



Australian Catholics mourn Pope Francis

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference President, Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, says Pope Francis will be remembered as a man of simplicity, humility and compassion.

Pope Francis, born Jorge Mario Bergoglio, became the first non-European pope in centuries, the first Latin American pope, the first Jesuit pope and the first to take the name Francis when he was elected to succeed Pope Benedict XVI in 2013.

“The sad news of the death of Pope Francis, while it does not come as a surprise given his age and his declining health in recent years, will be received with great sadness by Catholics, and by people of good will, all over the world,” Archbishop Costelloe said.

“When Cardinal Bergoglio appeared on the balcony overlooking Saint Peter’s Square on 14 March 2013, and was introduced to the world as the newly-elected Pope Francis, his simplicity and humility set the tone for a papacy which would be marked by an emphasis on the mercy and compassion of God, and on the Church’s vocation to be a sign and bearer of that merciful love in an increasingly troubled world.

“His famous description of the Church as a field hospital where wounds could be healed and hearts could be warmed was a call to a renewal of the Church’s life and mission, grounded in a return to Christ as the source and inspiration of everything the Church sought to do and to be.

“The 12 years of the papacy of Pope Francis were not without controversy. His constant call that the Church should be open to everybody caused some to fear that he was putting at risk the integrity of the Church’s faith and moral teaching.

“He himself insisted, however, that he was ‘a loyal son of the Church’ who, in recognising his own sinfulness, had come to understand that it was the task of the Church, as it was the task of Christ, to embrace people in their brokenness and fragility and lead them to healing and wholeness.”

Archbishop Costelloe got to know Pope Francis better over the past couple of years in his roles as president of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia and as a key figure in supporting the Synod on Synodality.

Parishes around the country will hold special memorial Masses for Pope Francis in the coming days. Information on those commemorations can be found on local parish and cathedral websites.

“While the Catholic Church, and indeed the whole world, will now turn its attention to the election of a new pope, faithful Catholics will also be praying for Pope Francis, that the mercy and compassion of God which he proclaimed to the world will now embrace him as he enters into the mystery of eternal life,” Archbishop Costelloe said.

“They will also join with so many others around the world who will remember with gratitude the simple goodness of a humble man who was ready to make of his whole life a gift of love and service, not just for his fellow Catholics but for everybody.

“May he rest in peace.”

The process of the election of a new pope will unfold in the coming days and weeks.

Cardinal Mykola Bychok CSsR, head of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Saints Peter and Paul, will be the sole attendee from Australia at the conclave.

Australian Church and civic representatives are expected to travel to Rome for Pope Francis’ funeral.

The Vatican News release can be found here:

[Pope Francis has died on Easter Monday at age of 88 - Vatican News](#)

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