





First pope of the *Americas*

MARCH 13, 2013

White smoke rose from the Sistine Chapel chimney and bells rang out across Vatican City on March 13, 2013, shortly after 7 p.m. (Vatican City time) in announcement of the election of a new pope. Approximately an hour later, French Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran stepped out onto the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica to inform the world that Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, S.J., of Buenos Aires, Argentina, had been made pope and would assume the name of Francis.

As the leader of the world's 1.3 billion Catholics, he became the first pope to take the name Francis, the first pope from the Americas, the first Jesuit pope, the 266th

pope in the history of the Catholic Church, and the 265th successor of St. Peter.

The crowd in St. Peter's Square grew silent as Jorge Mario Bergoglio, 76, recited the Lord's Prayer and a Hail Mary. As he stepped out onto the balcony to greet the people for the first time as pope, he wore a simple white cassock rather than the red velvet *mozzetta* typically worn by his predecessors. As the world watched, he gave an unconventional blessing that would set the tone for his papacy.

"And now I would like to give the blessing, but first I want to ask you a favor. Before the bishop blesses the people, I ask that you would pray to the Lord to bless me — the prayer of the people for their bishop. Let us say this prayer — your prayer for me — in silence.

"I will now give my blessing to you and to the whole world, to all men and women of good will."

Why Francis?

Pope Francis wasted little time in explaining why he had chosen the name in honor of St. Francis of Assisi. The pope indicated to journalists just three days after his election that the inspiration had come to him after the Brazilian Cardinal Cláudio Hummes had whispered to him,

"Don't forget the poor," when it was becoming apparent he was going to be elected the bishop of Rome. "And that's how in my heart came the name Francis of Assisi," who cared so deeply for the poor. According to the Associated Press, he then sighed, "Oh how I would like a poor Church and a Church for the poor." ●

St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226)

St. Francis founded the Order of Friars Minor (Franciscans), the Order of St. Clare (Poor Clares) and the Third Order of St. Francis. He was a friar known for his preaching, and is one of the most venerated religious figures in history. After a vision, Francis renounced his life of wealth and began to live a life of poverty. He was the first recorded person to receive the stigmata, the wounds of Christ's Passion. He is the patron saint of animals, the environment and Italy (with St. Catherine of Siena).





1. Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, S.J., of Buenos Aires, Argentina, on March 13, 2013, was elected pope and chose the name Francis. He is the first pope from the Americas.

2. Pope Francis at the Wednesday general audience in St. Peter's Square on Oct. 7, 2015. (Daniel Ibáñez, Catholic News Agency)

3. Pope Francis greets a child at the general audience in St. Peter's Square on April 13, 2016. (L'Osservatore Romano)

4. Pope Francis poses for a picture in St. Peter's Square for the Wednesday general audience on Sept. 16, 2015. (Daniel Ibáñez, Catholic News Agency)

5. Pope Francis greets Sister Gloria Cecilia Narváez Argoti, a Franciscan Sister of Mary Immaculate from Colombia, who had been kidnapped in Mali. (Vatican Media)

6. Pope Francis gives the *Urbi et Orbi* blessing for the city of Rome and the entire world on April 5, 2015. (L'Osservatore Romano)

7. Pope Francis celebrates Mass at Santa Marta on Sept. 1, 2015. (L'Osservatore Romano)

8. Pope Francis greets the pilgrims in St. Peter's Square and delivers his first *Urbi et Orbi* blessing. (Catholic News Agency)



A brief biography

Dec. 17, 1936: Born Jorge Mario Bergoglio in Buenos Aires, Argentina, to Italian immigrants

March 11, 1958: Entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus

Dec. 13, 1969: Ordained a priest

July 31, 1973: Appointed provincial of the Jesuits in Argentina, a position he held for six years

May 20, 1992: Appointed titular bishop of Auca and auxiliary of Buenos Aires by Pope John Paul II

June 3, 1997: Named coadjutor archbishop of Buenos Aires

Feb. 28, 1998: Named archbishop, primate of Argentina and ordinary for Eastern-rite faithful of Argentina

Feb. 21, 2001: Named a cardinal by Pope John Paul II

April 2005: Participated in conclave that elected Pope Benedict XVI

March 13, 2013: Elected supreme pontiff at the age of 76

Pope Francis was born Jorge Mario Bergoglio in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on Dec. 17, 1936, the son of Italian immigrants. His father, Mario, was an accountant and his mother, Regina Sivori, a homemaker. He was one of five children.

At age 21, he became severely ill with pneumonia and had part of his right lung surgically removed. He attended technical school, graduating as a chemical engineer. He also worked briefly as a bouncer and a custodian, according to *TIME* magazine, which featured him as Person of the Year in 2013.

Jorge worked as a chemist before answering the call to priesthood. He entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) on March 11, 1958. There, he studied the humanities and earned degrees in philosophy and theology.

Jorge was ordained a priest on Dec. 13, 1969, making his final profession with the Jesuits on April 22, 1973. On July 31, 1973, he was appointed provincial of the Jesuits in Argentina, a position he held for six years. After that, he served as a parish priest and rector of the Colegio de San Jose in San Miguel.

