

O HERALDO

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Pope Francis's legacy revolutionised the Church

April 26, 2025, will be remembered as one of the most solemn days in the history of the Catholic Church, as the faithful bid farewell to one of the most beloved contemporary Supreme Pontiffs — Pope Francis. His papacy not only guided the Church through turbulent times but also redefined its role in a rapidly changing world.

Barely six months after his election, Jorge Mario Bergoglio made a striking admission—"I am a sinner." In a gesture of profound humility, he acknowledged his own fallibility, despite the traditional belief in papal infallibility. While many hoped he would lead a liberal revolution within the Church, he maintained conservative stances on key issues, such as opposing same-sex marriage and declining to ordain women. As one critic put it, Francis was "at heart a conservative," often floating progressive ideas only to retreat when met with resistance.

Nevertheless, Pope Francis earned the title of "The Great Reformer." He transformed how Catholics communicated and what they prioritised. His landmark encyclical *Laudato Si'* reframed climate change as a moral imperative. He spoke out against unrestrained capitalism, initiated financial reforms within the Vatican, and lived a life that echoed the virtues he preached. When he passed, his personal wealth amounted to just \$100. He owned no bank accounts, no properties, and refused to draw a Vatican salary, choosing instead to honour his vow of poverty.

He fiercely condemned war, racism, exploitation, and authoritarianism, speaking truth to power without hesitation. Within the Church, his most transformative act was the initiation of the "Synod on Synodality"—the largest consultative process in Church history. This dialogue included priests, bishops, laypeople, and women, addressing vital issues like blessing same-sex couples and priestly celibacy. He shifted the Church's tone from rigid dogmatism to inclusive dialogue, urging clergy to be "gentle, patient, and merciful," and to live with "simplicity and austerity."

He was affectionately called the "Pope of the Marginalized" for his deep empathy, humility, and genuine concern for those on the peripheries of society. As the first Latin American Pope, he brought a warmth and pastoral accessibility that stood in contrast to his more reserved predecessors, Benedict XVI and John Paul II. He admitted his mistakes openly, including apologising for defending a bishop involved in a sexual abuse cover-up, and he sought forgiveness from survivors of sex abuse.

Francis chose humility in his daily life—refusing luxury vehicles, delighting in taking selfies with pilgrims, and embracing interfaith dialogue. "All religions are paths to God," he once said, seeking to build bridges across belief systems.

Dubbed the first "Digital Pope," Francis embraced social media to spread the Gospel, much like Christ used parables. He was the first Pontiff to have a Facebook account and even released an encyclical via Twitter. His presence online attracted over 53 million followers on Twitter (now X) across multiple languages and another 10 million on Instagram. One headline fittingly called him an "internet rock star."

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Yet, Pope Francis was no miracle worker. His vision faced significant resistance, especially from within the hierarchy. Many bishops and clergy remained hesitant to embrace his reforms. As the Church prepares to elect his successor—135 Cardinals will cast their vote after the 15-day mourning period—there remains a lingering uncertainty: will the Church continue along the path of reform initiated by Pope Francis, or will it revert to traditional orthodoxy?

Meanwhile, Indians and Goans hold the lingering regret that the amiable Pope Francis was unable to visit India and Goa. As the world watches and the faithful pray, we say farewell to a leader who redefined the papacy with courage, compassion, and conviction.

Adieu, Papa Francisco. You changed the Church—and us—for the better.

comment



TALLULAH D'SILVA

Advantage Goa

I was invited recently to Dodamarg, Maharashtra by the Akhil Bharatiya Maratha Mahasangh, (ABMM) Sindhudurg with eminent Advocate Suhas Sawant at its helm, along with Goa's eminent environmentalist Rajendra Kerkar as well as young advocate Uma Sawant and founder of Symantak University of Life (Dhamapur) Sachin Desai, to share our knowledge and insights on sustainable construction techniques drawing from traditional practices, potentials of Ecotourism, laws on controlled development and sustainable village and opportunities for entrepreneurship for youth.

