around him that smelled of courtly ceremony" [ibid.]. Living in

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<sup>5</sup> Pope Francis, Audience to Representatives of the Media (16.03.2013).

the Casa Santa Marta, wearing old shoes [De Ruiter 2025], lacking a cape, or being laid to rest in a simple oak coffin in a poor neighborhood of Rome<sup>6</sup> – all these elements created a coherent narrative of a shepherd's life who not only preached poverty, but lived it. The media accurately reflected this line, describing him as “the voice of the periphery in the heart of Europe” [Katkowski 2025].

The spiritual program of the pontificate, rooted in the choice of the name, found its most profound expression at the moment of the Pope's death and burial. “His style of papacy was dictated by the choice of his name”, emphasized Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re.<sup>7</sup> This name, inherited from Saint Francis of Assisi, resonated especially when “a group of homeless, poor, and refugees welcomed the coffin on the steps of the basilica.”<sup>8</sup> The Pope himself “wanted to remain among the poor” [Cernuzio 2025], choosing to be buried in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, located in a district inhabited by immigrants. Media commentary on the symbolic significance of these decisions clearly indicated that the pontificate of Pope Francis was inspired and carried out in the spirit of the Poor Fellow of Assisi. Pope Francis himself directly referred to this inspiration in the encyclical *Laudato si'*, calling Francis of Assisi “a beautiful, motivating example for us. I took his name as a guide and inspiration at the moment of my election as Bishop of Rome.”<sup>9</sup> Such a clear self-declaration must not be forgotten.

## 2. THE MAN WHO LOVED GOD'S CREATION<sup>10</sup> AND INTEGRAL ECOLOGY (*LAUDATO SI'*)

In the encyclical *Laudato si'*, which has become one of the most groundbreaking social documents of the 21st century [Wysocki 2016], Pope Francis

<sup>6</sup> We discussed that in more details in our article: Hodalska and Buksa 2025.

<sup>7</sup> Card. Giovanni Battista Re, *Homily at Pope Francis' funeral: “World Pope Francis is remembered as a pope of the people”* (26.04.2025), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/pope-francis-funeral-homily-text-cardinal-giovanni-battista-re> [accessed: 22.05.2025].

<sup>8</sup> See *Pogrzeb Franciszka bez kamer. Skromny pochówek w Santa Maria Maggiore*, <https://www.polsatnews.pl/wiadomosc/2025-04-26/pogrzeb-franciszka-bez-kamer-skromny-pochowek-w-santa-maria-maggiore/> [accessed: 22.05.2025].

<sup>9</sup> Pope Francis, Encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* on Care for Our Common Home (24.05.2015) [hereinafter: LS], [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html) [accessed: 22.05.2025], 10.

<sup>10</sup> These words Pope Francis referred to St. Francis of Assisi in the encyclical (LS 10).

presents St. Francis of Assisi as the spiritual precursor of integral ecology [McKibben 2015].<sup>11</sup> The very opening words of the document – “*Laudato si’, mi’ Signore*” – are a direct reference to the *Canticle of the Sun*,<sup>12</sup> a Franciscan hymn of praise for creation. In this way, Pope Francis depicts “our common home” (LS 1) as a space of relationships – not merely utilitarian, but brotherly and maternal: “Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us” (LS 1). This is an image of the world as a community, in which humans are not rulers but co-inhabitants.

The spirituality of St. Francis, expressed through his hymns and life, became an inspiration for Pope Francis to develop the concept of “integral ecology” (LS 10, 11, 62, 124, 137-62) which encompasses both care for the environment and for humanity. The Pope emphasizes that “Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable” (LS 10), and that his attitude goes beyond sentimental love for nature; it reflects a spiritual sensitivity to everything fragile and endangered – from the planet to social outcasts. Therefore, *Laudato si’* is not merely a document about environmental protection but a call for a new civilizational model in which human poverty and environmental degradation are two dimensions of the same injustice.

According to Pope Francis’s teachings, Saint Francis of Assisi is not a patron of ecology by coincidence – his life embodied a synthesis of caring for creation, humility before the world, and love for the poor. In the spirit of the Poor Man of Assisi, the pope calls for an “ecological conversion” (LS 216-21), urging a transformation of mentality and lifestyle. As media commentators noted, this encyclical letter *Laudato si’* made Francis “the environment’s pope” [Allen 2015], reminding the world that the relationship with the earth should not be one of exploitation but of brotherhood. This message also resonated after his death, with commentators emphasizing that “protecting the life of Mother Earth” [Boff and Matejko 2025] remains one of his lasting legacies.