In 1992, Father Jorge was appointed bishop of Auca and auxiliary bishop of Buenos Aires by Pope John Paul II. He was named coadjutor archbishop of Buenos Aires in 1997.



Pope John Paul II named him a cardinal in February 2001. He was known for his humility, doctrinal conservatism and commitment to social justice.

Pope Benedict XVI resigned because of health reasons in February 2013, and a conclave was convened in early March. Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio was elected pope on the fifth ballot and chose the name Francis. ●



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Did you know?

A few facts about Pope Francis:

- He was the first major leader of a world religion to appear on the cover of *Rolling Stone*. He was also *TIME* magazine's Person of the Year in 2013.
- He was a huge soccer fan and a passionate supporter of the Argentinian San Lorenzo club.
- He wrote a *New York Times* bestseller titled *Dear Pope Francis: The Pope Answers Letters from Children* (Loyola Press, 2017).
- He had only one functioning lung at the time of his election to the papacy.
- He spoke and understood multiple languages: Spanish, Latin, Italian, German, French, Portuguese and English.
- He was the only pope to address a joint session of the U.S. Congress.
- He loved the works of J.R.R. Tolkien.
- After becoming pope, he missed the opportunity to walk through the city to a favorite pizzeria to enjoy a slice, saying delivery "just wasn't the same."
- He auctioned his Harley Davidson to benefit the homeless.

1. Father Jorge Mario Bergoglio as a young priest. (Society of Jesus)
2. Anibal Gulas sits in his taxi with a picture of Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, now Pope Francis, May 2, 2013. (Catholic News Agency)
3. Pope Benedict XVI with Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio on May 13, 2007. (L'Osservatore Romano)
4. The former room of Father Jorge Bergoglio, now Pope Francis, at the Major residence of the Jesuits in Cordoba, Argentina on April 16, 2013. (Catholic News Agency)

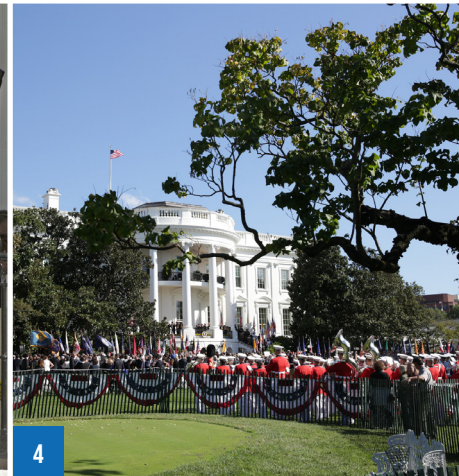


Visit to the *United States*

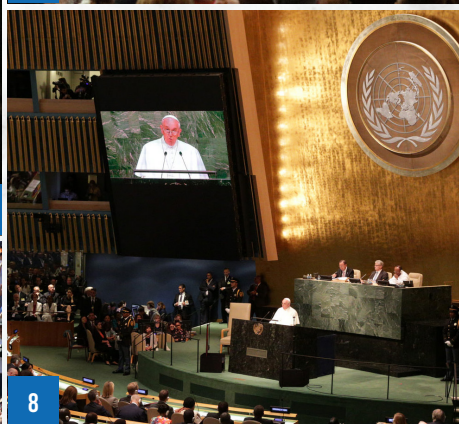
SEPT. 22-27, 2015

In September of 2015, Pope Francis visited North America. He visited Cuba from Sept. 19-22, and then journeyed to the United States for a five-day visit. He became the first pope to address a joint session of Congress. Other highlights of his time in the nation's capital included presiding over a canonization Mass for Junipero Serra at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception and a visit with the Little Sisters of the Poor religious order.

From Washington, he flew to New York where he visited the 9/11 Memorial and Museum, addressed the United Nations General Assembly, spoke with children at Our Lady Queen of Angels Elementary School in Harlem and celebrated Mass at Madison Square Garden. In Philadelphia, on the final leg of his journey, Pope Francis celebrated Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul and attended the World Meeting of Families gathering. ●



