

PROCLAIM

A Magazine for Missionary Animation

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*With Gratitude to
Pope Francis*



*With Hope in
Pope Leo XIV*

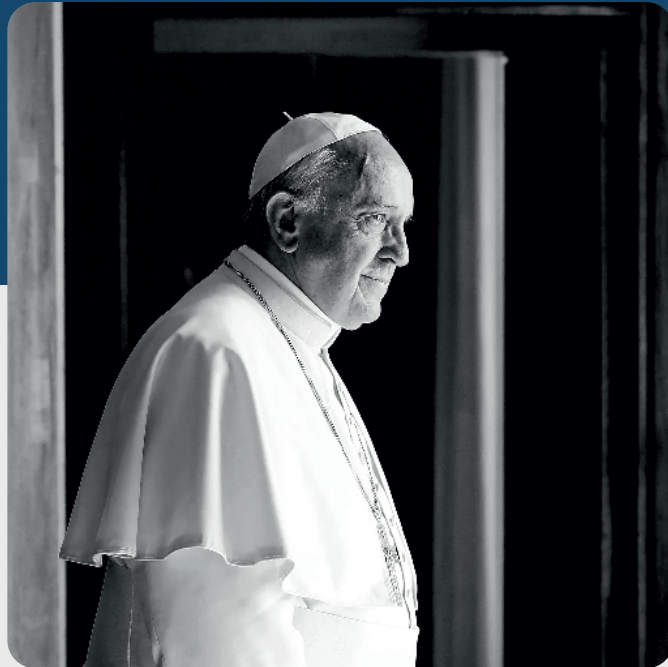
Our Missionary Journey Continues ...

Proclaim Commemorative Issue



Pontifical Mission Organizations India

IN LOVING MEMORY



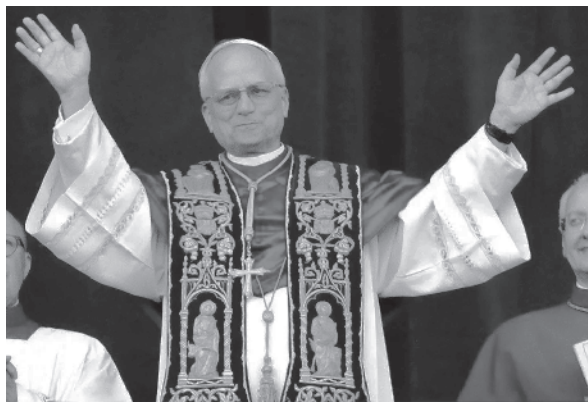
POPE FRANCIS

★ December 17, 1936

† April 21, 2025

He showed us the Merciful Face of God,
led us in the Journey of Synodality,
and has inspired us to be 'pilgrims of hope.'





PROCLAIM

Editor & Publisher

Rt Rev Dr Ambrose Pitchaimuthu
National Director
Pontifical Mission Organizations

Editorial Board

Dr Thomas J DSouza
Mahesh Lobo

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PONTIFICAL MISSION ORGANIZATIONS

PB 4216, No. 10, 3rd Cross,
Ulsoor Road, Bengaluru – 560042,
Karnataka, INDIA.

Tel: +91 79758 31942

Email: secretariat@indiapms.com

Website: www.pmoindia.org

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With gratitude to Pope Francis, with hope for Pope Leo XIV



"Peace be with you!" (John 20:19) — these were the first words spoken by the Risen Christ to His disciples, words that Pope Leo XIV echoed as he stepped onto the balcony of St Peter's Basilica, beginning a new chapter in the life of the Church. The moment was electric with possibility, as hundreds of thousands gathered in St. Peter's Square witnessed history unfolding before their eyes.

As we welcome Pope Leo XIV, we pause with reverence and affection to offer profound gratitude for the extraordinary papacy of Pope Francis — a shepherd who journeyed with us, who listened, who healed, and who challenged the Church to rediscover the Gospel in its simplicity and mercy.

