

'A FATHER TO EVERYBODY'

Pope Francis, leader of world's Catholics, dies at 88

Late pontiff's humility, love for the poor noted locally

BY DAVE SUTOR
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The Very Rev. Matthew Baum, Patricia Loughlin and Elizabeth Gramlich spent a few minutes Monday putting together a simple tribute to the late Pope Francis – a portrait with a black mourning cloth draped across an easel.

It will be on display near St. John Gualbert Cathedral's altar for a while.

Francis died a few hours earlier after leading the Roman Catholic Church and its approximately 1.4 billion members since 2013.

Loughlin described him as "a father to everybody."

■ Which cardinals are seen as contenders to be the next pope? / Page 10

"He happened to be very humble, had so much love for the poor people," Loughlin said inside the cathedral in downtown Johnstown, where she has been a parishioner since 2000.

"He gives such good advice to all the church, the Catholic Church, all over the world. He's our leader. We'll miss him, but we'll move forward to another pope."

Gramlich said she felt Francis was "a very sweet man" with "a natural calm manner."

"He was into evangelization, to get everyone out there talking to people and trying to explain your faith to people who may not know about it, so we tried," Gramlich said. "We did."

Francis, who had been seriously ill and in a wheelchair for a period of time, made his final public appearance at St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City the day before his death. In his own voice, he told the world, "Dear brothers and sisters, happy Easter," in Latin.

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DAVE SUTOR/THE TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT

The Very Rev. Matthew Baum, rector at St. John Gualbert Cathedral, and parishioner Elizabeth Gramlich prepare a tribute to the late Pope Francis Monday at the cathedral in downtown Johnstown. Francis, 88, died Monday of a stroke that put him into a coma and led to heart failure, the Vatican said.

Tributes paid from around the world

Leaders, backers, critics comment on Francis' legacy

BY JAMEY KEATEN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LYON, France – Church bells tolled in mourning. Well-wishers flocked into pews. Tributes to Pope Francis poured in from around the world Monday after the Vatican announced the pontiff's death at age 88.

The 266th pope was praised for his groundbreaking steps to honor the poor and the vulnerable; seek to end conflicts such as those in the Middle East, Ukraine and Africa; protect the environment; and guide the Catholic Church toward greater tolerance of gays and lesbians, among other things. Some critics say he didn't always go far enough. Others said he went too far.

Many recalled his legacy as the first pope from Latin America, and the first Jesuit to reach the pinnacle of church hierarchy, one who stressed humility over hubris for a Church beset with scandal and indifference – and even as a soccer fan from "futbol"-crazed Argentina.

Here's a look at some of the global reactions a day after his last public appearance on Easter Sunday to bless thousands of people in St. Peter's Square.

■ U.S. Vice President JD Vance, who met with the pope on Easter Sunday before traveling to India, wrote on social media that his "heart goes out" to the millions of Christians



A shop owner places a black ribbon over a photo of the late Pope Francis Monday in Bethlehem, West Bank, after the news of Francis' death at age 88.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

who loved him, and said: "I was happy to see him yesterday, though he was obviously very ill."

■ President Donald Trump posted on Truth Social: "Rest in Peace Pope Francis! May God

Bless him and all who loved him!"

■ King Charles III praised the pope for his work on

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Death of a pope triggers ancient church rituals

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

VATICAN CITY – The death of a pope starts a centuries-old ritual involving sacred oaths by the cardinals electing a successor, the piercing of ballots with a needle and thread after they're counted, and then burning them to produce either the white smoke or black smoke to signal if there's a new leader for the world's 1.3 billion Catholics.

The election itself is shrouded in secrecy, with cardinals forbidden from communicat-

ing with the outside world what happened during the voting in the conclave behind the frescoed walls of the Sistine Chapel.

While there were some leaps of artistic license, the process is in many ways as it was depicted in last year's Oscar-winning film "Conclave."

