

Caritas Australia expresses deep sorrow following the death of Pope Francis.

For 13 years, Pope Francis has led and inspired one of the most complex and diverse communities in the world, the Catholic Church.

His Holiness has been a supporter and inspiration for the work of Caritas Internationalis, of which Caritas Australia is a member. Speaking to the General Assembly of Caritas Internationalis in 2023, Pope Francis said:

Charity – caritas – is our very life; it is what makes us “be” what we are. When we embrace God’s love and when we love one another in him, we plumb the depths of our identity, as individuals and as Church, and the meaning of our existence. We understand not only how important our own lives are, but also how precious too are the lives of others. We perceive clearly how every life is unique and inalienable, a marvel in the eyes of God.

From day one, embracing the legacy of Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, he has stood up for mercy, justice, human dignity and compassion. Soon after his election, he visited the island of Lampedusa, 100 km from the coast of Tunisia, to express his fellowship with refugees. He came from a migrant family. He knew the pain of dislocation. In his final weeks, he returned to the same theme, reminding the US bishops that an authentic rule of law needs to be built on the dignity of every person, especially the most marginalised. He urged them ‘not to give in to narratives that discriminate against and cause unnecessary suffering to our migrant and refugee brothers and sisters.’

In 2015, Pope Francis’ celebrated encyclical, *Laudato Si*, ‘On care for our common home’ drew on a long tradition to call on all people to hear ‘the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.’

Pope Francis has constantly urged his flock to be at the service of the whole of God’s family. He has chosen leaders from the fringes, people with deep pastoral sensitivity. In his recently published autobiography, *Hope*, he quotes the words of Gustav Mahler, ‘tradition is not the worship of ashes; it is the preservation of fire.’

One of Pope Francis’ legacies will be the practice of synodality: a way of life where the whole church works together in a communion in which everyone has their proper voice.

Robert Fitzgerald, AM, Chair at Caritas Australia said, “Caritas gives thanks to God for the life and leadership of a figure of enormous hope. We pray that we will embody his mission of humble service to those in greatest need and to creation. The world has been richly blessed and will mourn his loss.”

May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

ENDS

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