Pope Francis will be remembered as the Pontiff of Mercy and Encounter. His heart was open to the peripheries of the world, and his feet walked the paths of the poor and forgotten. From the favelas of Buenos Aires to the refugee camps of Lesbos, from hospitals caring for the dying to prisons housing the forgotten, his pastoral ministry knew no boundaries. Through *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Laudato Si'*, and *Fratelli Tutti*, he invited us into a Church that is missionary, inclusive, and ecological in spirit. He showed us that the Church is not a fortress but a field hospital, a place of healing for wounded souls seeking refuge and restoration. In his humility, he became a bridge between the wounded and the Divine Physician. We are thankful for his prophetic voice, his courageous reforms, and his unwavering commitment to synodality — the Church walking together.

His legacy extends beyond documents and declarations to the countless lives touched by his gentle presence. Whether washing the feet of prisoners, embracing children with disabilities, or sitting with families torn apart by violence, Pope Francis embodied the tenderness of Christ in a world grown hard with indifference. His witness reminded us that holiness is not found in grand gestures alone, but in the daily

choice to love without counting the cost, to serve without seeking recognition, and to forgive as we have been forgiven. Through countless moments of authentic encounter, he demonstrated that the Church's mission is fundamentally about accompanying people in their joys and struggles, walking alongside them with patient compassion.

As we turn toward the future, we receive Pope Leo XIV with joy and prayer. His first words, "Peace be with you," signal continuity and hope. In a fragmented world yearning for reconciliation, Pope Leo's call to peace — humble, unarmed, and persevering — echoes the heart of the Gospel.

His inaugural message carries the weight of centuries of papal wisdom while speaking directly to contemporary souls thirsting for authentic spiritual leadership. His serene presence and clear conviction rekindle in us a desire to believe again that love is stronger than hate, that hope is stronger than despair. The challenges before him are immense: a Church seeking deeper unity, a world crying out for justice, and young hearts searching for meaning in an age of uncertainty.

In this historic moment, we find ourselves between memory and mission. Gratitude and welcome are not just sentiments — they are responses of faith. We look back with affection on the luminous path of Pope Francis and look ahead with hope as Pope Leo XIV carries forward the Petrine ministry with gentleness and strength. The baton of Peter's care passes from one faithful servant to another, each bringing their unique gifts to the universal Church, each called to shepherd Christ's flock with wisdom and compassion.

May the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, continue to breathe with both lungs — memory and prophecy, tradition and renewal — ever more faithful to Christ, the Good Shepherd.

+ Most Rev Dr Ambrose Pitchaimuthu

Bishop of Vellore
Director, PMO (India)

Pope Leo XIV

Walking with you on path of God's love

*Elise Ann Allen and John Allen/Crux**

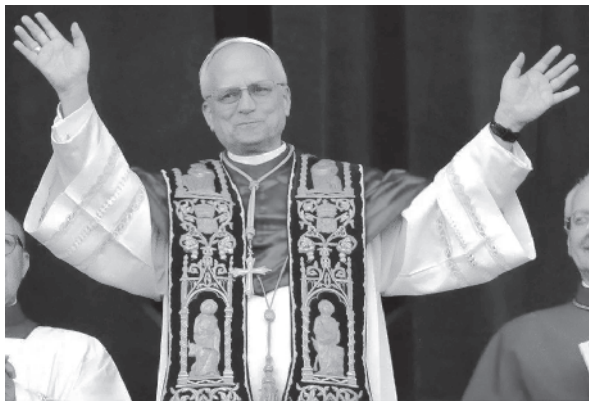
The so-called “Rorschach test” stage of the papacy – in which people can project whatever they want onto the Pope in this early period – continues and will likely last for some time, as Leo seems to be easing his way into his reign.

With just four weeks at the helm, Pope Leo has demonstrated a sense of calm and restraint, preferring to get the lay of the land and understand how things work before making any big decisions. However, he has also wasted no time in getting down to business on certain lingering issues from the Francis papacy related to personnel and some matters of reform.