St. John Paul II rewrote the regulations on papal elections in a 1996 document that remains largely in force, though Pope Benedict XVI amended it twice before he resigned. Here

is what happens when a pope dies, a period known as the "sede vacante," or the "vacant See."

Who's in charge?

After the pope has died, the camerlengo, or chamberlain, must certify the death and seal the papal apartment. He runs administrative and financial duties of the Holy See until a new pope takes over.

The largely ceremonial job

of camerlengo is currently held by Cardinal Kevin Farrell, the Irish-born American head of the Vatican's laity office, who also announced the death Monday morning.

Nearly all prefects of Vatican offices lose their jobs when a pope dies, but a few stay on, including the foreign minister and the master of liturgical ceremonies, who plays a key role in assembling the conclave.

The dean of the College of Cardinals summons the cardi-

nals for the funeral, presiding at the Mass before the conclave begins. That position is currently held by Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, the retired head of the Vatican's office for bishops.

In November 2024, Francis reformed the rites to be used for his funeral, simplifying them to emphasize his role as a mere bishop and allowing for burial outside the Vatican. Francis has chosen to be buried in St. Mary

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Vatican recalls a life dedicated to serving God and the church

BY NICOLE WINFIELD
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

VATICAN CITY – Pope Francis, history's first Latin American pontiff, who charmed the world with his humble style and concern for the poor but alienated conservatives with critiques of capitalism and climate change, died Monday. He was 88.

The Vatican said Francis died of a stroke that put him into a coma and led his heart to fail. Bells tolled in Catholic churches from his native Argentina to the Philippines and across Rome as news spread around the world.

"At 7:35 this morning, the Bishop of Rome, Francis, returned to the home of the Father. His entire life was dedicated to the service of the Lord and of his Church," Cardinal Kevin Farrell said from the chapel of the Domus Santa Marta, where Francis lived.

Francis, who suffered from chronic lung disease and had part of one lung removed as a young man, was admitted to Gemelli hospital Feb. 14 for a respiratory crisis that developed into double pneumonia. He spent 38 days there, the longest hospitalization of his 12-year papacy.

He made his last public appearance Easter Sunday – a day before his death – to bless thousands of people in St. Peter's Square, drawing wild cheers and applause. Beforehand, he met U.S. Vice President JD Vance.

Francis performed the blessing from the same loggia where he was introduced on March 13, 2013, as the 266th pope.

From his first greeting that night – a remarkably normal "Buonasera" ("Good evening") – to his embrace of refugees and the downtrodden, Francis signaled a very different tone for the papacy, stressing humility over hubris for a Catholic Church beset by scandal and accusations of indifference.

The Argentine-born Jorge Mario Bergoglio brought a breath of fresh air into a 2,000-year-old institution that had seen its influence wane during the troubled tenure of Pope Benedict XVI, whose surprise resignation led to Francis' election.

But Francis soon invited troubles of his own, and conservatives grew increasingly upset with his progressive bent, outreach to LGBTQ+ Catholics and crackdown on traditionalists. His greatest test came in 2018 when he botched a notorious case of clergy sexual abuse in Chile, and the scandal that festered under his predecessors erupted anew.

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Big windstorm leaves 'disaster area' behind

Barn destroyed, homes damaged in southern Somerset County; work to clean up underway

BY DAVID HURST
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SALISBURY – A weekend storm's strong winds destroyed a Salisbury-area barn, dislodged an Addison home's roof and left thousands of people temporarily without power in southern Somerset County.

Powerful straight-line winds peaked at 95 mph, causing a 13-mile-long trail of damage across the Mason-Dixon line Saturday, from Addison Township to the Salisbury area of Elk Lick Township, the National Weather Service reported.

"I can't even guess the number of trees that were blown over onto roads or into houses," Addison fire Chief Bill Bar-

low said Monday, adding that at least a dozen residences were struck.

The wind left a "disaster area" in its wake, he said.