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<sup>11</sup> He called it “the most important document yet of this millennium.”

<sup>12</sup> Francis of Assisi, *Canticle of the Creatures*, in: Francis of Assisi, *Early Documents*, vol. 1, New York–London–Manila 1999, p. 113-14.

### 3. THE MARGINALIZED – THE LEPERS OF OUR TIMES

In the spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi, a special place is occupied by peace, which does not stem from compromise but from a radical acceptance of the Gospel. It is not neutrality but courageous love that does not shy away from sacrifice. The peace proclaimed by the Poor Man was not a comfortable withdrawal from conflict but a testimony – authentic and demanding. As he wrote in his Testament, a key moment of his spiritual breakthrough was his encounter with a leper: “[F]or when I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I showed mercy to them. And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body.”<sup>13</sup> Saint Bonaventure, in his biography of Saint Francis, sees it as an act of transformation, breaking social barriers of fear and revulsion, and marking the beginning of Francis’s mission to serve the marginalized, which aligns with the spiritual renewal of the Church.<sup>14</sup> Kissing the leper became a radical gesture – breaking social barriers of fear and disgust. It is also a symbol of the spiritual renewal of the Church, which does not begin with institutions but with people – especially those pushed to the margins.

Saint Francis of Assisi, abandoning his wealth and comfortable life, chose to live among the poor and the rejected, bearing witness to the Gospel not from a pulpit but through everyday life. His mission was not only to rebuild damaged churches physically but to create a community rooted in simplicity, love, and presence. His life embodied a theology of the body and action – the Gospel not merely proclaimed with words but lived through concrete acts. He rejected power, prestige, and distance, choosing service and brotherhood. As the first Christian saint to attempt interreligious dialogue, during the Fifth Crusade he approached Sultan Al-Kamil not with weapons, but with humility and prayer. “We are impressed – notes Pope Francis – that some eight hundred years ago Saint Francis urged that all

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<sup>13</sup> Francis of Assisi, *Testament 1-3. Fontes francescani*, ed. E. Menestò, S. Brufani, Assisi 1995, p. 227.

<sup>14</sup> Saint Bonaventure, *Legenda Maior*, I, 6, in: Francis of Assisi, *Early Documents*, vol. 2, eds. R.J. Armstrong, J.A.W. Hellmann, W.J. Short, New City Press, New York 2000, p. 536.

forms of hostility or conflict be avoided and that a humble and fraternal 'subjection' be shown to those who did not share his faith."<sup>15</sup>

Pope Francis embraced the same spiritual vision, which he articulated in his 2013 homily in Assisi: "Franciscan peace is not something saccharine. [...]. Nor is it a kind of pantheistic harmony with forces of the cosmos... [...] The peace of Saint Francis is the peace of Christ, and it is found by those who 'take up' their 'yoke', namely, Christ's commandment: Love one another as I have loved you (cf. Jn 13:34; 15:12). This yoke cannot be borne with arrogance, presumption or pride, but only with meekness and humbleness of heart."<sup>16</sup> This peace of Christ is not neutrality, nor is it a compromise at any cost. It is a demanding peace that comes from the Gospel. Saint Francis accepted it, he embraced Jesus with his whole heart.

For Pope Francis, the figure of the Poor Fellow of Assisi has become not only an inspiration but a concrete point of reference in leading the Church – a humble, close, and free church. As he declared immediately after the conclave: "How I would like a Church which is poor and for the poor!"<sup>17</sup>

The papacy of Pope Francis was a consistent realization of this vision. He called today's lepers "the excluded" – the poor, migrants, the sick, prisoners, LGBT+ individuals, divorced persons, and the homeless.<sup>18</sup> He spoke about it many times, on various occasions and in different places, and he justified it, among other things, in the above-mentioned encyclical: "For Christians, the words of Jesus have an even deeper meaning. They compel us to recognize Christ himself in each of our abandoned or excluded brothers and sisters (cf. Mt 25:40.45). [...] We likewise believe that Christ shed his blood for each of us and that no one is beyond the scope of his universal love" (FT 85).

<sup>15</sup> Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter on Fraternity and Social Friendship *Fratelli tutti* (03.10.2000) [hereinafter: FT], [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20201003\\_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html) [accessed: 25.05.2025], 3.