Leo has also demonstrated a measure of balance, expressing clear continuity with his predecessor while also carving out his own priorities and personal style.

Unlike his immediate predecessors, Leo does not fit easily into the categories many pundits eagerly want to assign – such as “reformer”, “traditionalist”, “liberal” or “conservative” – though many in this “Rorschach stage” want to claim him as one or the other.

His vast experience in Latin America and his stints in Europe, as well as his contact with various corners of the world as superior of his



Augustinian Order, have given Leo a very rounded perspective that will never align with the ideologies attached to largely Western notions of “left” or “right”.

Rather, Leo has already begun to style himself as a unifier and a servant who seeks to foster communion – something that was specifically underlined as a need by cardinals during pre-conclave meetings.

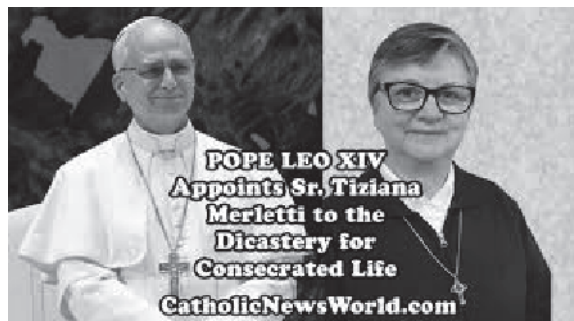
During his very first greeting from the loggia of St Peter's Basilica after his election on 8 May, Leo urged believers to follow Christ, saying, “Humanity needs him as the bridge that can lead us to God and his love. Help us, one and all, to build bridges through dialogue and encounter, joining together as one people, always at peace.”

In his 18 May homily for his inaugural Mass, Leo said, “I was chosen, without any merit of my own, and now, with fear and trembling, I come to you as a brother, who desires to be the servant of your faith and your joy, walking with you on the path of God's love, for he wants us all to be united in one family.”

Leo XIV in that homily gave a roadmap, of sorts, for his pastoral priorities as Pope, saying, “Love and unity: these are the two dimensions of the mission entrusted to Peter by Jesus.”

On that occasion, he lamented the “discord” and the “many wounds caused by hatred, violence, prejudice, the fear of difference, and an economic paradigm that exploits the Earth's resources and marginalises the poorest.”

Against this backdrop, his greatest desire for the Church, he said, is that it be “a sign of unity and communion, which becomes a leaven for a reconciled world”, and “a small leaven of





unity, communion and fraternity within the world.”

“We are called to offer God’s love to everyone, in order to achieve that unity which does not cancel

out differences but values the personal history of each person and the social and religious culture of every people,” he said.

From the very beginning, Leo has demonstrated clear continuity with his predecessor, Pope Francis, calling in his initial remarks for “a synodal Church” and using Francis’s language of “building bridges” of dialogue and fraternity. He has visited Pope Francis’s tomb in the Basilica of St Mary Major.

He has also repeatedly quoted Pope Francis in his speeches and homilies – including his inaugural 18 May homily – and has echoed Francis’s calls for care of the environment, the poor, migrants, and a greater sense of global fraternity.

Yet Leo has also made it clear that he is his own man – from his choice of papal attire,



bringing back the *mozzetta*, or red cape traditionally worn by popes, to his personal devotions, including his own expressions of popular piety.

While Pope Francis would often visit the famed *Maria Salus Populi Romani* icon in St Mary Major – beloved by Romans and historically by Jesuits – Leo, in his first week as pontiff, paid a visit to the Augustinian-run Shrine of the Mother of Good Counsel in Genazzano, to pray before the Marian icon bearing this title.

Francis made early waves in his papacy

through spontaneous gestures such as going to pay his own hotel bill, crossing the Vatican–Italy border to greet a friend while visiting the Vatican parish of St Anne’s, and stubbornly insisting on going to the Italian island of Lampedusa, threatening to purchase a ticket and go on his own when aides advised against the visit.

Leo, on the other hand, has been spontaneous in his own way – making surprise visits to the Augustinian headquarters in Rome, where he lunched almost daily as a cardinal – to be with his community and to celebrate the birthday of his friend Alejandro Moral, the Prior General of the Augustinians.

So far, internally, Leo has shown that he is not rushing into decisions. Instead, he is taking time to understand the status of things and how they work before making major structural or personnel changes – deciding to leave all dicastery prefects in their current positions for the time being.

However, he has begun to make some decisions, addressing unfinished business from the Francis era. He has held potentially delicate meetings with American Cardinal Seán O’Malley, president of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, to discuss matters of sex abuse, and met the leadership of Opus Dei to discuss the reform of the group launched but never completed under Francis.

Leo has also met with Italian Cardinal Angelo Becciu, whose conviction in the Vatican’s “trial of the century” for financial crimes remains one of the most disputed matters of the latter stage of the Francis papacy, and whose exclusion from the recent conclave also generated controversy.





Some early personnel moves from Leo were likely put into motion by Pope Francis prior to his death and can thus be seen as acts of continuity – such as the appointment of Franciscan Sister of the Poor Tiziana Merletti as secretary of the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

He also replaced Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia as president of the Pontifical Academy for Life and as chancellor of the Pontifical John Paul II Theological Institute for Marriage and the Family Sciences, as Paglia had turned 80 – naming Cardinal Baldassarre Reina, Vicar of the Diocese of Rome, as chancellor of the institute, and Monsignor Renzo Pegoraro, formerly the academy's chancellor, as its president – appointments seen as largely in continuity with Francis's agenda.

Soon, however, Pope Leo will need to begin making significant appointments entirely his own – including naming his successor at the Dicastery for Bishops, and new prefects for Saints Causes, Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, the Promotion of Christian Unity, Integral Human Development, and the Laity, Family and Life, all of whom are beyond the typical retirement age of 75.

Pope Leo's first month in office has been characterised by a sense of calm. However, he has also delved into action amid the Church's busy Jubilee calendar and has begun, tentatively, to use his voice – which carries with it the weight of the papal office.

Not only has he made repeated appeals for peace in Ukraine and Gaza – calling for the return of hostages, access to aid, and ceasefires – he has also held conversations with both Ukrainian

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Russian President Vladimir Putin, demonstrating a keen desire to prioritise peacemaking.

He has also begun to speak out on more sensitive and potentially politically inflammatory matters – condemning femicide and political nationalism in a 8 June homily during a Mass for the Jubilee of Movements, Associations and New Communities on Pentecost Sunday.

In that homily, Leo spoke about the Holy Spirit's role in “opening borders” in the relationship with others, saying the Holy Spirit “transforms those deeper, hidden dangers that disturb our relationships, like suspicion, prejudice or the desire to manipulate others.”

“I think too, with great pain, of those cases where relationships are marked by an unhealthy desire for domination, an attitude that often leads to violence, as is shown, tragically, by numerous recent cases of femicide,” he said.

The reference to femicide resounded throughout social and political circles in Italy, which has long been plagued by high rates of domestic violence and female homicides – so much so that the Italian government is currently considering a draft law on femicide that would send convicted perpetrators to prison for life.

Pope Leo also spoke of the Holy Spirit's role in “opening borders between peoples”, saying the Holy Spirit “breaks down barriers and tears down the walls of indifference and hatred” and instead fosters a love that leaves no room “for prejudice” and for “the exclusionary mindset that, tragically, we now see emerging also in political nationalisms.”

Leo's voice as an advocate is slowly emerging – echoing some of his predecessor's concerns, as Francis also condemned femicide and the wave of nationalist populism sweeping through much of the world, including Europe and the United States – but he is doing it with his own style and tone.

It is his penchant for balance and calm, for thinking before acting, for moving the needle in an almost quiet way, that has characterised Leo's first month.

