

Pope tells Jesuits that Cardinal Martini was 'prophetic, man of peace'

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On the eve of the first anniversary of the death of Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, Pope Francis called the late-fellow Jesuit and biblical scholar, a "prophetic" figure and a "man of discernment and peace."

The late cardinal, who died Aug. 31, 2012, at the age of 85, was "a father for the whole church," and remembering one's fathers "is an act of justice," the pope said during a meeting with a group of Italian Jesuits.

Representatives of the Italian Jesuit province met with the pope Friday to present the creation of the Carlo Maria Martini Foundation -- a nonprofit initiative aimed at promoting the late-cardinal's writings and the study of his life and works. The foundation will work in conjunction with the archdiocese of Milan, where Martini served as archbishop from 1979 to 2002.

During the brief meeting, the pope told the group that the late cardinal played an important role during the general congregation of the Society of Jesus in 1974 in discussions about the relationship between faith and justice.

Jesuit Fr. Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman, was present at the meeting and said the pope also recalled Martini's contributions in fostering good relations and understanding between the Society of Jesus and the Holy See.

The pope expressed his gratitude and esteem for the late cardinal and recalled how even Jesuits "at the ends of the earth" in Argentina would use his texts during their spiritual retreats.

The cardinal was a prolific author whose books were best-sellers in Italy and included everything from scholarly biblical exegesis to poetry and prayer guides.

When the cardinal died, Pope Benedict XVI praised his generous service to the Gospel and the church and said this "authoritative biblicist" helped open for the church community "the treasures of the sacred Scriptures."

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