



Memory in honour of Pope Francis

Pope Francis was a humble man, standing by the side of the most vulnerable and the most fragile. In these times of wars, migration, climate change, individuality and brutality, he constantly chose concretely for the poor, for those on the margins.

Jesus' love for wounded, abused humanity and his boundless compassion always shone through in Francis' encounters with people. Pope Francis had a great love for the people of God, he was a pope of the people. He reached out to everyone, without judging, but listening and guiding, like a good shepherd.

He was aware of the real situation of the Church and tried to do everything possible to make it more vibrant and missionary, to lead every believer to deepen their faith.

A great merit of Pope Francis is that he has brought renewal. Enough or not enough, opinions are divided on that, especially on the position of women and blessing of same-sex couples. But he did break ground and tackle church structures, often in difficult situations. For Christian communities and beyond, he embodied a broad hope for modernity.

Undoubtedly, his work in favour of the laity was based on his struggle against clericalism, in his vision of a welcoming and synodal Church, in his preference for ever greater involvement of women in the decision-making bodies of the life of the Church. He wanted to give more participation to the laity, to women.

For us as the European Lay Forum (ELF) - umbrella organisation for the national Catholic lay forums, recognised by their bishops' conferences - his synodal process is therefore fundamental for the Church of today and tomorrow. In his plea for synodality, he invited dialogue between clergy and laity to find suitable solutions together with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Much work remains policy-wise. We pray and hope that his successor will continue on the path taken, so that it becomes an increasingly synodal Church, also giving more space to the local Church. Unity in diversity, the ELF recognises the diversity of lay pastoral work and therefore fully supports this European motto.

We pray for Pope Francis with confidence and gratitude. May God welcome him in peace. And may his legacy live on in each of us, as a call to conversion, connection and dialogue.

European Forum of National Laity Committees (ELF)

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