

A close-up photograph of Pope Francis, smiling warmly and waving his right hand. He is wearing his white papal attire, including a zucchetto and a pectoral cross. The background is a blurred crowd of people.

POPE FRANCIS

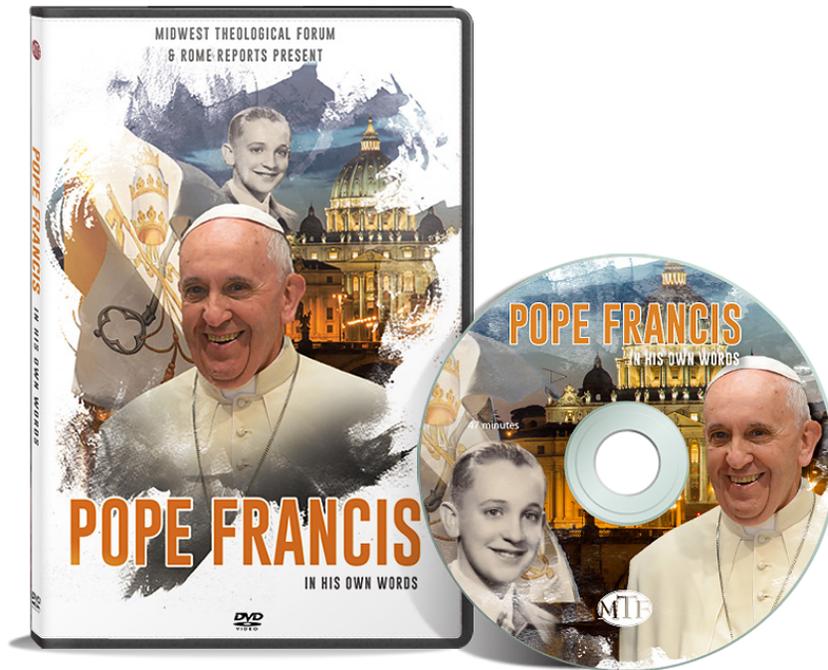
IN HIS OWN WORDS

A GUIDE FOR CATECHISTS

Students Ages 7 to 10

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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:
 - Relationship with family
 - Relationship with God, especially through the Sacraments
 - Relationship with others, especially the poor and suffering
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 that: "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 come 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.
 - i. "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 our prayers 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 his relationship with his family, with God, and with others.

Delving Deeper

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

1. Pope Francis says that he is grateful for his childhood and family life because they helped him to learn and appreciate many things. Which moments from his childhood does he mention still influence him to this day?
 - His father's job in accounting and economics, which required him to work on weekends, created Pope Francis's dislike for those subjects.
 - Sports brought people together in his community and influenced his own interest in sports, especially soccer.
 - His grandmother brought him close to Jesus Christ by teaching him prayers and the catechism; she also supported him through a letter that she wrote on his day of ordination, which he still reads often.
 - His mother taught him his appreciation for music.
2. What are some lessons Pope Francis mentions about family life that we can see and practice at home too?
 - The importance of generosity, especially in small acts of love and affection in the home.
 - All families have difficulties and a cross to bear, but there is also the resurrection.
 - We should never let the day end without making peace.
3. Pope Francis explains how his relationship with God grew deeper as he got older. What experiences and challenges does he mention *might* have changed his relationship with God?
 - He responded to a prompting to go to confession as a teenager; this moment changed him and he heard a calling to become a priest.
 - A rejected desire to serve as a missionary with the Jesuits in a foreign land.
4. What does Pope Francis say about God's mercy in the Sacrament of Confession?
 - There is a stark difference between God's forgiveness and the forgiveness of man; God never tires of forgiving, we tire of asking for forgiveness.
 - All people are in need of God's forgiveness; even Pope Francis goes to confession every 15 days.
5. It is very important to Pope Francis that we learn to love one another, especially the poor and the suffering. Which stories show how Pope Francis shares his love for everyone?
 - His unannounced visit to a slum on his way to a parish in Rome; he wanted to meet the families that lived in that neighborhood.
 - He welcomes immigrants to the Vatican.
 - He visits prisoners.

6. According to Pope Francis, how can we follow Jesus’s example when for caring for others?
 - Charity is about affection, closeness, and comforting one’s neighbor, not only relieving a material need.
 - Take the suffering of the poor on ourselves.

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. What lessons does Pope Francis want us to learn from the experiences of his own life?
2. Think of one action (*resolution*) that you can commit to each day that will challenge you to grow in one of the areas: being happy and helpful at home, talking with God (prayer), and thinking of others before yourself.
 - Pope Francis reminds us that living within a family is one of the primary places we can learn to love and serve others with generosity. A few examples of things to work on:
 - i. Kindness and patience in words and actions with siblings.
 - ii. Generosity in helping parents around the house; trying to help before you’re asked.
 - iii. When someone is talking to you put your phone/computer away and give them your full attention.
 - Through Pope Francis’s life, we see that growing in relationship with God requires effort and receptivity to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. A few ways to grow closer to God are:
 - i. Make the Sign of the Cross and offer your day to God first thing in the morning.
 - ii. Say a prayer before and after your meals, especially with your family.
 - iii. Prepare and go to Mass on Sundays.
 - iv. Prepare and go to confession once a month.
 - Our relationships with others challenge us to look beyond ourselves and live out our faith in the world. Suffering comes in many forms and we encounter people who are hurting every day. A few examples of resolutions in this area:
 - i. Invite someone who is left out at lunch or recess to sit with you or join in your games.
 - ii. Help someone in need: carrying groceries, doing yard work, opening doors.
 - iii. Ask someone about themselves and listen to them without interrupting or talking about yourself.

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.

POPE FRANCIS IN HIS OWN WORDS

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 connection 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 from his relationship with his family, with God, and with others. After watching it, we will discuss the following questions:

1. Pope Francis says that he is grateful for his childhood and family life because they helped him to learn and appreciate many things. Which moments from his childhood does he mention still influence him to this day?
2. What are some lessons Pope Francis mentions about family life that we can see and practice at home too?
3. Pope Francis explains how his relationship with God grew deeper as he got older. What experiences and challenges does he mention *might* have changed his relationship with God?
4. What does Pope Francis say about God's mercy in the Sacrament of Confession?
5. It is very important to Pope Francis that we learn to love one another, especially the poor and the suffering. Which stories show how Pope Francis shares his love for everyone?
6. According to Pope Francis, how can we follow Jesus's example when for caring for others?

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:
 - Being happy and helpful at home
 - Talking with God (*prayer*) and learning to be a true Christian
 - Thinking of others before yourself

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.

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