Somerset County Emergency Management Agency Director Joel Landis said the storm's path swept west to east, essentially along the Mason-Dixon Line.

Two people sustained injuries in an all-terrain vehicle accident after colliding with a tree downed by the storm, the National Weather Service in State College reported.

Barlow said the vehicle's driver sustained only minor injuries, but fire crews had to cut through downed trees and



THOMAS SLUSSER/THE TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT

A Thompson Electric Inc. lineman pulls limbs away from downed trees to remove fallen electrical wires Monday near a home on Springs Road in Somerset County. Find more photos of the damage at www.TribDem.com.

limbs to respond to the accident.

At one point, all of Addison was without power, he added. As of Monday, utility crews were still working to restore power to just less than 500 customers in the Addison and Confluence areas, Penelec's outage map showed.

Addison Volunteer Fire

Department officials opened their social hall to community residents who might be in need of water or restrooms.

Photographs shared by Addison fire officials showed tall trees toppled onto homes and roads by the storm. One photo showed a tree trunk that

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Forum spotlights fears over potential for Medicaid cuts

BY DAVE SUTOR
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Twenty-one percent of Somerset County's population was enrolled in some type of Medicaid coverage as of March. The number was even higher in Cambria County, at 26%.

Numerous services were available to those people with limited income or resources, including inpatient hospital treatment, transportation, rural health clinics, drug and alcohol rehab, pediatric care and nursing facility living.

Recently, though, a Republican budget resolution was introduced calling for the House Energy and Commerce Committee to cut at least \$880 billion in costs through 2034. That could require making significant reductions to Medicaid, a joint federal-state program that the committee oversees.

Medicaid spending was

approximately \$890 billion in 2023, with the federal government covering about two-thirds and states contributing the remainder.

On Monday, a newly formed group called Locals for Good brought attention to the issue by hosting a Medicaid Matters forum at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown's John P. Murtha Center for Public Service and National Competitiveness.

The panel consisted of Highlands Health Clinic Executive Director Rosalie Danchanko, certified community health worker Jason Riligio, United Way of the Southern Alleghenies President and CEO Karen Struble Myers, Center for Population Health Executive Director Jeannine McMillan, and Cambria Residential Services

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safeguarding the planet, and alluded to their multiple personal meetings – including a private visit April 10 at the Vatican.

“We were greatly moved to have been able to visit him earlier in the month,” the King wrote in a statement signed “Charles R.”

■ Church bells tolled in honor of Francis, from the recently reopened Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris to a lone bell at St. Bartholomew Parish in Bulacan, in the Philippines, that was rung 88 times to signify “the 88 fruitful years of our dear Pope Francis,” the parish wrote on social media.

The church was one of many in the Philippines, the largest Roman Catholic nation in Asia, to ring its bells to mourn the death of the pontiff, who in 2015 consoled survivors of Typhoon Haiyan and celebrated Mass before millions in Manila.

“Pope Francis showed us what it means to suffer with others and find hope in the midst of pain,” said Manila Archbishop Jose Advincula, alluding to the

devastation wreaked by Haiyan in 2013 that left more than 7,300 people dead or missing, flattened entire villages and displaced more than 5 million.

■ Anne Barrett Doyle, co-director of U.S.-based group BishopAccountability, called Francis “a beacon of hope” to many desperate and marginalized people worldwide: “But what we most needed from this pope was justice for the Church’s own wounded, the children and adults sexually abused by Catholic clergy. In this realm, where Francis had supreme power, he refused to make the necessary changes. This choice is having devastating consequences for the Church’s most powerless members. It will forever tarnish the legacy of this remarkable man.”

■ Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, noted a recent letter from the pope to bishops in the United States alluding to “our attempts to respond to the face of Christ in the migrant, poor, and unborn. In fact, he has always used the strongest and clearest expressions in the defense of the dignity of the human person from conception to natural death.”

FORUM

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Executive Director Jim Cook. The event was moderated by The Tribune-Democrat Publisher Chip Minemyer.

