

# BBC NEWS

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Hello, this is the BBC News with Fiona MacDonald.

The world's 1.4 billion Roman Catholics are mourning the loss of Pope Francis, their spiritual leader for the past 12 years. The 88-year-old died early on Monday from a stroke.

Prayers have been said for Pope Francis at the Vatican, in his native Argentina, and in churches worldwide. Aleem Maqbool assesses his legacy.

This was a pope who really wanted to reach out. His strength was being around people, trying to look at people's faith in their daily lives, trying to move away this church from being led by clerics and more into people's daily lives. But he did that through reaching across denominations, other faiths, people who were not of faith. He spoke out about issues others could connect with when it came to the environment, when it came to being anti-war, a very definite change in direction in the Catholic Church, but one that had an impact beyond the church itself.

In accordance with his will, Pope Francis will be buried in a simple tomb in the Basilica of Saint Mary Major in Rome, rather than the Vatican. Here's Mark Lowen.

A statement from the Vatican saying that the pope asked to be buried in the ground without a particular decoration, but with the inscription "Franciscus," that is the Latin of Francis, the name that he chose as Pope after St. Francis of Assisi, very much echoing the humility of that saint and a man whose values he led through his papacy. He arranged for an unnamed benefactor to cover the costs of the burial. That is according to a Vatican statement.

No date has been set for Pope Francis' funeral, but dozens of world leaders are expected to attend, alongside hundreds of thousands of the faithful.

President Trump said he and his wife would be present, calling Francis "a good man." His predecessor, Joe Biden, said Francis was "one of the most consequential leaders of our time." Russia's Vladimir Putin praised his sense of "justice," while President Mahmoud Abbas said Palestinians had "lost a friend."

Catholic leaders in Africa have joined worldwide tributes to the pontiff. The BBC's Paul Nguyen has the African reaction.

The African Union Commission chairperson, Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, described the pontiff as "a towering moral voice" who advocated for justice and human dignity.

The pope leaves an endearing legacy on the continent, which hosts 20% of the world's Catholic Christians. He will be remembered for his several trips, sometimes to conflict-hit nations like the Central African Republic, where he advocated for peace.

His mild stance towards LGBTQ issues revealed a conflict of ideology with African bishops who opposed his proposal to bless same-sex couples.

The conclave to elect Pope Francis' successor will not begin for at least 15 days. One hundred thirty-five cardinals are eligible to vote, most appointed by Francis himself.

World News from the BBC.

Harvard University, America's richest, has sued the Trump administration for freezing more than \$2 billion in federal funding. It has refused to bow to pressure from President Trump. David Willis reports.

Harvard's lawsuit represents the latest escalation in a battle between some of the country's leading universities and an administration determined to root out what it sees as left-wing activism on college campuses.

As well as the funding freeze, President Trump has threatened to strip Harvard of its tax-exempt status and bar the enrolment of foreign students in response to what his administration has labelled as the mishandling of last year's pro-Palestinian protests.

Harvard's lawsuit brands President Trump's actions "arbitrary and capricious."

President Trump has stood behind his embattled defense secretary, dismissing his "fake news" reports that Pete Hegseth shared sensitive information on a second chat group, this time including his wife, brother and personal lawyer.

Mr. Trump said he was "doing a great job." Earlier, his press secretary denied a media report that a search was on for his successor.

President Zelenskyy says Russia needs to give a clear answer about whether it will accept Ukraine's proposal not to strike civilian infrastructure. Mr. Zelenskyy added Ukraine was ready for any conversation about how a 30-day cease-fire could be achieved.

Earlier, President Putin said Ukraine's suggestion needed to be carefully assessed.

Russian state media is reporting that a journalist who faced up to 10 years in prison for criticizing the army has escaped house arrest. Ekaterina Barabash failed to turn up for a court hearing in a town near St. Petersburg and her whereabouts are unknown.

The TASS news agency says Ms. Barabash had been declared a wanted fugitive.

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