

## GEORGE PELL

CLERIC, 81

CARDINAL'S TRIAL  
TRANSFIXED AUSTRALIA

A prominent Roman Catholic figure, he was the church's financial leader from 2014 to 2019; a child-sexual-abuse conviction in his home country was overturned in 2020

NATASHA FROST  
DAMIEN CAVE

Cardinal George Pell, an Australian cleric and adviser to Pope Francis who became the most senior Roman Catholic prelate sent to prison for child sexual abuse, before later being acquitted of all charges, died Tuesday in Rome. He was 81.

The cause of death was complications from hip replacement surgery, according to Peter Comensoli, the archbishop of Melbourne, who confirmed the death in a post on Twitter. Cardinal Pell had gone to Rome to attend the funeral last week of Pope Benedict XVI.

For decades, Cardinal Pell was one of Australia's most powerful religious figures. A former athlete with a formidable intellect and a combative streak, he was a conservative voice heard regularly in the media, strongly opposing abortion while defending the church against accusations of child abuse as the archbishop of the Melbourne diocese and then the Sydney diocese.

For many Australian Catholics, Cardinal Pell's personal journey, from his origins in the tiny town of Ballarat to his stratospheric rise through the ranks of the Vatican, had at one time been personally inspirational, said journalist Lucie Morris-Marr, the author of *Fallen: The Inside Story of the Secret Trial and Conviction of Cardinal George Pell*.

"He was really seen as a success story, a superstar, in effect," Mr. Morris-Marr said. "But of course, the trajectory of his career and reputation have been terribly, irrevocably damaged, because of the child-abuse allegations."

From 2014 to 2019, Cardinal



Cardinal George Pell was lauded at the Vatican for his financial expertise and creative methods to protect the church from being bankrupted by cases involving claims of abuse. RICK RYCROFT/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pell was the church's financial czar and third-in-command, and he tried to push through reforms to make its finances more transparent. Those efforts were truncated in 2017, when he was forced to return to Australia to face trial

on charges of sex abuse dating to the 1990s. The case transfixed Australia — cameras met Cardinal Pell at the airport when he arrived from Rome.

In December, 2018, he was convicted by an Australian jury

of five counts of child sexual abuse of two choir boys that were said to have occurred in 1996, during his time in Melbourne. Less than two years later, in April, 2020, Australia's highest court overturned the conviction, saying that there was "a significant possibility" that he was not guilty.

Throughout the proceedings, Cardinal Pell maintained his innocence. At a news conference in Rome in 2017, he said he had been a victim of "relentless character assassination." He said, "The whole idea of sexual abuse is abhorrent to me."

At the time of his death, Cardinal Pell faced a lawsuit by the father of a now-deceased choir boy who alleged that the cleric had abused the boy when he was archbishop of Melbourne. In a statement, the claimant's lawyer said the suit would continue, adding: "There is still a great deal of evidence for this claim to rely upon."

Separately, a 2017 Australian government inquiry into the abuse of tens of thousands of children in churches, schools and other institutions over a period of decades found that Cardinal Pell had been aware of the sexual abuse of children by other Roman Catholic priests as early as 1974 but failed to take action.

At the Vatican, Cardinal Pell had been lauded for his financial expertise and creative methods to protect the church from being bankrupted by cases involving claims of abuse.

His promotion to Vatican treasurer in Rome followed a period of leadership in Australia during which church attendance declined but the institution's finances were secured. As archbishop of Melbourne in October, 1996 — two months before the

alleged incidents that led to his conviction — Cardinal Pell set up what would become a firewall for the church's finances and reputation in connection with abuse accusations. He called it "The Melbourne Response."

On paper, it was an alternative resolution process for survivors. Cardinal Pell said it aimed to "make it easier for victims to achieve justice" outside the courts. But it capped payments, initially at 50,000 Australian dollars (US\$35,000), and usually forced victims to keep their traumas confidential.

Cardinal Pell brought a similar approach to Sydney, where he served as archbishop from 2001 to 2014.

The response to Cardinal Pell's death in his native Australia was divided. Some said their thoughts would be with the victims of those abused by the Catholic Church, while others paid tribute to him — muted tribute, in some cases. In a statement, Archbishop Comensoli of Melbourne expressed "great sadness" at Cardinal Pell's death. "May eternal light now be his, who so steadfastly believed in the God of Jesus Christ," he wrote.

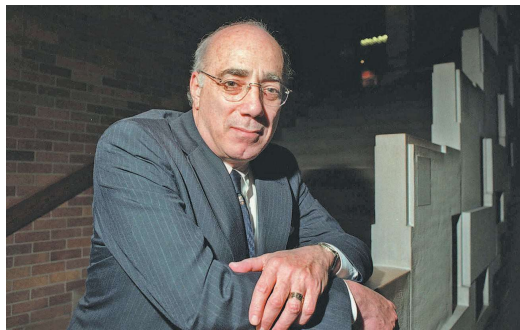
Tony Abbott, a former Australian prime minister and longtime Catholic, told The Australian newspaper that the cardinal had been a "saint for our times."

