

The Shoes of Pope Francis

He could have been buried in shoes polished to a shine, new and unmarked. But he wasn't. Simple black shoes. scuffed, worn, bruised, much like all of us. He went to his rest in shoes that had known the dust of the streets, the weight of long journeys, the ache of standing alongside the poor, the forgotten, the heartbroken and the lost. He once wrote, "I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting, and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security." And so he was—a shepherd who smelled like his sheep, a pilgrim who bore the scuffs and stains of the road... The shoes of a pilgrim.

The shoes of a man who believed the Gospel is not proclaimed by standing still, but by walking, by going, by risking, by loving.

Pope Francis lived as he died – showing us that the path of Jesus Christ is not paved in comfort but in courage. In not staying inside but going out. This is a path that leads to the margins, to the brokenhearted, to the overlooked corners of the world.

In his own word, spoken on April 12, 2023: "One does not proclaim the Gospel standing still, locked in an office, at one's computer, arguing like 'keyboard warriors' and replacing the reality of proclamation with copy and past ideas taken from here and there. The Gospel is proclaimed by moving, by walking, by going."

Thank you, Holy Father, for walking the road before us – scuffed shoes, bruised heart and open arms. - Julianne Stanz

