

## Pope Francis mourned by Catholic community, wider world

Pope Francis is being remembered by the local Catholic community for his compassion in leadership.

The Pontiff, who was the first Pope to hail from the Americas, died of a stroke and heart failure on Monday, just hours after presiding over Easter services in St. Peter's Square on Sunday.

"As a Catholic board united in faith, we mourn the loss of a humble shepherd to lead the Church with compassion, wisdom, and a profound love for the poor and marginalized," said the York Catholic District School Board in a statement. "Pope Francis reminded us all to walk in mercy, to care for our common home, and to see Christ in one another."

"We give thanks to God for his faithful witness and leadership. May his life of service inspire us to live the Gospel with courage and joy."

In a statement on Monday afternoon, Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy said Pope Francis "mastered the beauty of being prepared."

"I believe that Pope Francis mastered the beauty of being prepared, prepared for the hereafter as he led a life that took on some of the qualities of the life to come," she said. "Pope Francis travelled well in the three great Christian virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity. Faith grows a Christian; Charity proves a Christian; Hope confirms a Christian; Death crowns a Christian. Pope Francis lived his life like this, it was his fulfilment, his reward, and now, his victory."

Added Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa: "He will be remembered for his compassion and advocacy for those in need, as well as his significant efforts to reconcile with the Indigenous people of Canada. My sincere condolences to his family and to Catholics everywhere during this very difficult time."

Condolences were also offered by Mayor Tom Mrakas, who said, the Pope's "unwavering dedication to peace, compassion, and faith leaves a profound legacy that will endure across generations."

Born Jorge Bergoglio in Argentina, Pope Francis was elected to lead the church by cardinals in 2013.

Upon his appointment, the excitement was felt at Aurora's Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church "particularly among members of the congregation of Argentine heritage, including then-caretaker Pedro Zucca.

Our Lady of Grace's then-pastor Father Tim Hanley told The Auroran at the time of Bergoglio's appointment it was important to note the future Pope Francis' role as a Jesuit "because they have a history of intellectual fervor. Their formation is very long and very structured, not only to be intellectually sound, but also to be reaching out to the poor and the marginalized. He lives that out, and you will see that in his pontificate."

As a chapter in history closed on Monday, tributes paid to the Pontiff indicate that that was indeed seen during Francis' pontificate.

"Our Catholic family worldwide is in mourning following the death of our spiritual father, Pope Francis. Since 2013, our shepherd has guided the flock lovingly and served as a global ambassador of peace, hope and love," said Frank Carina Leo, Metropolitan Archbishop of Toronto. "The Holy Father's humility, compassion and care for others, most especially the poor and marginalized, has served as a powerful witness and a reminder of our daily call to reflect the face of Jesus to all those whom we encounter."

"I invite the faithful throughout the Archdiocese of Toronto and all those who mourn his loss, to pray for the repose of the soul of Pope Francis. May we honour his legacy and lovingly embrace his invitation to be missionaries of mercy, sharing the light of Christ in abundance as we affirm the dignity of every human life and foster a culture of care and love."

**By Brock Weir**