Background: Getty Images/Med-Net



1. Pope Francis participates in an inter-religious gathering at the location of Ground Zero in New York City on Sept. 25, 2015 during the Holy Father's apostolic journey to the United States. (Alan Holdren, Catholic News Agency)
2. Crowds gathered outside of Independence Hall in Philadelphia on Sept. 27, 2015 to hear Pope Francis speak about religious liberty during his apostolic visit to the United States for the World Meeting of Families. (Alan Holdren, Catholic News Agency)
3. Pope Francis meets with U.S. President Barack Obama and the First Lady at the White House for a welcoming ceremony on Sept. 23, 2015. (L'Osservatore Romano)
4. The welcoming ceremony at the White House for Pope Francis during his meeting with U.S. President Barack Obama on Sept. 23, 2015. (Alan Holdren, Catholic News Agency)
5. Pope Francis made a surprise visit to the Little Sisters of the Poor in Washington, D.C. on Sept. 23, 2015. (Courtesy of Little Sisters of the Poor)
- 6-7. Pope Francis celebrates Mass at Madison Square Garden in New York on Sept. 25, 2015 during the Holy Father's apostolic journey to the United States. (Alan Holdren, Catholic News Agency)
8. Pope Francis speaks to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City about caring for the environment and the human person on Sept. 25, 2015 during the Holy Father's apostolic journey to the United States. (Alan Holdren, Catholic News Agency)
9. Pope Francis meets with U.S. Bishops in St. Matthew's Cathedral in Washington, D.C. on Sept. 23, 2015. (Alan Holdren, Catholic News Agency)
10. Pope Francis arrives at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on the occasion of the canonization of Bl. Junipero Serra. (Alan Holdren, Catholic News Agency)
11. Pope Francis celebrates Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on the occasion of the canonization of Bl. Junipero Serra, a Spanish-born Franciscan friar known for starting nine Spanish missions in California in the 1700s. (Alan Holdren, Catholic News Agency)



A Church for *the Poor*

Through the 12 years of his papacy, Pope Francis would never forget the poor. He began by choosing the name of Francis after St. Francis of Assisi, who renounced his wealth and lived a life of poverty.

When Pope John Paul II named him a cardinal in February 2001, Archbishop Bergoglio asked the faithful not to travel to Rome but instead donate what they would have spent on travel to the poor.

As cardinal of Buenos Aires, he was known for his humble lifestyle. He lived in a simple apartment rather than the archbishop's residence and took public transportation.

He continued to choose simplicity when he became pope. Many remember the pope's first official car: a well-used blue Ford Focus.

Instead of the papal apartments in the Apostolic Palace, Pope Francis chose to live in a suite in the Vatican guesthouse. And during his 2015 visit to the United States, he opted for a relatively simple Fiat 500.

In April 2017, Pope Francis opened a free laundromat for the poor and homeless in Rome. Operated under the Office

of Papal Charities, the facility offers a barber, showers, free clothing and medicine. In November 2019, he invited 1,500 poor and needy people to lunch at the Vatican.

In his first apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, he wrote, "We have to state, without mincing words, that there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor. May we never abandon them." (48)

During Holy Week the year he became pope, Francis broke with the papal tradition of washing the feet of 12 priests on Holy Thursday. Instead, he washed the feet of two young women and 10 boys, including two Muslims, at a juvenile detention center in Rome. In subsequent years, he washed the feet of people with

disabilities, refugees and inmates from a maximum-security prison.

He established the first World Day of the Poor on Nov. 19, 2017, with the theme "Let us love, not with words but with deeds." Pope Francis celebrated a special Mass at St. Peter's on that day, followed by lunch at the Vatican audience hall. •

*"Let us love,
not with
words but
with deeds."*

– World Day of
the Poor, 2017



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*"We have to state
... that there is an
inseparable bond
between our faith
and the poor.
May we never
abandon them."*

– *Evangelii Gaudium*, 48



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Background: Getty Images/Red-Ved



1-3. Pope Francis shares a free lunch with nearly 1,500 poor people invited to dine in the Vatican's Paul VI Hall for the 3rd annual World Day of the Poor on Nov. 17, 2019. (Catholic News Agency)

4. Pope Francis washes the feet of 12 prisoners in Civitavecchia on Holy Thursday, 2022. (Vatican Media)

5. Pope Francis washes the feet of migrants and refugees at the Reception Center for Asylum Seekers, or CARA, in Castelnuovo di Porto, during Holy Thursday Mass on March 24, 2016. (L'Osservatore Romano)

6. The laundromat organized by the papal charities office and the Community of Sant'Egidio to serve the homeless in Rome, Italy. (Comunità di Sant'Egidio)



A champion for *peace* and *human* *dignity*

Through his prayer intentions, writings, general audiences and apostolic visits, Pope Francis continually pleaded for peace in troubled areas of the world and raised awareness of the plight of those who might otherwise not have a voice.

Pope Francis' calls for peace, dialogue and negotiation never wavered. In his homilies, he repeatedly asked for prayers for those affected by war and conflict throughout the world. In 2025, he invited "every individual, and all peoples and nations, to find the courage needed to walk through that door, to become pilgrims of hope, to silence the sound of arms and overcome divisions."

Always a champion for the dignity of human life regardless of circumstances, he said this on the 108th World Day of Migrants and Refugees in 2022:

"The Kingdom of God is to be built with them, for without them it would not be the Kingdom that God wants. The inclusion of those most vulnerable is the necessary condition for full citizenship in God's Kingdom ...

"Indeed, history teaches us that the contribution of migrants and refugees has been fundamental to the social and economic growth of our societies. This continues to be true in our own day. Their work, their youth, their enthusiasm and their willingness to sacrifice enrich the communities that receive them." ●



Background: Getty Images / Ned-Ver

“Let us entrust to Mary the whole world, so that hope may be reborn and peace may finally spring up for all the peoples of the earth.”

