

**APPENDIX I:  
PRESIDENT’S LETTER ON THE PASSING  
OF POPE FRANCIS**

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April 24, 2025

Dear CTSA Colleagues and All Who Mourn the Passing of Pope Francis:

CTSA grieves the passing of His Holiness Pope Francis and expresses gratitude for his leadership marked always by dialogue, inclusivity, catholicity, a global vision, synodality, and the enduring communal search for truth. He encouraged a theology of encounter that fosters greater intimacy with the people, taking account of their joys and sorrows. Notably, he invited our particular interest in the condition of people who live amidst the peripheries of our world. Both his annual recent visit to prisoners on Holy Thursday, and his July 2013 trip responding to the cry of refugees in Lampedusa, bookended his ceaseless grace-filled vision, personal character, and spiritual depth. He encouraged theologians to be shepherds who take on the smell of the sheep, and to recognize the need today to envision the church as a “field hospital,” a place of healing for all who are wounded in body, soul, heart, and mind. Indeed, Francis often spoke of the Eucharist as not a prize for the perfect, but, as food and nourishment for those who need it. He envisioned the sacrament of reconciliation as an experience not of desolation but of consolation.

As a leader of theologians, Francis’ 2023 apostolic letter, *Ad Theologiam Promovendam* (“On Promoting Theology”) urged, “To promote theology in the future, we cannot limit ourselves to abstractly re-proposing formulas and schemes from the past. Called to prophetically interpret the present and to see new itineraries for the future, in the light of Revelation, theology will have to deal with profound cultural transformations, aware that: ‘what we are experiencing is not simply an era of change, but a change of era’” (§1). And he further taught us, “A synodal, missionary, and “outgoing” Church can only correspond to an “outgoing” theology” (§3). In more recent remarks addressing theologians, and also signaling his theme for our current 2025 jubilee year, he preached that theology is a “significant and necessary ecclesial ministry...because it is part of our Catholic faith to explain the reason for our hope to all those who ask (cf. 1 Pet 3:15). And we know that hope is not an emotion or a feeling,

but the very person of Jesus, who is himself “the way, and the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6).” (Greeting of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Members of the International Network of Societies for Catholic Theology (INSeCT), Friday, 10 May 2024)

His deep understanding of the ministry of theology again showed a freshness in another recent set of remarks addressing theologians from around the globe. Francis shared “This is a journey you are called to undertake together, theologians of both sexes. Here I think of an episode in the Second Book of Kings. During the restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem, a text came to light; perhaps it was the first edition of Deuteronomy, which had been lost. A priest and several scholars read it, as did the king. They sense its importance but did not understand it. So the king decided to give it to a woman, Huldah, who immediately understood its meaning and helped the group of scholars – all men – to grasp it (Cf. 2 Kings 22:14-20). There are things that only women understand, and theology needs their contribution. An all-male theology is an incomplete theology. We still have a long way to go in this direction.” (Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants in the International Congress on the Future of Theology, 9 December 2024)

Francis once remarked that when he thinks about theology, he thinks about light, about light that illuminates faces, people, the color of our world, so that the light of Christ and his Gospel may shine ever more brightly. May his memory continue to light the way.

Rest in peace, Francis.

Y por favor, ruega por nosotros,  
Nancy Pineda-Madrid  
*CTSA President*