The ABMM members were concerned that the Dodamarg region just across the border from Goa had been witnessing rapid urbanisation and unregulated township projects causing environmental destruction and loss of traditional livelihoods. Its members also acknowledged the fact that development was essential but that it was equally important to preserve Dodamarg's rich ecological and cultural heritage. And most importantly, their objectives were to integrate sustainable best practices into modern infrastructure planning and involve experts, policy makers and stakeholders to explore innovative solutions that could compliment Dodamarg's environmental and economic needs.

So if Dodamarg has sparked its design and sustainable thinking for its future where environment and culture can be protected, can Goa too, take advantage?



I had first visited Dodamarg more than ten years ago to the village of Mangeli with a large group of children and we had trekked through the quaint village, its stunning plateau at Sada with mesmerising views of the Sahyadris and the Tillari Dam area, the caves under the plateau and finally the most amazing Mangeli waterfall. Did you know that this village on the plateau was planned so sustainably that it had a couple of laterite stone stepped wells so beautifully designed that one could go down to its lower levels quite comfortably even at the peak of summer? The village was self-sufficient and we were taken care of by the locals with a hearty

meal of home grown staples—rice, seasonal vegetables and a bounty of fruits. I had often heard my Papa talk about Shivaji's great engineering capabilities and architectural brilliance when he talked about forts like Sadashivgad in Karwar and others built in Goa.

Isn't it amazing that Shivaji built these forts so sustainably using local materials and planned in such a way that there were lakes, ponds and fresh water sources that an entire village and more could survive on in those times. While we remember Shivaji today, do we recall and practice these values of resourcefulness, innovation, collaboration, environmental protection, conservation of water, high quality outcomes and efficiency? Do we practice the values that Shivaji upheld in sustainability, good governance, respect to all religions and working for the well-being of citizens?

Development cannot be done at the cost of the environment that gives us fresh air, water, food, almost everything that we need today. Planning for sustainability with values set in traditional and nature based practices is but part of all development. There are alternatives today to limit the use of RCC, steel, glass, and such artificial items, the very materials that are causing global warming and spiralling climate change.

Shri Kerkar lamented about the environmental degradation of the village and Dodamarg region as a result of the infrastructure building since the dam building. But he asserted that the rich tribal and indigenous culture and biodiversity of Dodamarg, that is still practiced and seen today, has the potential for Eco tourism initiatives if planned in a non-exploitative manner and one that gives ownership and custodianship to its local youth and community.

Young Advocate Uma Sawant from Kudal, who has also studied microbiology and is an environmental lawyer, stressed the need to understand the laws of the region and neighbouring states and use the provisions to challenge uncontrolled development that can ruin and destroy pristine biodiversity, different ecologies and uniqueness of our villages and towns.

Sachin Desai, inspired everyone to dive deep into the understanding of the Sustainable Development Goals by UN, opportunities to pitch our villages for Best Tourism Village International Award giving examples of the only

3 in India that feature in the list- Dhordo in Gujarat, Kongthang in Meghalaya and Pochampalli in Telangana. He also shared inspiring stories of youth in Sindhudurg who have returned to their villages from big cities and have started successful initiatives like 'Ajaonkar Aji's Eco-Store', Farm to kitchen 'Swayam Naturals', 'Konkan Routes', etc.

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Today I was invited by The Resources and Energy Institute (TERI) for the 'Mainstreaming Climate Sensitive Urban Planning in Goa' stakeholder meeting that had Government Agencies/Departments like the TCP, PDA, Smart City, G-SUDA, etc. to moderate one of its sessions on Climate Sensitive approaches in Urban Spatial Planning. We first closed our eyes and reflected on our childhood memories and special moments spent in spaces in our villages and cities, how these have changed with rapid urbanization and unplanned development, how these will be impacted with the impending rise in sea level and global warming and what we need to do to mitigate the impact and simply survive!

All the participants were vocal and in unison asserted that the river, khazaans, manos, fields, coconut lined bunds, hills full of berries, walking, meeting and knowing fellow citizens, climbing a tree, etc were key to the sustainable growth and well-being. Only one town planner wisely asserted that as planners, designers, engineers, developers, builders, etc, 'we' have the knowledge, power and opportunity to plan our cities, towns and villages to be beautiful, livable and sustainable.

He said it's not the cities or towns alone that need to undergo renewable development but our villages too need to be planned in advance in a sustainable manner where all the unforgettable memories and unique places of our childhood are preserved and environment and development go hand in hand. The power to effect positive and sustainable change is with each one of us. Let's use it to our advantage for Goa and for the Konkan region.