– Pope Francis



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1. Pope Francis greets children in the San Damaso Courtyard during the puppet Little Amal's visit to the Vatican for World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Sept. 10, 2021. (Vatican Media)

2. Pope Francis met with the President of the Autonomous Region of Iraqi Kurdistan and with the Prime Minister at the Erbil Airport on March 7, 2021. (Vatican Media/Catholic News Agency)

3. Pope Francis greets migrant families in Athens, Dec. 3, 2021. (Vatican Media)

4. Pope Francis is given drawings from children staying at the Vrazhdebna refugee camp in Sofia, Bulgaria on May 6, 2019. (Vatican Media/Catholic News Agency)

5. Pope Francis arrives to Papua New Guinea as part of an 11-day apostolic journey visiting Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, East Timor, and Singapore on Sept. 6-9, 2024. (Vatican Media)



Gathering and *listening*

World Youth Days

Established by St. John Paul II in 1985, World Youth Days (WYDs) gather hundreds of thousands (and sometimes millions!) of young people from around the world for days of prayer, solidarity and celebration with the Vicar of Christ. Pope Francis continued the tradition of his predecessors by participating in four WYDs during his pontificate. Below are the number of participants for each:

WYD by the numbers

- 2013: **3,700,000**
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- 2016: **3,000,000**
Kraków, Poland
- 2019: **700,000**
Panama City, Panama
- 2023: **1,500,000**
Lisbon, Portugal



“You are not here by accident. The Lord has called you, not only in these days, but from the very beginning of your days. He called you by name.”

– Pope Francis, Lisbon 2023



Synod on Synodality

In October 2021, Pope Francis convened the Synod on Synodality, a multiyear process in which he invited the Church to reflect on the task of “journeying together.” “It is precisely this path of synodality,” he said, “which God expects of the Church of the third millennium.” The synod’s theme, “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission,” guided discussions during the diocesan, continental and universal phases of the unprecedented global event.

Beginning at the diocesan level, all of the baptized were invited to participate in local listening sessions to consider the question: “What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our ‘journeying together’”? Results from these sessions were then discussed and synthesized during the continental phase.

The synod concluded in October 2024 with an assembly in Rome. Among the approximately 370 voting members were bishops and priests, consecrated men and women, and lay Catholics from around the world. ●



1. Pope Francis at the World Youth Day welcoming ceremony in Krakow’s Blonia Park on July 28, 2016. (L’Osservatore Romano)

2. Pope Francis arrives at Tocumen International Airport in Panama City, Panama to celebrate World Youth Day on Jan. 23, 2019. (Catholic News Agency)

3. Pope Francis participates at the Ninth General Congregation during the Synod on Synodality on Oct. 16, 2023. (Vatican Media)

4. Pope Francis speaks with bishops at the First General Congregation during the Synod on Synodality on Oct. 4, 2023. (Daniel Ibáñez, Catholic News Agency)

5. Pope Francis attends the first week at the Synod on Synodality at the Vatican on Oct. 6, 2023. (Vatican Media)



A determined *Reformer*

Pope Francis will be remembered for many poignant moments, his humility, sense of humor, and powerful words whether written in encyclicals, preached in sermons or posted via @Pontifex.

Behind the scenes, however, Pope Francis instituted substantial reforms — of the Vatican Curia, finances, and even the Code of Canon Law and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Many of the reforms were undertaken in order to further his goal of a “healthy decentralization” of power, giving more decision-making authority to local bishops. He made frequent use of the *motu proprio* (“of his own accord”) to make changes to Church law, issuing 75 during his papacy.

For example, Pope Francis used the *motu proprio* to:

- hold bishops and religious superiors accountable for “negligence” in handling cases of sexual abuse of minors (2016)
- revise paragraph #2267 of the *Catechism* declaring the death penalty “inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person” (2018)
- issue guidelines for the handling of clergy sex abuse allegations against bishops (2019)
- require greater transparency and competition in procedures for award-

ing public contracts of the Holy See and Vatican City State (2020)

- transfer financial responsibilities from the scandal-plagued Vatican Secretariat of State to the Patrimony of the Apostolic See, the Vatican’s central bank (2020)
- revise canon law to open the ministries of lector and acolyte to women, creating institutional support for what had already been common practice (2021)
- limit the use of the pre-Vatican II Latin Mass, known as the “extraordinary form,” giving bishops the authority to regulate where and when these liturgies take place (2021)

On the ninth anniversary of Francis’ election as pope, in March 2022, he released the apostolic constitution *Praedicate evangelium* (“Preach the Gospel”), which includes several reforms to the Vatican Curia and paves the way for more participation and decision-making roles for the laity. The restructuring of the Curia makes it better able to serve local churches and promotes its mission of evangelization. Many of these reforms were instituted over the course of his papacy, and this document codified them.





Pope Francis used the *motu proprio* to revise canon law to open the ministries of lector and acolyte to women, creating institutional support for what had already been common practice.



