

“Dirty War” Pope blesses Trump administration hours before his death

Andrea Lobo
23 April 2025

Pope Francis, born Jorge Mario Bergoglio, died Monday at the age of 88, following a protracted case of pneumonia that kept him hospitalized for five weeks.

Since the bells tolled in the Vatican’s St. Peter’s Square announcing his death, the corporate news cycle in much of the world has been dominated by fawning coverage of the Argentine Jesuit, the first pope from Latin America.

In the United States, where barely a fifth of the population identifies as Catholic, the news media delves unceasingly into the intricacies of the papacy. This fascination can only be explained in political and class terms.

Following tributes by Barack Obama and Joe Biden, US President Donald Trump announced that the first foreign trip of his second term will be to attend the Pope’s funeral in Rome, which will take place Saturday.

The media’s canonization of Bergoglio as the “Father of the poor,” “Man of the people,” and the “Progressive Pope” aims to place a last coat of “democratic” and “modern” varnish on the Catholic Church as it grants its blessing to the ruling elites’ global turn to fascist and dictatorial forms of rule.

Speaking at the White House Easter Egg Roll Monday, the American would-be Führer called Bergoglio “a good man.” In a clear affront against the separation of church and state, Trump said, “We’re bringing religion back in America” as he ordered US and state flags flown at half-mast across the country.

Italy’s fascistic Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni applauded “the privilege of enjoying his friendship, his advice, his teachings.” Meloni is the political heir of Mussolini, who also enjoyed a close friendship with the papacy even as his Blackshirt gangs beat up Catholic clerics and youth.

From Brazil’s Lula da Silva and Spain’s Pedro Sánchez to the fascistic Ferdinand Marcos Jr. of the Philippines, several heads of state with large Catholic populations

declared days of national mourning.

Argentina’s fascist President Javier Milei, who had previously called Bergoglio an “imbecile,” recalled the time he was received by the Pope in the Vatican and declared a week of mourning.

Genuine sympathy is naturally being felt by workers and youth across the world as they hear or read about Bergoglio’s painful illness and verbal denunciations of war, inequality, greed, and racism, among other popular positions. These feelings emerge not because of, but despite, the eulogies from hated capitalist politicians and media outlets.

Most recently, Bergoglio had denounced Trump’s mass deportation plans as a violation of human dignity and specifically berated US Vice President JD Vance for claiming these policies were in accordance with Catholic views.

One could almost be forgiven for suspecting that Vance’s Easter Sunday visit was too much to bear for the pontiff, who died only hours later.

“I know you have not been feeling great, but it’s great to see you in better health,” he told the visibly dying man.

But Bergoglio’s framing of migrant rights as a priority for his papacy, his encyclical calling climate change a “moral crisis,” calls to decriminalize the LGBTQ community, and other minimally “progressive” gestures were never intended to alter the reactionary character of the Catholic Church, whose official teachings on issues like same-sex marriage, abortion, and gender identity remain unchanged.

Bergoglio’s calls for humility have not stopped the Catholic Church from maintaining its hundreds of billions of dollars in assets and status as the world’s largest landlord.

For that matter, his description of inequality as a “social disease” failed to stop him from hosting in the friendliest and most complacent terms members of today’s tech and

financial aristocracy, including Tesla's Elon Musk, Amazon's Jeff Bezos, Apple's Tim Cook, and Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg.

His appeals for "peace," famously kissing the feet of South Sudanese warlords to end the civil war, went hand-in-hand with the faithful blessing of imperialist leaders responsible for the worst war crimes since World War II, including Obama, Biden and Trump.

Such performative stances on social and environmental issues were aimed at regaining the Catholic Church at least some measure of popular credibility amid a historic drop in followers, as youth and workers in general feel repulsed by its obscurantism in the age of globalization and smartphones. A limited adaptation to the growing radicalization of masses around the world was seen as an existential question for the Church.

Now, ruling elites everywhere exploit the death of the "people's pope" as an opportunity for proclaiming a "return of religion," with all its backwardness and ignorance. Amid the deepest crisis of capitalism since World War II, such efforts are seen as necessary to provide a cover for the enrichment of the world's oligarchs and the suppression of growing mass opposition through the promotion of feudal-like, fascist reaction.

Such has been the character of previous reform efforts in the Catholic Church, which remains the same bastion of reaction that carried out the Inquisition and oversaw the genocide of Native peoples during the colonial period.

Figures like Pope Leo IX (1049–1054) condemned clerical corruption and simony, yet rural churches remained mired in abuses, contributing to the rise of movements like Catharism, denounced by the Church as 'heretical.' The Council of Trent (1545–1563) centralized doctrine and discipline but entrenched the Church's alignment with political power and resistance to doctrinal evolution. John XXIII's reforms (1962–1965) modernized liturgy and engagement with the world, yet post-conciliar battles over implementation deepened divisions and failed to resolve systemic clericalism or abuse scandals.

Francis's own past reflects the Catholic Church's natural alliance with fascism. As a leading figure in the Argentine church during the country's "dirty war" (1976–1983), Bergoglio was accused by priests and lay workers of collaborating with the military dictatorship in efforts to "cleanse" the Church of leftist elements.

This was not merely a personal failing; the Argentine church hierarchy as a whole provided cover and moral sanction to the junta's torturers and assassins, assuring

them they were doing "God's work." An estimated 30,000 suspected "leftists" among workers, students and intellectuals were "disappeared," tortured and murdered.

Bergoglio was implicated in the 1976 kidnapping of Jesuit priests Orlando Yorio and Francisco Jalics, whom he allegedly failed to protect, and was accused of withholding support for their social work in Buenos Aires slums—a factor that led to their detention.

The military junta also systematically kidnapped babies born to women in torture centers, placing them with regime-aligned families. Survivors, including Estela de la Cuadra, testified that Bergoglio provided a handwritten note to her father in 1978 to inquire about her missing pregnant sister, only to learn the baby had been taken by the regime. This contradicted Bergoglio's 2010 court claim that he was unaware of baby thefts until after the dictatorship. Bergoglio testified in 2010 to address these allegations, though survivors criticized his evasive responses and refusal to appear in open court initially.

As pope, Francis never returned to his native Argentina.

Independently of his mental state on Sunday, Bergoglio had no trouble in blessing the Trump administration as it adopts political "disappearances" that echo those of Latin America's military juntas, including of foreign students who have protested the genocide in Gaza.

That was his last major official act in his meeting with Vance and one of the most consequential ones that he will be remembered for.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact