



POPE FRANCIS

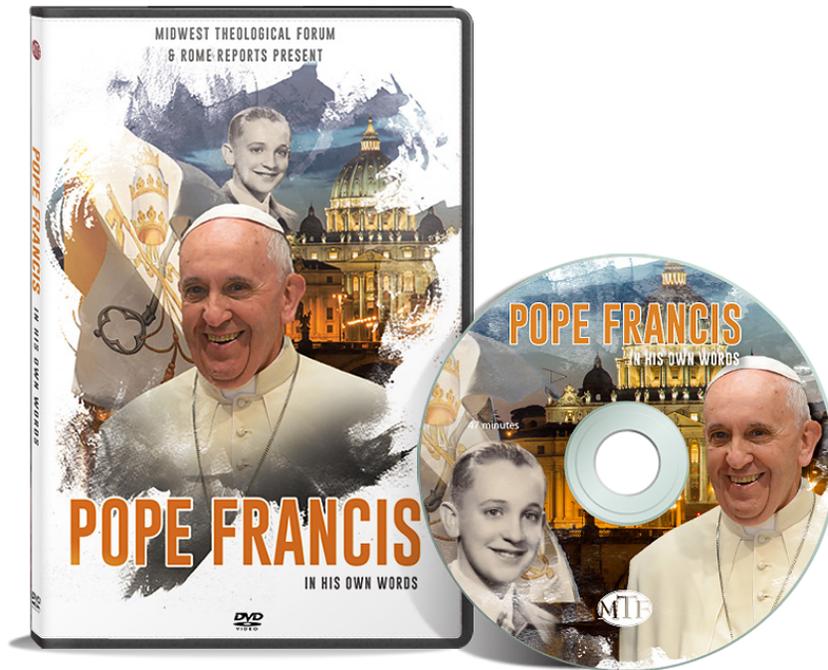
IN HIS OWN WORDS

A GUIDE FOR CATECHISTS

Students Ages 11 to 13

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About the Documentary

On March 13, 2013 a new Pope was elected to become the spiritual leader of more than 1.3 billion Catholics worldwide. From the moment he walked onto the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica, Pope Francis began to take the whole world by storm with his humble personality and his passionate message of love and mercy.

Pope Francis in His Own Words is a documentary that brings together, for the first time, the words of Pope Francis to show the life experiences that led him to discover God's mission for his life and that helped shape what is most important to him— the education and formation received and fostered in the family; the physical and spiritual care for all people, especially the poor; and the need for a deep faith and trust in God.

Get to know the *real* Pope Francis, through his own words, as we follow him from his early years in Argentina, to his call to the priesthood, and to his election as Pope.

By getting to know the *real* Pope Francis we see how the Holy Spirit chose him for this era to teach us the value of what it means to be true Christians.

Audio and subtitles in English and Spanish.

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Film Length

47 minutes

Key Ideas

Pope Francis, the 266th pope of the Catholic Church, has made his mark on the Church, particularly through his personal witness of the Christian values of joy, simplicity, and humility. There is much to be learned from him, especially by looking at his life and coming to know him through the circumstances that formed him into who he is today.

“Your deepest love, your greatest esteem, your most heartfelt veneration, your most complete obedience, and your warmest affection have also to be shown towards the Vicar of Christ on earth, towards the Pope. We Catholics should consider that after God and the most Holy Virgin, our Mother, the Holy Father comes next in the hierarchy of love and authority.”

St. Josemaria Escriva
The Forge, no. 35

Objectives

Students should be able to:

1. Learn and understand the significance of the papacy.
2. Recall stories from the documentary that illustrate the role of each of the following themes in Pope Francis’s life:
 - Prayer and the Sacraments
 - Discovering God’s Will
 - Mission of the Church
3. Make connections between their own lives and the life of Pope Francis.

Lesson Plan

Setting the stage

Before watching the documentary, help your students get the most from it by *setting the stage* and introducing the themes and topics they will encounter in the documentary.

The following questions, facts, Scripture verses, and points from the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) may be used as an introduction to the documentary:

1. What do we know about Pope Francis?
 - He was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina on December 17, 1936.
 - He was ordained a priest in 1969.
 - In 2013, he was elected the 266th Pope of the Catholic Church.
 - He is the first Pope from the Americas.
 - In 2015, he visited the United States for the World Meeting of Families.

2. Who was the first Pope?
 - St. Peter
 - “The Lord made Simon alone, whom he named Peter, the ‘rock’ of his Church. He gave him the keys of his Church and instituted him shepherd of the whole flock” (CCC 881).