“There’s so much disinformation out there about what it actually does, what it actually means to people,” Locals for Good volunteer Todd Holsopple said. “We wanted to give this opportunity as a way for people to learn more about it.”

All the panelists expressed concerns about what could happen if big cuts are made to Medicaid.

“I’ve followed this forever and I’m not an alarmist, but in 55 years of studying government in Washington, this is the most threatening, frightening thing I have seen in 55 years,” Cook said.

Danchanko said there are “a lot of problems” and “a lot of concerns,” but hoped that the forum would educate people “so that we can move forward to take action.”

Struble Myers said cuts would “hurt our most vulnerable residents.”

“Above all else, it feels like a penalty for being in poverty. ... Taking away fundamental health care for folks will ultimately

debilitate our community,” she said.

Riligio said reductions could negatively affect local hospitals and necessitate states taking money from other areas in order to offset losses of federal Medicaid dollars.

“If our hospitals fail, everybody that works in human services or medical won’t have a job,” Riligio said. “I don’t understand. I think the whole city should be in this room. There’s not going to be food for all the people that are laid off, all the nurses, all the cleaning staff at the hospitals.”

McMillan talked about reactions she is seeing in the community.

“We do hear (concerns) from folks every day,” McMillan said, “and we’re really just trying to bring some of that localized data and conversation around that, let folks share their concerns. Hopefully we can take those concerns back to some of our elected leaders and share what we’ve heard from their constituents.”

Locals for Good plans to host a Defend Medicaid rally beginning at 1 p.m. Saturday at Central Park in downtown Johnstown.

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FRANCIS

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And then Francis, the crowd-loving, globe-trotting pope of the peripheries, navigated the unprecedented reality of leading a universal religion through the COVID-19 pandemic from a locked-down Vatican City.

“We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented,” Francis told an empty St. Peter’s Square in March 2020. Calling for a rethink of the global economic framework, he said the pandemic showed the need for “all of us to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other.”

World leaders Monday extolled Francis’ commitment to the marginalized. French President Emmanuel Macron, whose country is largely Catholic, wrote on X: “From Buenos Aires to Rome, Pope Francis wanted the church to bring joy and hope to the poorest. ... May this hope forever outlast him.”

Flags flew at half-staff in Italy, and crowds gathered in St. Peter’s Square. When the great bells of St. Peter’s Basilica began tolling, tourists stopped in their tracks to record the moment on their phones.

Francis’ death sets off a weeks-long process of allowing the faithful to pay their final respects, first for Vatican officials in the Santa Marta chapel and then in St. Peter’s for the general public, followed by a funeral and a conclave to elect a new pope.

As the sun was setting Monday evening, the Vatican held a rosary prayer in St. Peter’s Square in its first public commemoration.

In his final will, Francis confirmed he will be buried in St. Mary Major Basilica in a simple underground tomb with only “Franciscus” written on it.

The basilica, which sits outside the Vatican, is home to Francis’ favorite icon of the Virgin Mary, to whom Francis was particularly devoted.

Francis was elected on a mandate to reform the Vatican bureaucracy and finances but went further in shaking up the church without changing its core doctrine. “Who am I to judge?” he replied when asked about a purportedly gay priest.

The comment sent a message of welcome to the LGBTQ+ community and those who felt shunned by a church that had stressed sexual propriety over unconditional love. “Being homosexual is not a crime,”

he told The Associated Press in 2023, urging an end to civil laws that criminalize it.

Stressing mercy, Francis changed the church’s position on the death penalty, calling it inadmissible in all circumstances. He also declared the possession of nuclear weapons, not just their use, was “immoral.”

In other firsts, he approved an agreement with China over bishop nominations that had vexed the Vatican for decades, met the Russian patriarch and charted new relations with the Muslim world by visiting the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq.

He reaffirmed the all-male, celibate priesthood and upheld the church’s opposition to abortion, equating it to “hiring a hit man to solve a problem.”

