

ACU mourns the passing of the Holy Father, Pope Francis

Australian Catholic University mourns the death of Pope Francis, who passed away today aged 88.

The first pope from the Global South and the first Jesuit elected to the papacy, Pope Francis followed in the footsteps of his namesake, Francis of Assisi, choosing to live humbly and focused on caring for our common home.

During Pope Francis's long life and ministry, his significant achievements included the papal encyclical *Laudato si'*, which championed environmental stewardship; his efforts to promote interfaith unity and historic apologies to survivors of clergy sexual abuse. He also convened a three-year global Synod on Synodality, which involved theologians from all over the world, including from ACU.

Pope Francis encouraged Catholic universities to help the church engage "confidently in dialogue on the great issues of our time."

"It is not enough to prepare students for competitive careers: it is necessary to help them discover fruitful vocations, to inspire pathways of authentic existence and to integrate the contribution of each individual within the creative dynamics of the larger community," Pope Francis told Catholic educators in 2024.

"Education is, above all, an act of hope in those before us, in their possibilities to change and contribute to the renewal of society."

ACU Chancellor, the Honourable Martin Daubney AM KC, said that the university joined the global Catholic community in mourning the passing of Pope Francis.

"The Church and its institutions in Australia and abroad are indebted to Pope Francis for his faith leadership and contribution to our community," Mr Daubney said.

"His death will be felt by many, and we join with all people of faith in praying for the repose of his soul."

ACU Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Zlatko Skrbis said that Pope Francis had led by example.

"While always affirming Catholic teachings, Pope Francis was able to embody the offer of God's mercy to those 'on the margins' of society or of church membership, encouraging them to be open to whatever small next step God might be asking of them," Professor Skrbis said.

"As a Catholic university, we are grateful for Pope Francis's encouragement to embrace our mission as communities of faith, service and intellectual discovery," he added.

"His teachings inspired us to nurture dialogue and build a more just and compassionate world.

"Much of what we do in education and research at ACU is a direct response to Pope Francis' call for 'Universities of Meaning' that respond to the health, social, cultural and environmental challenges facing society today."

ACU experts have reflected on the legacy of Pope Francis' pontificate. Read more [here](#).

Media Contact: Louise Crossen, 0477 675 772, louise.crossen@acu.edu.au