(Tallulah D'Silva is an architect and silver awardee of the Golden Door Award 2020 for truth and integrity.)

people's edit

TAXI DRIVERS: DO NOT TURN TYRANTS, PLEASE!

RAGHAV GADGIL

Goa earned its reputation as a serene coastal paradise where time flows gently and carefree laughter lingers on sunlit shores. Tourists flock here to escape urban chaos, while locals pride themselves on a unique, laid-back culture. But beneath this postcard image, lurks an escalating crisis that leaves passengers, both outsiders and Goans alike, feeling cornered and helpless when dealing with taxis that seem to operate under their own rules.

I first sensed the gravity of this problem around five years ago when I arrived at Karmali Railway Station with my wife and young son. We wanted to go to our home in Marcel, but it was too far for a reasonable fare. Outside the station, I approached a rickshaw driver who quoted me a steep sum of Rs 400. It felt unjust, so I attempted to bargain. But every other driver I came across silently agreed with the first man. Dejected, I returned to him, hoping he might reconsider. Instead, he turned smug, declaring the new, non-negotiable price of Rs 600. In a matter of minutes, the inflation was 50%. "The 400-rupee offer is no longer valid," he said dismissively. It felt like a heist in broad daylight, leaving me with a taste of humiliation.

In that moment of helplessness, I trudged some 50 meters to the main road and managed to strike a deal with another driver for Rs 300. The harshness, the arrogance — it all lingered far longer than the actual journey. Such instances of rickshaw or taxi extortion are not isolated. They're woven into a daily narrative where visitors and locals alike are forced to pay beyond reason.

Fast forward to recent times, and the hostility has grown bolder. I've witnessed a shocking scenario where taxi drivers from one taluka decided to scold and threaten a driver from another who dared pick up passengers "outside his jurisdiction." Moreover, there are accounts of local drivers flat-out urging app-based taxis not to pick people from certain prime locations like airports, railway stations, or even major hotels. I wonder how this approach has become normalised. Is there a secret rulebook that grants them the monopoly rights? Or do these ideas simply take birth in the small minds of those who wield misplaced authority?

We might imagine that in a democracy, citizens can choose the service that suits them best. But on Goan roads, a handful of operators have elected themselves gatekeepers, restricting who can operate where and pushing away any sense of healthy competition. We are still stuck in a feudal era, where landowners control the territory while commoners pay tribute. Ironically, we see the government encouraging app-based services to modernise transport, yet on the ground, these same services are blocked by intimidation tactics at key transport hubs.

The saddest part is that such intimidation tarnishes the image of Goa as a warm, hospitable land. It inconveniences tourists seeking solace and embarrasses locals who witness these brash displays of territorial power. We are torn between empathy for the many drivers who genuinely struggle to make ends meet and frustration towards those who revel in bullying, uncompetitive pricing, and subtle threats of violence.

App-based taxi services are not a panacea but offer features that benefit everyone: transparent pricing, digital payments, real-time tracking, and accountability. They could help standardise fares and put an end to arbitrary hikes. We all deserve an honest fare, a safe ride, and a reminder that Goa remains a haven of tranquility, not a battleground where taxi drivers act like tyrants with impunity.

One can only hope that, in the coming days, voices demanding fairness, rationality, and dignity in Goa's transport system will resonate loud enough to overshadow the din of intimidation. Until then, we remain caught in a struggle — arms full of luggage, hearts heavy with disappointment, and minds laden with questions no one seems eager to answer.

Our unforgettable memories of Pope

Easter Monday was a very sad day for us rejoicing Christians as we celebrated the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and of a sudden we received the passing of our beloved Pope Francis, where the world witnessed his blessing Urbi et Orbi (to the city and the world) and then surprisingly moving in his pope mobile to greet the faithful gathered at St Peter's square at the Vatican.