But he added women to important decision-making roles and allowed them to serve as lectors and acolytes in parishes. He let women vote alongside bishops in periodic Vatican meetings, following long-standing complaints that women do much of the church’s work but are barred from power.

Sister Nathalie Becquart, whom Francis named to one of the highest Vatican jobs, said his legacy was a vision of a church in which men and women existed in a relationship of reciprocity and respect.

“It was about shifting a pattern of domination – from human being to the creation, from men to women – to a pattern of cooperation,” said Becquart, the first woman to hold a voting position in a Vatican synod.

Still, a note of criticism came Monday from the Women’s Ordination Conference, which had been frustrated by Francis’ unwillingness to push for the ordination of women.

“This made him a complicated, frustrating, and sometimes heart-breaking figure for many women,” the statement said.

While Francis did not allow women to be ordained, the voting reform was part of a revolutionary change in emphasizing what the church should be: a refuge for everyone – “todos, todos, todos” (“everyone, everyone, everyone”). Migrants, the poor, prisoners and outcasts were invited to his table far more than presidents or CEOs.

“For Pope Francis, (the goal) was always to extend the arms of the church to embrace all people, not to exclude anyone,” said Farrell, the Vatican camerlengo, who takes charge after a pontiff’s death.

RITUALS

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Major Basilica, where his favorite icon of the Virgin Mary, the Salus Populi Romani, is located.

What’s the timing?

The death of a pope begins a precise sequence of events that include the confirmation of death in the pontiff’s home, the transfer of the coffin to St. Peter’s Basilica for public viewing, a funeral Mass and burial. Interment must take place between the fourth and sixth day after his death.

After the funeral, there are nine days of official mourning, known as the “novendiali.” During this period, the cardinals arrive in Rome. To give everyone time to assemble, the conclave must begin 15 to 20 days after the “sede vacante” is declared, although it can start sooner if the cardinals agree.

Who can elect a pope?

Only cardinals younger than age 80 are eligible to vote. Current regulations notionally limit the number of electors to 120, but popes have often exceeded that ceiling.

According to the most recently updated Vatican statistics, there were 135 cardinals younger than 80 and eligible to vote. Cardi-

nals older than age 80 can be elected pope.

Those older than 80 can’t vote but can participate in pre-conclave meetings, known as general congregations, in which church problems are discussed. It was in these meetings in 2013 that then-Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio spoke about the need for the church to go to the “existential peripheries” to find those who suffer – an off-the-cuff speech that helped his election.

How are the votes taken?

A first ballot is held in the Sistine Chapel on the afternoon after the initial Mass. If no pope is elected, over the ensuing days two ballots are held each morning and two each afternoon.

The ballots are rectangular pieces of paper with the words: “Eligo in Summum Pontificem” (“I elect as supreme pontiff”) written on top, with a space for a name.

Each cardinal makes his choice, folds the paper in half, walks to the front of the chapel and declares: “I call as my witness Christ the Lord, who will be my judge, that my vote is given to the one who before God I think should be elected.”

He then puts the ballot on a tray and tips it into a receptacle.

Three designated cardinals, known as scrutineers, check each ballot to see if it is filled out correctly. Each name is read aloud and counted, with the results announced to the conclave after each round.

If no one gets the needed two-thirds of votes, the ballots are pierced with a needle and thread, which is then knotted and placed on a tray, and another round of voting is prepared.

Benedict modified some of John Paul’s 1996 conclave rules, most notably excluding his vision that a pope could be elected by a simple majority if voting was stalemated.

