

**OBITUARY: FRANCESCO MELCHIORRI
(1940-2005)**

The death of Francesco Melchiorri on Thursday, July 28, marks the end of the pioneer era of experimental cosmology in Italy. Francesco, who was born in Rome on 24 March 1940, began, more than 30 years ago, experimental and observational work on the cosmic microwave background (CMB) radiation, our main probe of the large-scale Universe. The work he and his colleagues have done resulted in major contributions to the requisite knowledge of the infrastructure of CMB measurements in general, and CMB anisotropy in particular. His many past students and colleagues are spread all over Italy and elsewhere, continuing the mission he helped define and lead for so many years.

Francesco's scientific leadership was provided through his mastery of the field and its experimental complexities. He maintained a high level of involvement in experimental CMB research,

leading the work of a large number of students and researchers in a very busy lab.

His leadership emanated in a gentle, unassuming style. He was soft spoken, clear and concise. Eversince we first met (in Varenna, in 1980, when he and Remo Ruffini invited me to lecture in the Fermi School on «Gamov Cosmology») I was impressed by his pleasant demeanor, and his healthy, sarcastic attitude towards «crazy» cosmological theories and models (which, however, did not prevent him from co-authoring quite a few theoretically inclined papers on non standard models).

But this is obviously not a summary of Francesco's impressive scientific output. So close to his death just a few days ago, what mostly comes to mind is the essence of his human qualities: the wonderful husband and father, a caring and nurturing educator, an extremely generous colleague, and a highly sensitive man. His noble attitude and gentle conduct continued through the last, painful



phase of his life, when his health deteriorated, and he must have felt tremendous discomfort and anxiety. Francesco endured stoically, seemingly unaffected by his condition; one had the feeling that he was concerned not to cause any uneasiness to whoever asked him about his health, a subject matter he discreetly tried to avoid.

These qualities, along with his scientific leadership, have undoubtedly contributed greatly to his prolific record as a mentor to so many who will miss him greatly.

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