<sup>16</sup> Idem, *Homily during the Eucharistic Celebration in Saint Francis of Assisi Square* (04.10.2015), [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_20131004\\_omelia-visita-assisi.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20131004_omelia-visita-assisi.html) [accessed: 23.05.2025], p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Idem, Audience to Representatives of the Communications Media (16.03.2013).

<sup>18</sup> Pope Francis devoted considerable attention to the phenomenon of social exclusion and the role of the Church in overcoming it in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, especially in paragraphs 53-54. In the encyclical *Fratelli tutti* he writes about 'neighbours without borders'.

He not only spoke about their dignity, he lived among them, visited them, blessed them, embraced them. As media noted after his death, “Pope Francis was loved by the world of the excluded, the poor, and migrants. He served them in the suburbs of Buenos Aires” [Kucharczyk 2025]. The symbolic aspect of his funeral location – the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in a poor district of Rome – also reflected this ethos, which was made so clear when a group of homeless, poor, and refugees welcomed his coffin in front of the basilica to say their final farewell to the Pope who wanted to “remain with the poor,” as one TV commentator highlighted.

Pope Francis was a witness to the Gospel in the style of St. Francis of Assisi – simple, close, embodied in the flesh. As commentators observed, “Francis was compassionate toward the poor and unwavering toward dignitaries” [Hlebowicz 2025]. He proclaimed not doctrine but himself – through his lifestyle, gestures, and choices in everyday life, which were “from the bottom up.” That is why, after his death in April 2025, he was called “the Pope who wanted to remain among the poor” [Povoledo 2025]. Just as St. Francis stayed close to lepers, Pope Francis concluded his earthly journey surrounded by those he previously embraced with his heart – not from the heights of office, but from the depths of human solidarity.

#### 4. PEACE AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Saint Francis of Assisi, contrary to the spirit of his times, did not go to war – he went to *meet* others. During the Fifth Crusade in 1219, he traveled to the Muslim camp in Damietta to meet Sultan Al-Kamil.<sup>19</sup> Unlike what contemporaries might have expected, his purpose was not to convert via force but to foster dialogue. This event – considered one of the earliest peaceful interreligious meetings in Christian history – became a symbol of the Franciscan attitude: gentleness, bravery, and witness without violence. Saint Francis risked his life to proclaim the Gospel not as an ideology but

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<sup>19</sup> Thomas of Celano, *The Life of Saint Francis (Vita Prima)*, trans. by P. Hermann, in: St. Francis of Assisi, *Writings and Early Biographies: English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis*, ed. M.A. Habig, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 1973, p. 229-41; Bonaventure, *The Major Legend of Saint Francis (Legenda Maior)*, trans. by B. Faherty, in: St. Francis of Assisi, *Writings and Early Biographies...*, p. 631-787.



through presence. It was an act of radical peace that predated its era and continued to inspire the Church's Interreligious diplomacy today.

Pope Francis, walking in the footsteps of the Poor Fellow of Assisi, made interreligious dialogue one of the pillars of his pontificate. On the First World Day of the Poor, the Pope directly referred to Francis of Assisi, presenting him as an example. He wrote about the Poor Man of Assisi: "Precisely because he kept his gaze fixed on Christ, Francis was able to see and serve him in the poor. If we want to help change history and promote real development, we need to hear the cry of the poor and commit ourselves to ending their marginalization."<sup>20</sup>

In the spirit of peace and poverty, which connected him to his patron, in 2019 Pope Francis signed, together with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, the "Document on Human Fraternity for Peaceful Coexistence."<sup>21</sup> His call to build relationships across religious and cultural divisions was not only political but spiritual: he urged for encounters, not dominance.

Both St. Francis of Assisi and Pope Francis embody a spirituality that does not build walls of division but constructs bridges of cooperation. Their shared stance is not a sign of weakness but a strength rooted in the Gospel of peace. Pope Francis spoke about this on December 3, 2018, during a meeting with representatives of the Citadel of Peace Association: "Those who do not know how to dialogue and exchange with each other are not leaders of peace: a leader who does not try to meet the 'enemy', to sit with him at the table as you do, cannot lead his people to peace. To do this we need humility, not arrogance."<sup>22</sup>

For both Francis, the path to reconciliation begins with recognizing the dignity of the other person – regardless of their religion, origin, or views. This idea seems to be one of the central themes of the Pope's social message.

