News

Vatican twitter profile

After the Vatican announced April 21 that Pope Francis had died, it changed the pope's official X account, @Pontifex, to "Apostolica Sedes Vacans" — "The Apostolic See is vacant." The account's profile image is now the coat of arms the Vatican uses during the period of sede vacante, when there is no pope. (NCR Screenshot/X)



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Social media reaction poured in April 21 as people from every corner of the digital world took to online platforms to lament the loss of Pope Francis.

Millions of social media users — presidents and politicians, theologians and celebrities — flocked to social media to share tributes, reflections and stories of the late pontiff, who died early that day after suffering a stroke.

Former President Barack Obama, who was in office during the Holy Father's 2015 visit to the United States and his joint address to Congress, spoke highly of the pope's deep care for the poor and vulnerable.

Former President Joe Biden, the second Catholic to serve as U.S. president, called Francis "a pope for everyone."

Former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, echoed that praise.

Leaders from around the world were also quick to offer condolences.

Of course, dignitaries and world leaders were not alone in reacting to the news. As of 2 p.m. eastern, there were more than 1.6 million posts about Pope Francis on X (formerly Twitter), and the Holy Father's name was trending as a topic on Bluesky, Threads, Facebook, Instagram and Reddit.

Church leaders and social media influencers were quick to eulogize the pope.

Many described Francis as "the people's pope," a shepherd who lived simply and who drew strength from being with his flock.

Francis' example as an advocate for the marginalized and "the least of these" was another common theme.

Many people have shared online the ways that Francis has intimately impacted their lives. The outpouring will likely continue in the coming days, as the world continues to mourn Francis’ death and celebrate the pontiff for his pastoral care and leadership.

Lionel Messi, international soccer giant from Argentina, paid tribute on Instagram to his country's first pope, writing, "A different Pope, close, Argentinean..." The tribute was shared alongside a photo of the soccer player and Francis. Messi continued, "Rest in Peace Pope Francis. Thank you for making the world a better place. We will miss you."

Perhaps the most poignant social media post came from the pope's official X account, @Pontifex. After his death was announced, the account's profile picture was updated to the coat of arms the Vatican uses during the period of sede vacante, when there is no pope. And the account's name was changed from "Pope Francis" to "Apostolica Sedes Vacans" — "The Apostolic See is vacant."

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