1. Pope Francis presides over the inauguration of the 93rd Judicial Year of the Tribunal of the Vatican City State in Vatican City on March 12, 2022. (Vatican Media)
2. Pope Francis gives his weekly general audience in the Paul VI Hall at Vatican City on Nov. 17, 2021. (Daniel Ibáñez)
3. Pope Francis meets with Roberto Gualtieri, mayor of Rome, on Jan. 8, 2022. (Vatican Media)
4. Pope Francis meets with members of the Roman Rota on Jan. 23, 2017. (L'Osservatore Romano)

Areas of reform

Sex abuse

As revelations of clergy sex abuse by priests and bishops came to light during his papacy, Pope Francis made reforms to Church law and practice to ensure greater transparency and accountability.

In 2019, Pope Francis wrote a letter to the U.S. bishops during their retreat to discuss the clergy sex abuse crisis, “encouraging your prayer and the steps you are taking to combat the ‘culture of abuse’ and to deal with the crisis of credibility.”

In 2014, he formally established the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, which in 2022 became part of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, giving it more authority and direct access to the Holy Father.

At its 2024 plenary assembly, Pope Francis encouraged the commission to continue helping the Church safeguard minors and vulnerable people by ensuring a climate of listening and respect.

Women in the Church

During his papacy, Pope Francis affirmed the importance of including women in leadership positions in the Church. For example, in a subtle but significant action, Pope Francis issued a January 2021 *motu proprio* opening the ministries of lector and acolyte to women. While women serving as lectors, altar servers and extraordinary ministers of holy Communion has been a common practice in many communities, the new ruling adds the weight of an institutional mandate to these roles.

Pope Francis also opened the door to women in the highest levels of Church leadership in his 2022 apostolic constitution *Praedicate evangelium*. The constitution underlines that “any member of the faithful” can lead one of the newly constituted Vatican dicasteries or other bodies, “given their particular competence, power of governance and function.” This means that these positions would be open not only to bishops and clerics, but also to laymen and laywomen.

Financial reforms

Pope Francis continued efforts begun by Pope Benedict XVI to get Vatican finances in order and promote greater transparency. Early in his papacy, he created the Secretariat for the Economy to begin the process of financial reform. In 2020, he stripped the Secretariat of State of its financial assets and put them under the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See (APSA). The Secretariat office is one of the most powerful in the Vatican because it oversees diplomatic affairs and day-to-day administrative functions. The papal decree on this topic stated that, although the Secretariat of State performs essential duties, “it’s not appropriate for it to perform those economic and financial functions already attributed to other competent departments.”

Although Pope Francis’ papacy was not immune to financial scandals, he made a great effort to put controls in place to provide monitoring and oversight of finances.



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“The reform of the Roman Curia is to be viewed in the context of the Church’s missionary nature.”

- Praedicate evangelium



5. Pope Francis meets with members of the Roman Curia on Feb. 26, 2016. (L'Osservatore Romano)

6. Briefing with members of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors at the 2018 World Meeting of Families. (Daniel Ibáñez, Catholic News Agency)

7. After leading the opening procession of the Amazon Synod from St. Peter's Basilica to the Synod Hall, Pope Francis leads the opening prayer, Oct. 7, 2019. (Catholic News Agency)

8. Pope Francis concludes a week of spiritual exercises with members of the Roman Curia outside of Rome in Ariccia, Italy on March 15, 2019. (Vatican Media/Catholic News Agency)



Honoring *the elderly*

Pope Francis was first a pastor, and he never stopped seeing people through the lens of compassion and not judgment. He represented the face of Christ to the young and the old, the saints and the sinners, the rich and the poor, the weak and the powerful. And he often did so with a smile and sense of humor.

“A long life — so the Bible teaches — is a blessing, and the elderly are not outcasts to be shunned but living signs of the goodness of God who bestows life in abundance. Blessed is the house where an older person lives! Blessed is the family that honors the elderly!” (July 24, 2022)

In 2021, Pope Francis established the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly. It would be celebrated annually on the fourth Sunday of July, close to the memorial of Sts. Joachim and Anne, the grandparents of Jesus.

For Pope Francis, a devotion to grandparents is personal. He has frequently spoken of his own grandmother, Rosa, a woman of faith who came from a peasant family in Piedmont, Italy, and emigrated to Argentina to escape poverty. During the Pentecost Vigil of 2013, he said it was his grandmother who first transmitted the Christian faith to him.

*“In old age they will
still bear fruit.”*

– Ps 92:14

“I had the grace to grow up in a family where faith was lived in a simple and concrete way; but it was above all my grandmother, my father’s mother, who marked my path of faith. She was a woman who explained to us, who spoke to us about Jesus, who taught us the Catechism.”

When Pope Francis was asked what should be the vocation of the elderly, he said: “To preserve our roots, to pass on the faith to the young and to care for the little ones. Never forget this.”