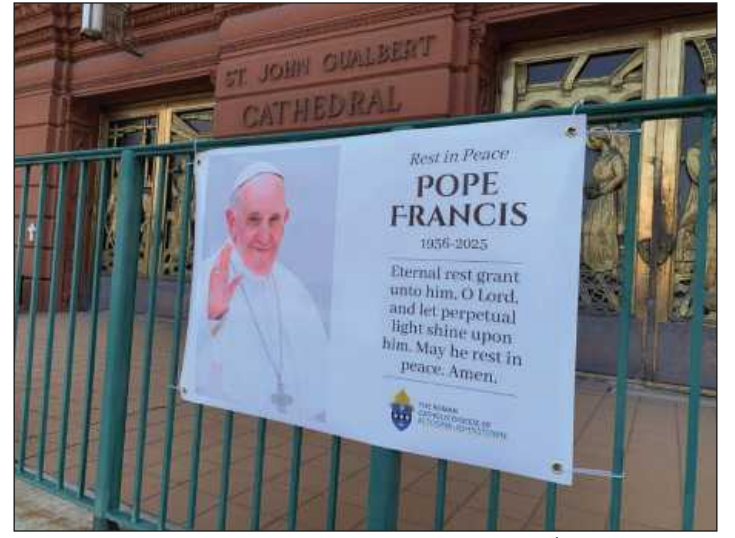
Benedict decreed that a two-thirds majority is always needed, no matter how long it takes. He did so to prevent cardinals from holding out for the 12 days foreseen by John Paul and then pushing through a candidate with a slim majority.

What about secrecy?

Benedict also tightened the oath of secrecy in the conclave, making clear that anyone who reveals what went on inside faces automatic excommunication.

In John Paul’s rules, excommunication was always a possibility, but Benedict revised the oath that liturgical assistants and secretaries take to make it explicit, saying they must observe “absolute and perpetual secrecy” and explicitly refrain from using any audio or video recording devices.

They now declare: “I take this oath fully aware that an infraction thereof will incur the penalty of automatic excommunication reserved to the Apostolic See. So help me God and these Holy Gospels, which I touch with my hand.”



DAVE SUTOR/THE TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT

A banner paying tribute to the late Pope Francis hangs on a fence Monday outside St. John Gualbert Cathedral in downtown Johnstown.

LATE

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He died from a cerebral stroke that led to a coma and cardiocirculatory collapse, according to the Vatican. Francis was 88.

“It was a blessing that we made it through Holy Week,” said Baum, St. John Gualbert Cathedral’s rector. “And, in a certain respect, the Holy Father was facing his own passion at the very same time we were celebrating the passion of our lord.”

‘Deeply Argentinian’

Francis, born Jorge Mario Bergoglio in Buenos Aires, Argentina, was ordained in 1969 as part of the Jesuit religious order. Bergoglio was named auxiliary bishop of Buenos Aires in 1992 and archbishop of the Argentine capital in 1998.

“He was a deeply Argentinian person,” said Yamila Audisio, a Catholic immigrant from Argentina now living in Westmont. “He was an intellectual. He was full of complexities, contradictions. He was passionate about soccer, and about friendship and family. I think all of those things made him like a representative of an Argentinian person.”

Bergoglio became known as the “slum bishop” because of how he served the poor and marginalized.

“He held certain values throughout his entire life, values that he expressed at his time as a pope, but also when he was in the lower ranks of the church,” Audisio said. “So, for example, he was always very close to the poor. I’m not talking about the poor in general. He was close to the poorest people. He was very close to the priests that work in these poor communities. He always had a message of inclusion.”

Audisio and Francis are both descendants of Italians who emigrated to Argentina. “He had humble origins, too,” Audisio said. “He was the first generation in Argentina. He knew how much immigrants had suffered. I think there is a connection between not only the religious part of the message of Jesus, but he also had a personal experience of immigration. If you follow his message, he always advocated for immigrants no matter where they were from.”

“Build up people”

Pope St. John Paul II elevated him to cardinal in 2001.

Bergoglio then ascended to the papacy and took the name Francis in honor of St. Francis of Assisi on March 13, 2013, following the historic resignation of Pope Benedict XVI. He was the first South American pope and the first non-European leader of the Catholic Church since Syrian-born

Pope Gregory III died in 741.

