



President reflects on funeral mass for Pope Francis

The funeral for Pope Francis was “solemn and dignified”, Australian Catholic Bishops Conference President, Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB said.

Archbishop Costelloe represented the Church in Australia at the funeral Mass in Rome on April 26, 2025.

Over a quarter of a million people gathered in St Peter’s Square to bid their final farewell to Pope Francis, with hundreds of millions around the world watching the Mass on television and online.

The solemn liturgy was presided over by Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, Dean of the College of Cardinals, joined by about 250 cardinals, patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, priests, consecrated religious, and lay people.

The pope’s body was taken to its final resting place in the Basilica of Saint Mary Major.

Archbishop Costelloe said the experience of the days leading up to the funeral was a “reminder of the power of the papacy to bring the light of the gospel into a darkened and troubled world”.

“The funeral Mass itself was solemn and dignified,” Archbishop Costelloe said.

“It was preceded by the praying of the Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary, while the last prayer to be prayed, as the coffin containing the body of the Holy Father was solemnly carried into the basilica, was the Magnificat.

“The presence of Mary, the mother of the Lord, was therefore very real. Pope Francis’s love for Mary, and his confidence in her prayerful support, were acknowledged and affirmed in this way.

“Cardinal Battista Re preached a beautiful homily in which he recalled themes which had been so important in the life, teaching and ministry of Pope Francis.

“Central to it all was the theme of mercy: that in Jesus we see the face of the Father’s mercy, and thus come to understand not only the depths of God’s love for us, but also the nature of our vocation as Christians.

“Cardinal Re concluded his reflections by reminding us of the constant plea of Pope Francis that we should pray for him.

“Now, the Cardinal suggested, we can ask Pope Francis to pray for us. He has passed through the gates of death and entered into the great mystery of eternal life in God. His service to the Church now takes on a new form as he unites his prayers for us to those of Mary and the saints.”

The life of the Church goes on, Archbishop Costelloe said.

“This is the Jubilee Year of Hope and as we entrust Pope Francis to God and thank God for the gift Francis has been to us, the Church is celebrating the Jubilee of Young People,” he said.

“Rome is teeming with young people who have come to celebrate this Jubilee. Their presence and their enthusiasm is a gift of hope to the whole Church.

“It is also a reminder of the need for all of us to confirm our young people in their hope by our openness to them, our welcoming of them, and the gift of our own fidelity to the faith which can become for young people a source of inspiration. This is what Pope Francis would want us to do.”

Australian Catholics now have the opportunity to pray for the cardinals who are meeting to discuss the needs of the Church in preparation for the Conclave, Archbishop Costelloe said.

“The experiences of the last few days since the death of Pope Francis are a powerful reminder to us of the power of the papacy to bring the light of the gospel into a darkened and troubled world.

“As one of the bishops to whom I have been speaking put it, the task of the Church at the moment is to pray - to surround the cardinals with our prayerful support - not so that we get the pope we want, but that we get the pope God wants: the pope that the Church and the world really needs at this time.

“The days following the death of Pope Francis have been inspiring, uplifting, sorrowful, and hope-filled.

“The Church is alive, it lives by faith, and it is guided and sustained by the power of God’s Spirit. That is why we can move forward in confidence, trusting that the Lord who has been faithful to his Church through the ages will not cease to be faithful to his Church today.”