He went on to say: “It makes no difference how old you are, whether you still work or not, whether you are alone or have a family, whether you became a grandmother or grandfather at a young age or later, whether you are still independent or need assistance. Because there is no retirement age from the work of proclaiming the Gospel and handing down traditions to your grandchildren. You just need to set out and undertake something new.” ●



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Background: Getty Images/Med-Ved

1. Pope Francis with participants in a meeting sponsored by the Charity Commission and Health of the CEI in the Vatican's Clementine Hall on Feb. 10, 2017. (L'Osservatore Romano)

2. Pope Francis greets an elderly woman after speaking to participants in Rome's diocesan conference about stages of Christian initiation in St. Peter's Square on June 16, 2015. (L'Osservatore Romano)

3. Pope Francis greets pilgrims at the general audience in the Vatican's Paul VI Hall on Aug. 2, 2017. (Catholic News Agency)

4. Pope Francis speaks to the elderly priest-residents of Casa San Gaetano in Rome, continuing the "Mercy Friday" series on June 17, 2016. (L'Osservatore Romano)

5. Mass for the Elderly with Pope Francis in St. Peter's Square, Sept. 28, 2014. (Catholic News Agency)

6. Pope Francis blesses an elderly man outside of St. Peter's Basilica during the Wednesday general audience in St. Peter's Square on May 20, 2015. (L'Osservatore Romano)

7. Pope Francis visits the San Raffaele Borona assisted living home in Rieti on Oct. 4, 2016, where most of the residents are elderly and who lost their homes in the August 2016 earthquake in Amatrice. (L'Osservatore Romano)



The *People's* Pope

Whether donning a bright red nose to help bring clown therapy to sick children or posing for “selfies” with the young, the old, and everyone in between, Pope Francis will be remembered as a pope who enjoyed his interactions with crowds and visitors to the Vatican. He was always approachable, always humble, and quick to flash that trademark smile.



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“From my point of view, God is the light that illuminates the darkness, even if it does not dissolve it, and a spark of divine light is within each of us.”

- Pope Francis



1. Pope Francis greets pilgrims during the Wednesday general audience inside the San Damaso Courtyard of the Vatican's Apostolic Palace, Sept. 30, 2020. (Daniel Ibáñez, Catholic News Agency)

2. Pope Francis makes a visit to Casa Hogar, one of his last stops before leaving Panama City, on Jan. 27, 2019. (Vatican Media/Catholic News Agency)

3. Pope Francis offers a pizza lunch to 1,500 poor and needy people cared for by the Missionaries of Charity throughout Italy on the occasion of the canonization of St. Teresa of Calcutta on Sept. 4, 2016. (L'Osservatore Romano)

4. Pope Francis makes a visit to Casa Hogar, one of his last stops before leaving Panama City, on Jan. 27, 2019. (Vatican Media/Catholic News Agency)

5. Pope Francis gives his weekly general audience in the Paul VI Hall at Vatican City and plays foosball on Aug. 18, 2021. (Vatican Media)

6. Pope Francis during his papal visit to the country of Colombia Sept. 6-11, 2017. (Nelson Cardenas/Presidencia Colombia)



Canonizing Holy Men and Women

Pope Francis canonized 942 saints during his papacy, which includes the 813 Martyrs of Otranto as a group. In his homilies at the Canonization Masses through the years, he always stressed that holiness can be attained in everyday life, and that it is not some sort of impossible achievement. He repeatedly said that the path to holiness is universal and begins at baptism.

1. Pope Francis celebrates the canonization Mass of Popes John Paul II and John XXIII in St. Peter's Square, April 27, 2014. (Catholic News Agency)

2. Pope Francis kisses a relic of Blessed Junipero Serra presented by Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, California at the conclusion of Mass celebrated at the Pontifical North American College in Rome May 2, 2015. (L'Osservatore Romano)

3. Pope Francis celebrates the canonization Mass of St. Teresa of Calcutta on Sept. 4, 2016 in St. Peter's Square. (L'Osservatore Romano)

4. Pope Francis celebrates the Beatification Mass of Pope Paul VI in St. Peter's Square on Oct. 19, 2014. (Catholic News Agency)

5. Pope Francis greets His Royal Highness Prince Charles of Wales, a member of the official delegation of the United Kingdom to the canonization of St. John Henry Newman at the Vatican on Oct. 13, 2019. (Vatican Media/Catholic News Agency)

6. Pope Francis presides over the Holy Mass and Canonization of Giovanni Battista Scalabrini and Artemide Zatti in St. Peter's Square on Oct. 9, 2022. (Vatican Media)



► April 27, 2014

Sts. John XXIII and John Paul II

"They were priests, bishops and popes of the 20th century. They lived through the tragic events of that century, but they were not overwhelmed by them. For them, God was more powerful."



► Oct. 14, 2018

St. Pope Paul VI and St. Oscar Arnulfo Romero, along with seven others

"Jesus is radical. He gives all and he asks all: He gives a love that is total and he asks for an undivided heart." All of the canonized saints "in different contexts, put today's word into practice in their lives, without being lukewarm, without calculation, with the passion to risk everything. May the Lord help us to imitate their example."



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Sept. 23, 2015

St. Junipero Serra, in Washington, D.C.

“St. Junipero sought to defend the dignity of the native community, to protect it from those who had mistreated and abused it.” He was the first saint to be canonized on U.S. soil.

“Holiness does not consist of a few heroic gestures, but of many small acts of daily love.”