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<sup>20</sup> Pope Francis, Message of First World Day of the Poor: *Let us love, not with words but with deeds* (19.11.2017), [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/poveri/documents/papa-francesco\\_20170613\\_messaggio-i-giornatamondiale-poveri-2017.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/poveri/documents/papa-francesco_20170613_messaggio-i-giornatamondiale-poveri-2017.html) [accessed: 27.05.2025], p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> Apostolic Journey of his Holiness Pope Francis to the United Arab Emirates (03-05.02.2019). *A Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco\\_20190204\\_documento-fratellanza-umana.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html) [accessed: 27.05.2025].

<sup>22</sup> Pope Francis, *Peace is everyone's responsibility* (03.12.2018), <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2018-12/pope-francis-peace-is-everyone-s-responsibility.html> [accessed: 26.05.2025].

It is enough to recall the call to fraternity in the spirit of respect for others in the encyclical *Fratelli tutti*. Just as Sultan Al-Kamil opened the door to St. Francis, so Pope Francis has invited the Church to reach out not only to its own but to all – with an open hand, not a clenched fist. “In his simple and direct way, Saint Francis expressed the essence of a fraternal openness that allows us to acknowledge, appreciate and love each person, regardless of physical proximity, regardless of where he or she was born or lives” (FT 1).

## 5. LIFESTYLE AND CLOSENESS TO PEOPLE

For Saint Francis of Assisi, a way of life was a form of proclamation – his simplicity, closeness to the poor, and lack of distance from others embodied the Gospel. He was not a teacher speaking from behind a pulpit but a brother sharing life with the most impoverished. He did not retreat into a monastery but traveled the roads, going to people whom others avoided – the sick, the marginalized, the simple. In *Fratelli Tutti* Pope Francis wrote about the Poor Fellow of Assisi: “Francis did not wage a war of words aimed at imposing doctrines; he simply spread the love of God. He understood that ‘God is love and those who abide in love abide in God’ (1 Jn 4:16). In this way, he became a father to all and inspired the vision of a fraternal society” (FT 4). This style of presence – quiet, humble, non-violent – became an inspiration not only for the document on fraternity but for the entire style of the papal pontificate.

Pope Francis, following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, chose the path of closeness to people from the very beginning of his pontificate. He did not merely speak about the poor – he lived among ordinary people, visited prisoners, washed the feet of refugees, embraced sick children, took selfies with youth. One of the most symbolic moments of his pontificate was his embrace of a man with a deformed face.<sup>23</sup> In an interview with Beata Zajączkowska, this man recalled this as life-changing experience: “For most people, I am like a leper. The worst part is exclusion. In the Pope’s arms, I truly felt loved” [Zajączkowska 2025]. As reporters noted after his death, “Pope Francis was a Pope among the people” [Kent 2025] and “he remained the

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<sup>23</sup> It was Francis Riva who suffers from a genetic disease; the event took place in 2013. See, for e.g. Lubov 2024.

same man who, as a cardinal, rode the tram” [Kucharczyk 2025]. His way of life was not a liturgical or doctrinal revolution – it was a revolution of presence. Closeness to people – both of St. Francis of Assisi and Pope Francis – was not sentimental but very demanding: it was a conscious choice of solidarity with those whom the world overlooks.

Saint Francis of Assisi gave up wealth to live among lepers. Pope Francis of Buenos Aires relinquished papal apartments and red shoes to be closer to the everyday lives of ordinary people. As one commentator noted during the funeral broadcast: “Francis wanted to remain among the poor,” and his burial place – not the Vatican, but the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, visited often by migrants, refugees, and the homeless – was a very clear signal of his identity. The style of life of Pope Francis reflects the style of St. Francis of Assisi, embedded in the reality of the modern world.

## CONCLUSION

The history of two Franciscuses – Saint Francis of Assisi and the Pope from Buenos Aires – shows that Christian spirituality can be both radical and gentle, both evangelistic and deeply rooted in the realities of life. They are connected not only by their name but also by their attitude: readiness to meet others, courage in dialogue, and love for those the world pushes to the margins. Saint Francis kissing a leper, and Pope Francis embracing a man with a deformed face – these are not theatrical gestures but spiritual revolutions that do not begin with words, but with actions. A notable figure at his funeral was also Sister Geneviève Jeanningros, weeping by his coffin, a spiritual, “very special friend of the Pope” (*amistades especiales de Bergoglio*) [Domínguez 2025]. The nun from the Little Sisters of Jesus lives in a caravan at an amusement park in Ostia, near Rome. For nearly 60 years, she has been helping the poor, prostitutes, and transgender individuals working on the streets, while also preaching among circus workers. Her emotional moment at Pope Francis’ coffin, where she broke Vatican protocol to pray and weep, became a symbol of their deep bond and his legacy of compassion for the marginalized.