3. What is the relationship between Pope Francis and St. Peter?
 - Pope Francis is a successor of the Apostle, St. Peter; there is a direct line from St. Peter, who was appointed by Jesus, to Pope Francis.
 - “The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter’s successor, is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful” (CCC 882).

4. What is the role of the Pope?
 - Head of the Catholic Church on earth.
 - Jesus gave Peter the power to speak for him as head of the Church and to carry on the work of the Apostles: preaching, teaching, baptizing in Jesus’s name, and doing good.
 - Every Pope since Peter has had the responsibility to teach and lead the Church in Jesus’s name.
 - “For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered” (CCC 882).
 - “The successor of Peter himself is nothing but the servant of the servants of God” (Pope Francis).

5. Why is it important to learn about Pope Francis's life?
- St. Josemaria Escriva once said: "Love for the Roman Pontiff must be in us a delightful passion, for in him we see Christ" (*In Love with the Church*, no. 13).
 - In order to love the Pope, we must get to know him, his personality, and the things that are most important to him.
6. Why should we pray for the Pope?
- He is our father; just as we pray for our family members, we should pray for the Pope since he is the head of God's family on earth, the Church.
 - "A Christian who does not pray for the Pope is like a child who does not pray for his father" (St. Clement Mary Hofbauer).
 - He relies on prayers in order to support him in his mission of caring for the Church and the world:
 - i. "Pray a great deal for the Holy Father" (Our Lady of Fatima, 1917).
 - ii. "May the daily consideration of the heavy burden which weighs upon the Pope and the bishops move you to venerate and love them with real affection, and to help them with your prayers" (St. Josemaria Escriva; *The Forge*, no. 136).
 - iii. "The Holy Spirit transforms and renews us, creates harmony and unity, and gives us courage and joy for mission" (Pope Francis).

Watching the Documentary

As you prepare to watch the documentary together, explain to your students that the documentary highlights certain themes from Pope Francis's life that have been important to helping him become the man that he is today.

As they watch the documentary, direct them to take notes, especially of Pope Francis's lessons and examples about prayer, the sacraments, doing God's will, and the Church.

Delving Deeper

After watching the documentary, the following questions and answers can be used to lead a discussion:

1. Throughout the documentary, Pope Francis talks about the role of prayer in his life. Which prayers does he mention learning and using daily? How does it help him?
 - He is grateful for the prayers that he learned at home from his family, especially his grandmother.
 - He takes time each day for prayer and adds extra time during his vacation.
 - He mentions praying from his breviary (the Liturgy of the Hours) daily.
 - He keeps a rosary and a little “Way of the Cross” in his pocket for his prayer throughout the day:
 - i. “With these two things, I try to do my best, but thanks to these two items I don’t lose hope.”
 - He recognizes prayer is at the very core of his life and seeks the prayers of others:
 - i. “I ask you all, please, to pray for me.”
2. Using examples from the documentary, how would you describe the Pope’s devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary?
 - He loves her as his mother:
 - i. When speaking about his elementary school, he said that it was there that he learned to love Mary. “They taught me about affection and with love comes natural affection. As children we would offer flowers to our Lady.”
 - He relies on her for protection and guidance:
 - i. Before and after each apostolic trip, he stops to pray before the Virgin Mary at the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome.
3. How has Pope Francis learned God’s plans for him throughout his life? Were there times when he found God’s will in unexpected ways?
 - Through the sacraments:
 - i. As a teenager during Confession he had an experience of Jesus that changed him: “I had heard something like a voice or a call. I was convinced I should become a priest.”
 - Through the desires of his heart:
 - i. He decided to join the Jesuits because their missionary outlook aligned with his God-given desire to share the Gospel.
 - By saying “no” to something he wanted:
 - i. After he had joined the Jesuits, he requested to be sent away as a missionary but was denied due to his health; he eventually became archbishop of Buenos Aires and later, Pope.

4. What personal decisions has Pope Francis made in his life to be a witness of humility and simplicity according with the Gospel?
 - At the Vatican, he chose to live in a simple apartment and not the designated papal apartment.
 - He doesn't go away on vacation but instead takes time once a year to rest, pray, and study, usually just staying wherever he is.
 - He prefers to be driven around in a small, simple car instead of luxury vehicles.
5. What motivated Pope Francis to take his name after St. Francis of Assisi? What else has he done in his papacy to demonstrate the effect it has had on him?
 - A fellow Cardinal encouraged him to not "forget the poor," which made him think of St. Francis and inspired him to take his name.
 - He spontaneously visited a slum outside of Rome to pray with the immigrants living there, showing that "charity isn't just about alms but affection and closeness, comforting one's neighbor."
 - He opened a homeless shelter near the Vatican: "The Son of God came into the world as a homeless person."
6. Pope Francis's vision for the Church is that it be a church of action, a church that goes out to meet and serve others. What does he teach about joy and evangelization?
 - He teaches that joy is more than just a feeling or a mood, it is an "essential characteristic of those who follow Christ."
 - He also teaches that "a Christian finds joy in mission."
 - He wants the Church to go out searching for souls: "I want people to go out, I want the Church to go out into the street... Go out to others and share the good news that God our Father walks at our side."