George Pell was born in Ballarat, Australia, on June 8, 1941, to George Arthur and Margaret Lill (Burke) Pell. His father, an Anglican of little religious conviction, was the manager of a gold mine and a heavyweight boxing champion; his mother was a devout Catholic. He had a sister, Margaret, who died in 2021, and a brother, David.

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

## I REMEMBER

MICHAEL MARRUS



Michael Marrus, seen in November, 1999, worked alongside scholar Robert Jan van Pelt to help ensure the conservation of Auschwitz-Birkenau as a historic site. LISA SAKULENSKY/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Michael Marrus lived in my scrappy downtown Toronto neighbourhood and was my friend for four decades. He was generous, convivial, sophisticated, well informed, a marvellous dinner guest who brought with him insider stories about what was happening in the scholarly world in Paris, Rome and Tel Aviv. He read widely beyond his own discipline as a historian, and had a special affinity for the novels of Philip Roth. In his last years, he and Mr. Roth corresponded. As the first academic in Canada to hold a chair in Holocaust studies, he commanded international respect for his knowledge and judgment.

In 1993, four years after the destruction of the Berlin Wall and the fall of communism, he and another Canadian scholar, Robert Jan van Pelt of the University of Waterloo's architecture school, were invited by the Polish government to be part of an advisory round table convened to decide what to do about Auschwitz-Birkenau, ground zero of the Holocaust. The buildings were crumbling, and Birkenau, where the gas chambers had been, could not be visited at all. Michael later told us there were hundreds of kilograms of human hair that the rabbis said must be given burial, as a person would be. The government was proposing to demolish Birkenau and put up an enormous memorial like the Vietnam War memorial in Washington until

the Canadians, especially Prof. van Pelt, argued that the U.S. military knew precisely the names of all the Americans killed in Vietnam to carve them in stone but that no records exist of every-one killed in Auschwitz.

Under communism, the site had mostly stressed the Polish freedom fighters who had perished there. Prof. van Pelt recalled: "The victimhood of the Jews was suppressed." But the staff and conservators were interested in the trends in Holocaust studies in the West, as well as Western approaches to conservation and preservation. According to Prof. van Pelt, there was confusion about what had to be done, but Michael helped sort out the options and bring in larger perspectives. The site would be preserved and gradually restored.

Some years later, Michael was asked by the French government to study the role of the French railway system, the SNCF, under the collaborationist Vichy government in the transportation of Jews to concentration camps in Germany. His conclusion was controversial: The present French government could not be held responsible for Vichy actions and reparations were not required.

Michael believed that scholars had an obligation to engage with the big, thorny questions of history. Which he did.

Judy Stoffman, Vancouver and Toronto

## TATJANA PATITZ

MODEL, 56

Supermodel of eighties, nineties  
was 'European symbol of chic'

SANTA BARBARA, CALIF.

Tatjana Patitz, one of an elite group of famed supermodels who graced magazine covers in the 1980s and 90s and appeared in George Michael's *Freedom '90* music video, has died at the age of 56.

Ms. Patitz's death in the Santa Barbara, Calif., area was confirmed by her New York agent, Corinne Nicolas, at the Model CoOp agency. Ms. Nicolas said the cause was illness, but did not have further details.

Ms. Patitz, who was born in Germany, raised in Sweden and later made her life in California, was known as part of an elite handful of "original" supermodels, appearing in Mr. Michael's video along with Christy Turlington, Linda Evangelista, Naomi Campbell and Cindy Crawford.

She was a favourite of fashion photographer Peter Lindbergh, who highlighted her natural beauty in his famous 1988 photo, *White Shirts: Six Supermodels*, Malibu, and for British Vogue's

1990 cover — leading Mr. Michael to cast the group in his lip-synching video, according to Vogue.

The magazine quoted its global editorial director, Anna Wintour, as saying Ms. Patitz was "always the European symbol of chic, like Romy Schneider-meets-Monica Vitti. She was far less visible than her peers — more mysterious, more grown-up, more unattainable — and that had its own appeal."

In a 2006 interview, Ms. Patitz opined that the golden age of supermodels was over.

"There was a real era, and the reason that happened was because glamour was brought into it," she was quoted as saying in *Prestige Hong Kong* magazine. "Now the celebrities and actresses have taken over and the models are in the backseat completely."

She also added that models from her era had healthier physiques.

"Women were healthy, not these scrawny little models that nobody knows their names anymore," Ms. Patitz said.

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Tatjana Patitz said in a 2006 interview that the supermodel golden age was over. "Now the celebrities and actresses have taken over and the models are in the backseat completely." JOERG CARSTENSEN/AP