- Pope Francis



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Oct. 13, 2019

St. John Henry Newman

Quoting Newman, Pope Francis said: “‘The Christian has a deep, silent, hidden peace, which the world sees not ... The Christian is cheerful, easy, kind, gentle, courteous, candid, unassuming; has no pretence...’ Let us ask to be like that, ‘kindly lights’ among the encircling gloom.”



3

Sept. 4, 2016

St. Teresa of Calcutta

“Her mission to the urban and existential peripheries remains for us today an eloquent witness to God’s closeness to the poorest of the poor.”



6

Oct. 9, 2022

Giovanni Battista Scalabrini and Artemides Zatti

“Let us pray that these saints, our brothers, may help us to walk together, without walls of division; and to cultivate that nobility of soul, so pleasing to God, which is gratitude.”



Writings and teachings

What is an encyclical?

An encyclical letter is a high-level teaching document that expresses the pope's thoughts on matters of faith and morals. Encyclicals may be to the entire Church, a particular Church or people, or to all people of goodwill. Encyclicals do not constitute *ex cathedra* ("from the chair") pronouncements, meaning they do not have infallible authority. However, they are important in that the pope is fulfilling his role as pastor and teacher.

What is an apostolic exhortation?

An apostolic exhortation is typically issued in response to a synod of bishops in which a pope encourages the Church to undertake a particular activity. Exhortations do not define Church doctrine and are considered less authoritative than papal encyclicals, but they are more authoritative than other papal issuances such as audiences and homilies.

Encyclicals

Lumen fidei | 2013

In "Light of Faith," Pope Francis builds on a first draft written by his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, on the topic of Christian faith in the third millennium. Pope Benedict had written two previous encyclicals on the other two theological virtues, charity and hope.



Laudato si' | 2015

In *Laudato si'* (on care for our common home), Pope Francis holds up St. Francis of Assisi as "the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically." He says that St. Francis demonstrates "how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace." (10) The apostolic exhortation *Laudate deum* (to all people of good will on the climate crisis), published in 2023, is a follow-up to *Laudato si'*.

Fratelli tutti | 2020

In his third encyclical, *Fratelli tutti* (on fraternity and social friendship), Pope Francis focuses on many of the issues that serve to fracture our relationships with one another and with society. The eight-chapter papal document studies the effects of our social ills and proposes a pathway to human fraternity and social friendship.

Dilexit nos | 2024

Pope Francis' fourth encyclical, *Dilexit nos*, discusses "the human and divine love of the heart of Jesus Christ." Echoing several of his predecessors, Pope Francis recommends devotion to the Sacred Heart as a means of contemplating the love of God for humanity. Reparation, reconciliation, missionary activity and fraternity are some of the fruits of this devotion.

Apostolic exhortations

Evangelii gaudium | 2013

Pope Francis' first apostolic exhortation "on the proclamation of the Gospel in today's world" urges the Church to embrace her mission of evangelization to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Amoris laetitia | 2016

Pope Francis' papacy illuminated the importance of family within the sacrament of marriage, and this exhortation "on love in the family" addresses pastoral care for the family and the challenges modern families face.

Gaudete et exsultate | 2018

In his exhortation "on the call to holiness," Pope Francis reminds the faithful that holiness is a universal call and offers guidance for pursuing this call in today's world.

Christus vivit | 2019

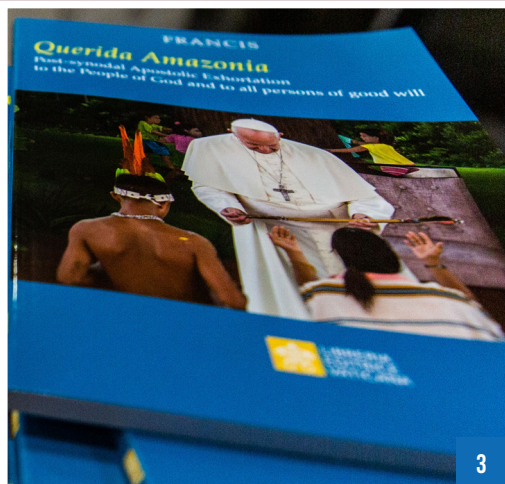
This "post-synodal exhortation to young people and to the entire people of God" was written in response to the 15th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. Pope Francis explores the unique challenges faced by today's young people and offers timeless wisdom to help them pursue Christ.