The papacy of Pope Francis, which concluded in April 2025, left behind not just definitions and instructions but a style – a style of simplicity, closeness, and brotherhood. “Francis wanted to remain among the poor” – this

was said after his death. His funeral, surrounded by a crowd of homeless and refugees, was a symbolic affirmation that the message of Saint Francis of Assisi not only survived the centuries but was reborn in the 21st century.

In times of violence, inequality, and global indifference, both Saint Francis and Pope Francis remind us of an alternative: of a Church that does not rule from a throne, but serves with love; of a faith that does not isolate but unites; of hope that arises from the lowest peripheries. Their example remains an open invitation – not only to admire, but also to follow.

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**Francis Across the Ages: A Legacy of Humility, Peace, and Service.  
St. Francis of Assisi and Pope Francis in Light of Media Reports in 2025**

Abstract

This article explores the spiritual and thematic ties between Saint Francis of Assisi and Pope Francis, focusing on how the Pope "from the end of the Earth" embodied the values of the Poor Fellow of Assisi in a modern context. The aim is to demonstrate their shared commitment to humility, poverty, dialogue, and closeness to marginalized groups, which collectively form the core of their spiritual programs and actions. The material analyzed includes papal documents, statements, and media narratives surrounding Pope Francis's death in April 2025, encompassing 79 media reports from April 21-26, 2025. The study highlights key themes, such as the name "Francis" as a symbolic program, ecological awareness rooted in Franciscan spirituality, the renewal of the Church from the bottom up, interreligious dialogue, and lifestyle closeness to the poor. The most important conclusion is that both figures exemplify a radical, yet gentle spirituality centered on active love, humility, and service, leaving a lasting legacy of

a Church committed to meeting others where they are, rather than ruling from a distance. Their shared example highlights faith rooted in compassion and solidarity.

**Keywords:** Pope Francis; St Francis of Assisi; pontificate; interreligious dialogue; ecology; media; media narratives.

**Franciszek różnych stuleci: dziedzictwo pokory, pokoju i służby.  
Św. Franciszek z Asyżu i papież Franciszek w świetle relacji medialnych  
po śmierci Papieża w 2025 roku**

Abstrakt

Artykuł wskazuje i omawia wspólne wątki w historii św. Franciszka z Asyżu i papieża Franciszka, koncentrując się na tym, jak papież „z krańca świata” wcielał we współczesnych nam kontekstach wartości Biedaczyny z Asyżu. Celem jest ukazanie ich wspólnego zaangażowania w życie aktywne, w pokorze i ubóstwie, ich chęć dialogu z innymi ludźmi oraz bliskość wobec marginalizowanych grup, które stanowią istotę ich duchowych programów i działań. Analizowany materiał stanowią dokumenty papieskie, oświadczenia oraz relacje medialne dotyczące śmierci papieża Franciszka w kwietniu 2025 r. Analiza zawartości obejmowała 79 publikacji w internetowych wydaniach polskich dzienników i tygodników, wydanych w tygodniu od śmierci Papieża do dnia jego pogrzebu (od 21 do 26 kwietnia 2025 r.). Artykuł wskazuje na kluczowe motywy wspólne, takie jak: wybór imienia „Franciszek”, świadomość ekologiczna oparta na duchowości franciszkańskiej, oddolna odnowa Kościoła, dialog międzyreligijny oraz bliskość z życiem ubogich. Zarówno św. Franciszek z Asyżu, jak i papież Franciszek przez swoje wybory i życie stanowią przykład duchowości radykalnej, a zarazem łagodnej, skoncentrowanej na aktywnej miłości, pokorze i służbie oraz Kościele zaangażowanym w spotkanie z innymi, a nie w rządzenie z dystansu. Ich wspólny przykład podkreśla wiarę zakorzenioną we współczuciu i solidarności.

**Słowa kluczowe:** papież Franciszek; św. Franciszek z Asyżu; pontyfikat; dialog międzyreligijny; ekologia; media; relacje medialne.

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