Roman Catholic Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown Bishop Mark Bartchak said that, as pope, Francis knew how to do “little things” to “build up people so they can find that hope.”

“Personally, I really admired the way Pope Francis conducted himself,” Bartchak said.

“What you see is what you get when you talk with him, when you meet with him – very down-to-earth, humble person, a very intelligent person.”

Bartchak continued: “Pope Francis had the experience and the compassion and the virtue to listen to people from where they’re coming from. I think that’s what set him apart.”

The Rev. James Crookston, a senior priest in the diocese and Bishop McCort Catholic Academy board member, recalled Francis’ work in a similarly affectionate way.

“Pope Francis was an inclusive man,” Crookston said.

“This will also be educational. We’ll have an inclusive approach to our student body, which is about 30% non-Catholic, and point out what Pope Francis meant for the whole world, especially when he went to the peripheries. He wanted to include everyone. Everyone has a gift and a talent.”

Crookston added: “This is the (Jubilee 2025) year of hope, and, as Catholics, we believe even in our suffering we have hope because Jesus is with us. This pope was a very hopeful person. He always saw his purpose was to get to Heaven. And he now, with God’s graces, has achieved that.”

‘Historic event’

The College of Cardinals will soon hold a secluded conclave during which they will select a new pope. Only cardinals younger than 80 years old can participate.

“That would be hard to top this pope, but I really don’t know how strict they want it,” Gramlich said. “He was very good at evangelizing and embracing people of all faiths to come into our church. I don’t know what they’re going to look for. That’s up to the College of Cardinals.”

The first conclave occurred in January 1276. It is the longest-running process currently in use for electing a head of state, with the pope being the leader of Vatican City, a sovereign nation.

Bishop McCort Principal Tom Smith said the upcoming conclave will be “a very historic event.”

“It absolutely is a learning experience. ... For us here in the school as Catholics, it’s a great learning opportunity for our students to understand the process and the history of that process,” Smith said.

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STORM

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crashed onto a Subaru sedan parked on the roadside near a home.

“We’re extremely fortunate there weren’t more homes left

uninhabitable from this storm,” said Landis, whose department was collecting storm-related damage information and reporting it to the National Weather Service to help the weather agency study the storm’s impact.

Landis said several barns appeared to have been damaged by the storm. In a media release,

the National Weather Service indicated one farm on Ash Hill Road sustained damage because strong winds caused a silo to drop onto a large barn.

The American Red Cross was working to help anyone temporarily displaced by the storm, Landis added.

Barlow credited fellow fire-

fighters, PennDOT, Penelec and Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative crews for their work, as well as the Somerset County Department of Emergency Services and the county’s 911 dispatchers for “doing a tremendous job” throughout the hectic weekend.

Generator safety

Landis said many families in rural Somerset County have backup generators to help them adapt to lengthy storm outages.

They can be an invaluable asset, but he also reminded people to exercise caution when operating them.

“The carbon monoxide they produce is colorless and odorless,” Landis said. “We want to remind people ... to use them only in well-ventilated areas with their exhausts pointing away from the home.”

Landis urged generator users to run the devices as far from a house as possible, to reduce fume exposure risks.

Stormy trend

For many, reports of wind damage in the Salisbury area



THOMAS SLUSSER/THE TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT

Damage caused by Saturday’s high winds to a barn on Ash Hill Road near Salisbury in Somerset County is shown Monday.

evoke memories of a series of tornadoes that ransacked the community in 1998.

But Landis said damage from straight-line winds, microbursts and tornadoes have become significantly more common in Somerset County over the past several years. And each can inflict serious damage, he added.

The maximum wind speed of Saturday’s storm was the equivalent to EF-1 tornado strength

– but even without a rotating wind force, straight-line winds can be just as damaging, weather officials have said.

The last damaging event was just over a month ago on March 16, Landis said.

“These can be serious events,” he said.

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