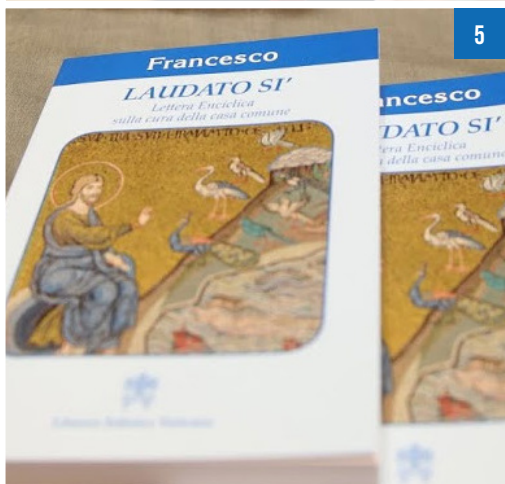
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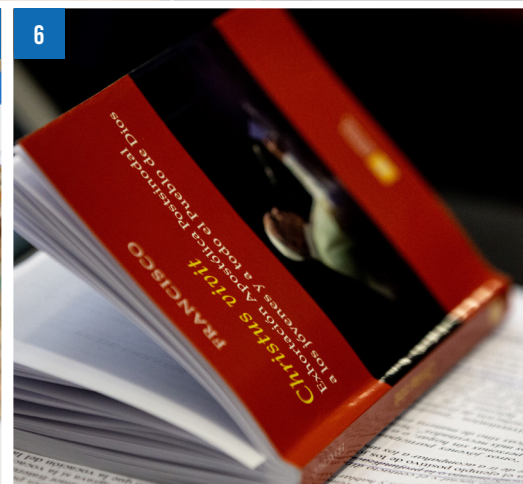
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Querida Amazonia | 2020

Pope Francis addressed the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon region in 2019. In 2020 he issued this post-synodal exhortation which explores care for the environment, social concerns for the poor and the desire to “develop a Church with an Amazonian face” through new paths of evangelization. (61)

C'est la confiance | 2023

In his apostolic exhortation “on confidence in the merciful love of God,” Pope Francis proposes St. Thérèse’s “little way” of trust and love as a “synthesis” of Christian holiness. By this “way of spiritual childhood,” we place our confidence in God’s love for us as we strive for sanctity. ●

*“Thérèse
experienced a deep
and boundless trust
in God’s infinite
mercy: 'confidence
that must lead us
to Love.'”*

-C'est la confiance, 27

1. Pope Francis at Holy Mass on the fourth centenary of the Canonization of Saints Isidore the Farmer, Ignazio di Loyola, Francesco Xavier, Teresa of Jesus and Filippo Neri in Vatican on March 12, 2022. (Vatican Media)

2. Pope Francis waves from the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica on Easter Sunday morning, April 5, 2015. (L'Osservatore Romano)

3. Physical copies of the apostolic exhortation *Querida Amazonia* at the press conference for the presentation of the post-synodal document inside the Vatican Press Office on Feb. 12, 2020. (Catholic News Agency)

4. Cardinal Peter Turkson at a press conference on Pope Francis' newly released encyclical *Laudato si'* in Paul VI Hall on June 18, 2015. (Catholic News Agency)

5. Copies of *Laudato si'* at a press conference on Pope Francis' newly released encyclical in Paul VI Hall on June 18, 2015. (Catholic News Agency)

6. Press conference for the presentation of *Christus vivit*, Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation on the Synod of Bishops on young people, faith, and vocational discernment, at the Vatican Press Office on April 2, 2019. (Catholic News Agency)



Words of *Wisdom*

“The priest who seldom goes out of himself ... misses out on the best of our people, on what can stir the depths of his priestly heart. ...

This is precisely the reason why some priests grow dissatisfied, lose heart and become in a sense collectors of antiquities or novelties — instead of being shepherds living with ‘the smell of the sheep.’ This is what I am asking you — be shepherds with the smell of sheep.”

– Holy Thursday, March 28, 2013

“Parents, can you ‘waste time’ with your children? It is one of the most important things you can do each day.”

@Pontifex, Oct. 27, 2015



1



2

“God never tires of forgiving us.”

– First Angelus after becoming pope, March 2013

“I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security.”

– *Evangelii Gaudium*, 49



“Our defence of the innocent unborn needs to be clear, firm and passionate, for at stake is the dignity of a human life, which is always sacred.”

– Gaudete et Exsultate, 2018



3

“Those who love do not stand idly by, but serve others. Those who love hasten to serve, hasten to dedicate themselves to the service of others.”

– Address, 2023



5

“A ‘couch potato’ evangelization doesn’t exist, get up and go! Be always on the move. Go to the place where you must speak the Word.”

– Homily, April 18, 2018

“God sees how good you are. He alone knows what he has sown in your hearts.”

– Angelus, 2023

“Have the courage to be happy.”

– World Youth Day message, 2016



4

1. Pope Francis during the general audience at St. Damaso Courtyard at the Vatican on May 12, 2021. (Daniel Ibáñez)

2. Pope Francis baptizes infants in the Sistine Chapel on the feast of the Baptism of Jesus on Jan. 10, 2016. (L'Osservatore Romano)

3. Pope Francis at St. Peter's Basilica during the Convocation of the Year of Mercy on April 11, 2015. (L'Osservatore Romano)

4. Pope Francis greets members of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres after the Wednesday general audience in St. Peter's Square on Sept. 25, 2019 (Catholic News Agency).

5. Pope Francis greets a family at his second general audience with members of the public since the coronavirus outbreak, in the San Damaso courtyard at the Vatican, Sept. 9, 2020. (Daniel Ibáñez, Catholic News Agency)