As one of the recipient of the Papal Honor - Pro Ecclesia Et Pontifice - from late Pope, now Saint John Paul II during the Jubilee Year 2000 when ten of us parishioners of Sacred Heart Church, Bahrain, had opportunity to attend the Papal Mass of Pope Francis on 5 November, 2022 through the invitation of previous Apostolic Administrator of Arabia, Bishop Paul Hinder, during the Pope's visit to the Kingdom of Bahrain from 3-6 November, 2022, where my wife and myself had the privilege to attend Pope Francis's Mass seated on the first row to partake in the Eucharistic Celebration amongst the thousands gathered.

As we mourn the death of our dear Pope, who worked for the down trodden, to bring peace in the warring countries, the champion of the poor. Rest in Peace our beloved Pope Francis.

John Rebello, Old Goa

Tell the world of his love

Pope Francis leaves his flock 12 years after his papacy. A fatherly religious world leader always wanting to meet his followers standing in long queue, embracing, blessing everyone wherever His Holiness went to visit will be missed by many henceforth never to be seen again in our midst. Little ones and more particularly, young mothers, some with just born new ones holding in their arms, waited to meet the Pope when passing by with the hope that he will bless them all. Indeed, while waving out to all if the Pope saw anyone wanting to meet him he would stop his Pope mobile, call out the waiting standee and moved ahead more particularly children and even the new born, held them so tenderly and returned to the mother pushing some souvenir into the hand of the children that they all will remember him in their life time. Indeed, they will now more fondly that his presence is not with us any more.

His Holiness cared as much for the suffering ones, the lonely, the marginalised, more the poor. Rightly so, Pope Francis gave away in charity whatever he was gifted with in the true spirit of the Jesuit, he himself being one,

like St. Francis Xavier who turned away from this world once he realized the emptiness of life staying attached to this world. And the list goes on of his goodness to talk about to this world. Pope Francis will be missed very much once he is permanently put to rest in the Basilica of St. Mary Major which he visited very often to pray but will inspire many to walk in his footsteps to making life meaningful with love, affection and personal touch.

Aires Sequeira, Salvador do Mundo

Champion of world peace

In the death of Pope Francis, the world has lost a genuine and humble human, who dedicated and reached out to all in particular to the poorest and most marginalised. Leading by example, he will always be remembered as a beacon of hope for the downtrodden and underprivileged and for his compassion by a tireless commitment for the common causes and benefits of ordinary people.

Pope Francis, the first Jesuit Pope was very inspiring and had an extraordinary human memory. Ever so, candid and upright, always walking the talk and speak-

ing his mind. He was passionate about saving the environment and dealing with the adverse effects of climate change. He reached out to different faiths and his immense contribution to promoting inter faith dialogue was appreciated by all. While striving for World Peace, he wanted leaders in power to conduct themselves with humility, kindness and respect for each other.

History will record that all through his thirteen years as Pope and until the very last, he was close to the people. Even on this Easter Sunday, the Holy Father with determination and love made his final public appearance by greeting and giving his apostolic blessing to the people and the world in St Peter's Square.

A true tribute to our departed Pope would be for all world leaders to emulate his rich legacy and to work tirelessly towards lasting and sustainable World Peace and end all acts of war and aggression currently going on in various parts of the world. His mission on earth accomplished, may Pope Francis continue to bless us while he now rests in eternal peace as he makes his journey to the House of God awaited by the Lord.

Aires Rodrigues, London

World bids adieu to ever smiling Pope Francis

The body of the late Pope Francis was transferred to St Peter's Basilica on Wednesday to lie in state until his funeral today morning. The Holy See Press Office announced on Tuesday that Pope Francis' funeral Mass will take place on Saturday, April 26, at 10 am local time, 1.30 (IST) in St Peter's Square. The mass will be celebrated by Patriarchs, Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, and priests from across the globe. The Eucharistic celebrations will mark the beginning of the nine days mourning and masses for the repose of the soul of Pope Francis. The world will today bid adieu to one of their most beloved Pope who won the hearts of millions across the globe. He will be remembered forever as the people's Pope who led a down-to-earth life and a life devoted to the 1.3 billion Catholics spread across the globe. But most of all Pope Francis will be remembered for his smile.

He always wore an infectious smile. Incidentally Pope Francis beatified Pope John Paul I who was described as the "smiling Pope" and was one of the shortest serving pope in history. Pope John Paul I was head of the Catholic Church and sovereign of Vatican City from 26 August 1978 until his death 33 days later.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco