

## PRAY Loving

God, in Jesus you become our kin and our kind. You become one of us. Help each of us testify to the truth of who we are—your sons and daughters, made in your image, able by loving one another to be like you. Amen.

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# SPIRIT

**P**eople like to take selfies with the pope. Not only is Pope Francis thriving in the contemporary digital world but he is a man of the new world of the Americas, who likes soccer, maté, and tango.

Francis's parents immigrated to Argentina in 1929, when they saw the forces rising in Italy that led to World War II. He views the Church and world with the eyes of an Argentinian, with special concern for the people of the *barrios*.

Jorge Bergoglio was born and grew up in Buenos Aires, Argentina, with two brothers and two sisters. He studied chemistry in college. As a young man, he worked as a janitor, a bouncer at a bar, and chemistry technician.

Then in 1958, he joined the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits, a religious order of priests who have schools and universities all over the world. That same year John XXIII became pope. Pope John soon called for the Second Vatican Council, a meeting of the



## POPE FRANCIS Lifts Up the Poor

bishops of the whole world. The new pope wanted to open the window and let in the winds of the Holy Spirit to renew the Church.

When the bishops of Latin America came home from Vatican II, they embraced its emphasis on solidarity with the poor and afflicted. They gathered in Medellín, Colombia, in 1968. Together they committed to serve the multitudes of people who are poor in their countries as their number one priority. They called the commitment “the option for the poor.”

Jorge studied and learned to be a Jesuit in the midst of all this change.

He was ordained a Jesuit priest in 1969. Just four years later the Jesuits put him in charge of their priests. Then military dictators rose to power.

The dictators disappeared thousands of those who worked with people in the *barrios*. The word *disappeared* refers to people *tortured* and *killed*, never found or accounted for. This era in Argentina's history is called the Dirty War. It is the era when the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Disappeared begin standing in the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires to protest the loss of their children, an action they have done for decades.



Pope Francis commemorated the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in a liturgy in Sweden with leaders of the Lutheran World Federation.

Two Jesuits worked in the *barrios* in Buenos Aires. The Dirty War endangered their lives. Father Bergoglio urged the two to leave their work with the poor and get out of danger. The priests wanted to stay with the people. Both were kidnapped and tortured but not killed. Many with land and wealth feared that the Church's emphasis on the poor could lead to revolution and put their land and wealth at risk.

**W**hen he became Archbishop of Buenos Aires in 1998, Archbishop Bergoglio himself often spent time in the *barrios* where people who are poor put up ramshackle houses out of any building material they could find. He set up food and education centers in the *barrios*. He celebrated Mass with the people there and honored their feasts and devotions.

In his exhortations, Pope Francis always talks about the impact of world problems on people who are poor and cannot protect themselves from the effects of climate change. For example, in parts of Africa the land farmers depend on has become desert. Rising sea levels flood island peoples in the Pacific off their islands. Warmer sea waters change fishing grounds and leave people without a livelihood.

Francis wants the people of God, the Catholic Church, to stand with those who suffer, to be a Church of the poor and for the poor. He writes, "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" (*Joy of the Gospel*, #49).

Pope Francis made news when he was elected pope by staying a man of the people. He wore his old black shoes with his new white pope cassock. He took the bus and paid his own hotel bill. On Holy Thursday he washed and kissed the feet of young prisoners, two of them young women. He chose the name Francis as pope because St. Francis renounced his father's wealth and identified with people who are poor.



### Francis is a joyful pope.

In his first exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, he calls us, the people of the Church, to open our hearts to encounter with Jesus and then to share the Joy of the Gospel, the English title of the exhortation. He reminds us that life grows by being given away. It is joy that attracts others to Jesus' good news.

"The gospel tells us constantly to run the risk of a face-to-face encounter with others, with their physical presence which challenges us, with their pain and their pleas, with their joy which infests us in our close and continuous interaction. True faith in the incarnate Son of God is inseparable from self-giving, from membership in

the community, from service, from reconciliation with others. The Son of God, by becoming flesh, summoned us to a revolution of tenderness" (*Joy of the Gospel*, #88).

### Francis is a green pope.

He timed his second exhortation *Laudato Si'* to coincide with the Paris 2015 U.N. Conference on climate change. In *Laudato Si'* Francis urges support for international agreements to

reduce climate change and protect Earth's poorest people. He calls us to repair our common home.

Pope Francis never forgets the people of the *barrios* of Argentina who live on \$2 to \$10 per day. Like most people in the world, they live below the official U.S. poverty line—\$25,100 for a family of four in 2018. He speaks against an economy that excludes people and creates inequality. He asks, "How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly person dies of exposure, but it is

news when the stock market loses two points?" (*Laudato Si'* #53)

### Francis is a pope for families.

For Francis life is a process that requires time and God's grace. In family life relationships take time to build and time to heal when people hurt each other. He called the Church together for a Synod on the Family. In *Amoris Laetitia*, On Love in the Family, Francis summarizes the synod and explains "there is a need to accompany with mercy and patience the eventual stages of personal growth. . . , making room for the Lord's mercy which spurs us to do our best" (295).

**Pope Francis will be 81 year old on December 17. Send him a card.**

# SUNDAY GOSPEL

Feast of Christ the King

## Where is Jesus' kingdom?

**NARRATOR:** Pilate, the Roman governor, summoned Jesus.

**PILATE:** Are you the king of the Jews?

**JESUS:** Are you saying this on your own, or have others been telling you about me?

**PILATE:** I am no Jew. Your own people and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?

**JESUS:** My kingdom does not belong

to this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my subjects would be fighting to save me from being handed over. My kingdom is not here.

**PILATE:** So, then, are you a king?

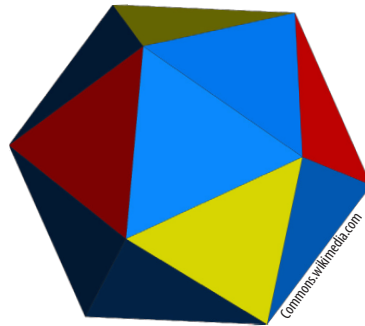
**JESUS:** It is you who say I am a king. The reason I was born, the reason why I came into the world is to testify to the truth. Anyone committed to the truth hears my voice.

John 18.33-37

## Francis is a pope for young people.

This October Pope Francis called together another synod, this time the subject: Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment. The synod explored recognizing, interpreting, and choosing a life.

Reality is greater than ideas, the pope insists. He wants to know what life is like for young people ages 16-29—hopes and fears, attitudes toward the Church, the problems where they live, such as crime, trafficking, corrupt politics. Many have answered his questions in their dioceses and through the online questionnaire. The pope suggests the world for young people is a polyhedron, reflecting many facets—globalization, families, relationships with adults, music, sports, work, life choices, education, inequality for



girls, jobs, professions. How does one form a life in a digital world?

The pope fears that “many young people declare that they are looking for the meaning of life, pursuing ideals, searching for their own personal spirituality and faith, but they rarely turn to the Church” (63). He also notes “the call to holiness plays out in the practice of our everyday life. Jesus’ words are few and straightforward, yet practical and valid for everyone, for Christianity is meant above all to be put into practice” (109).

**QUESTIONS** 1 What keeps young people from turning to the Church in their search for meaning? 2 How is your world like a polyhedron? 3 Why does the whole world, and not just Catholics, admire and relate to Pope Francis? 4 What is a way you live Jesus’ words in your everyday life? 5 What is the truth to which Jesus testifies with his life? 6 To what do you testify with your life?

## OUR CATHOLIC FAITH:

### SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, CHURCH AND WORLD

## Building Jesus’ kingdom on earth

**J**esus insists in Sunday’s gospel that his kingdom is not of this world. He reigns through the loving actions of his followers, not armies. In the Our Father, his own prayer, Jesus prays that God’s kingdom will come and God’s will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Between 1962 and 1965, the Second Vatican Council updated the Church and renewed its commitment to make Jesus’ prayer real. In the decades before the Council many Catholics lived a spirituality that focused on getting to heaven. They tended to accept suffering and poverty because God would reward people in heaven.

The Council called us to be our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers on earth. The first sentence of the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World insists:

**The joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these, too, are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.**

Like all Church documents the title of this document comes from its first words, which in Latin are *Gaudium et Spes* or in English *Joys and Hopes*. After this teaching Catholics developed a spirituality of solidarity with the poor.

“In no other age has humanity enjoyed such an abundance of wealth, resources and economic well-being,” the Council says of the modern world. “Yet a huge proportion of the people of this world is plagued by hunger and extreme need while countless numbers are totally illiterate (*Gaudium et Spes* #4).



The bishops of the world assemble in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome for the Second Vatican Council.

**T**he bishops of the Council observed, "The hungry nations cry out to their affluent neighbors; women claim parity with men in fact as well as of right, where they have not obtained it; laborers and agricultural workers insist not just on the necessities of life but also on the opportunity to develop by their labor their personal talents and to play their due role in organizing economic, social, political, and cultural life (*Gaudium et Spes* #9).

The Second Vatican Council emphasized the common good. This concept provides people in politics and government a way to talk about and negotiate the many needs of people in our world. "The common good is the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily. Every group must take into account the needs and legitimate aspirations of every other group, and even those of the human family as a whole" (*Gaudium et Spes* #26).

**T**he work of solidarity is making sure that our neighbors have food, clothing, shelter, education, and health care. Today's world is global. Catholic Relief Services is the way U.S. Catholics extend our care around the globe.

Solidarity asks us to help when people experience disaster or famine but even more to help all people become self-sustaining.

Solidarity asks us to treat immigrants and migrants as brothers and sisters. It asks us to find ways to help people become part of the world economy without being cheated for cheap labor or cheated out of natural resources.

Solidarity asks us to promote education for girls in the developing world. It asks us to raise funds but also to make friends across continents. All are responsible for all.

**T**he Council challenges us. "Today there is an inescapable duty to make ourselves the neighbor of every individual without exception, and

to take positive steps to help a neighbor whom we encounter, whether that neighbor be an elderly person abandoned by everyone, a foreign worker who suffers the injustice of being despised, a refugee, an illegitimate child wrongly suffering for a sin of which the child is innocent, or a starving human being who awakens our conscience by calling to mind the words of Christ: 'As you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you did it to me'" (Matthew 25:40; *Gaudium et Spes* #27).

## FAITH in ACTION

- 1 Whose voices do you hear crying out for dignity in our world? In your school or neighborhood?
- 2 Visit [CRS.org](http://CRS.org) to discover activities for young people.
- 3 Find the United Nations eight Sustainable Development Goals online. Discuss how they work for the common good.