



Association of Practical Theology in Oceania

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Dear colleagues across our APTO Community,

You will know by the time you read this that Pope Francis has died at the age of 88. He passed into the great love of the God he proclaimed, at 7.30am Rome time, on Easter Monday morning... somehow so very appropriate as Christians celebrate the mystery of the resurrection with Easter Sunday.

Easter Sunday was his last public outing, speaking to the crowds in St Peter's Square, giving blessing, and delighting all (himself included!) with a little trip around the square in the Popemobile.

This was and is an extraordinary man. And if he didn't do all he hoped he could, and if he didn't fulfil the dreams that different groups in our big wide church hoped he would, he stood as a steadfast beacon against self-interest, self-promotion and self-centredness - in all its myriad guises. And that is no small thing. He did it against strong pressure from both within and outside the Church.

Yet, no-one was able to hide their soul from the fierce gentleness of his gaze. From the smiling Pope.

He lived the beatitudes because they were the blueprint for the life and vision of Jesus.

He lived his mission with a special charism that was his compassionate capacity to make that vision and life of Jesus accessible, meaningful and relevant for everyone, everywhere.

With Pope Francis - everyone has a place at the table. And he showed us and shared with us - over and over and over again - what that should look like in families, in politics, in economics, in schools, in cities, in countries... in the Church.

He was a great teacher and the Catholic Church - and indeed the whole Christian community, has been extraordinarily blessed to have him as our Pope. This will only become more apparent as the next years pass.

I invite you to light a candle sometime over the next days in remembrance of Pope Francis and may flights of angels carry him home.

With every blessing,

Dr Jill Gowdie, President, Association of Practical Theology in Oceania.