Reflecting and Projecting

Help your students make connections between their own lives and the life of Pope Francis. Begin with a question for reflection and then ask them to think of a resolution that they can commit to every day that will help them grow in one special area of their lives:

1. After watching the documentary and learning about Pope Francis's life, what examples from his life can help you to grow closer to God and to serve others?
2. Think of one resolution that you can commit to that will challenge you to grow in one of these areas: keeping a daily conversation with God in prayer, seeking God's plan for you, and being a true and joyful Christian.

- Prayer is at the core of Pope Francis’s life. Here are a few ideas for small actions that you can add to your daily prayer to grow closer to God:
 - i. Carry a rosary in your pocket and commit to praying at least one decade every day.
 - ii. Practice small acts of affection towards Jesus and his Blessed Mother, like placing flowers by her image or kissing a crucifix before going to bed.
 - iii. Begin your own daily “tradition” of prayer, offering a prayer at a specific time each day (when you wake up, before each class, before meals, etc.).
- Pope Francis’s life demonstrates that God has a plan for each and every person, and he can communicate it in many different ways. A few ways to seek God’s will in your life are:
 - i. Actively seek to grow closer to God by going to confession once a month and being prepared to receive Jesus in the Eucharist when you go to Mass.
 - ii. Make an act of trust daily, telling God that you trust him and his plans for your life and asking him to increase your trust.
- Participate in the mission of the Church as Pope Francis describes:
 - i. Choose to be joyful, even when you have a bad day or don’t feel like it.
 - ii. Invite a friend to join you and your family for Mass.
 - iii. Find ways to serve the poor or suffering in your area (serving in a soup kitchen, donating unused clothing and toys, helping an elderly neighbor, etc.).
 - iv. Reach out to those other students that may feel left out or excluded—invite them to study or do something fun together.

Prayer for the Pope

End the class with a prayer for the Pope and his intentions:

Lord, source of eternal life and truth, give to Your shepherd, the Pope, a spirit of courage and right judgment, a spirit of knowledge and love.

By governing with fidelity those entrusted to his care may he, as successor to the apostle Peter and vicar of Christ, build Your church into a sacrament of unity, love, and peace for all the world.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

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Discussion Guide for Students

Who is the Pope?

Before watching the documentary, let's *set the stage* by reviewing some of the themes and topics we will encounter in the documentary:

1. What do we know about Pope Francis?
2. Who was the first Pope?
3. What is the relationship between Pope Francis and the first Pope?
4. What is the role of the Pope?
5. Why is it important to learn about Pope Francis's life?
6. Why should we remember to pray for the Pope every day?

Let's Discuss

As you watch the documentary take note of Pope Francis's lessons on prayer, the sacraments, doing God's will, and the Church. After watching it, we will discuss the following questions:

1. Throughout the documentary, Pope Francis talks about the role of prayer in his life. Which prayers does he mention learning and using daily? How does it help him?
2. Using examples from the documentary, how would you describe the Pope's devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary?
3. How has Pope Francis learned God's plans for him throughout his life? Were there times when he found God's will in unexpected ways?
4. What personal decisions has Pope Francis made in his life to be a witness of humility and simplicity according with the Gospel?
5. What motivated Pope Francis to take his name after St. Francis of Assisi? What else has he done in his papacy to demonstrate the effect it has had on him?
6. Pope Francis's vision for the Church is that it be a church of action, a church that goes out to meet and serve others. What does he teach about joy and evangelization?

How Does This Help Me?

Take a few minutes after watching and discussing the documentary to reflect on what you have learned and how it can help you in your life:

1. What examples from Pope Francis's life stood out to you that can help you to grow closer to God and to serve others?
2. Think of one action (*resolution*) that you can commit to each day that will challenge you to keep growing in these areas of your life:
 - Talking with God every day in prayer
 - Seeking God's plan for you
 - Being a true and joyful Christian

Prayer for the Pope

Lord, source of eternal life and truth, give to Your shepherd, the Pope, a spirit of courage and right judgment, a spirit of knowledge and love.

By governing with fidelity those entrusted to his care may he, as successor to the apostle Peter and vicar of Christ, build Your church into a sacrament of unity, love, and peace for all the world.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

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