***<https://thecatholicherald.com/pope-leo-xiv-one-month-on/>♦**

Pope Francis and the Synodal Journey from Below

Rev Dr Merlin Rengith Ambrose*



Pope Francis's pontificate has been marked by a profound shift in ecclesial methodology, placing synodality at the heart of the Church's life and mission. This emphasis on "walking together" (the literal meaning of synodality) has sought to move beyond a top-down model of governance, fostering a more inclusive and participatory Church that actively listens to the voices of all its members, especially the often-marginalised. This article will trace how synodality became a key method of reform under Pope Francis, giving voice to the lay faithful, youth, women, and the poor, with a particular focus on the spiritual conversation method and the emphasis on listening.

From Vatican II to a Synodal Church

The seeds of synodality were sown in the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), which called for a renewed understanding of the Church as the People of God, emphasising the shared dignity and responsibility of all the baptised. While the Council established the Synod of Bishops as an advisory body, its potential for broader participation remained largely untapped for several decades.

Pope Francis, however, has consistently sought to revitalise and expand the concept of synodality, moving it from an occasional event to an ongoing process that permeates the entire

Church. He has repeatedly emphasised that synodality is not merely a strategy or a set of mechanisms, but a way of being Church (*modus vivendi*), a dynamic expression of communion, participation, and mission. In his 2015 address, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Synod of Bishops, Pope Francis stated, "The Synod of Bishops is the dynamic point of convergence that obliges the Church to listen to the People of God." This statement encapsulates his vision of a Church that learns by listening.

Giving voice to the margins: "A Church from Below"

A defining characteristic of Pope Francis's synodal approach is his insistence on listening to the voices of those often excluded or marginalised within the Church. He has consistently sought to amplify the perspectives of the lay faithful, youth, women, and the poor, recognising that their experiences and insights are essential for the Church to be truly faithful to the Gospel. This emphasis on listening "from below" represents a significant departure from traditional models.

The lay faithful: Pope Francis frequently urges the faithful to remember their Baptismal day, to celebrate it, and to reflect on its meaning for their lives. He sees this remembrance as a way to renew their commitment to Christ and to the Church. He connects Baptism directly to the call to evangelization and mission. He sees it as the source of the Christian's identity and mission in the world, empowering each baptized person to be a witness to the Gospel. The baptismal vocation of the lay faithful and synodality emphasises that all baptised Catholics are called to actively participate in the Church's mission, sharing in Christ's threefold role of priest, prophet, and king. His emphasis on Baptism is also a counterpoint to clericalism, the tendency to see the clergy as being superior to the laity. By stressing the common dignity of all the baptised, he seeks to promote a more participatory and collaborative Church. Pope Francis has repeatedly stressed the indispensable role of the



laity in the Church's mission, recognising their unique charisms and their direct engagement with the world. He has encouraged their active participation in decision-making processes, moving beyond a purely consultative role.

Youth: Recognizing the energy, creativity, and idealism of young people, Pope Francis convened the Synod on Youth in 2018. This synod was notable for its emphasis on listening to young people's concerns, aspirations, and challenges, and for its call to accompany them on their journey of faith. In his homily at the Opening of the Synod on Youth (October 3, 2018), Pope Francis stated, "We are called to listen to the reality of young people, what they feel, what they desire, what they criticise, and what they hope for." He consistently emphasises the importance and potential of young people in the Church and the world, urging them to embrace their faith, take risks, and be active participants in building a better future. He recognizes youth as a vital source of hope and renewal, encouraging them to be the living hope of the Church on the move. He invites young people to "make their voices heard" as they "bear witness before everyone to the joy born of friendship with Christ." The post-synodal

Apostolic Exhortation, *Christus Vivit* is a significant papal document of Pope Francis that gives the Catholic Church's current and central understanding of its approach to youth and young adults.

Women: Pope Francis has acknowledged the significant contributions of women to the Church while also recognising the need to address the historical and ongoing exclusion of women from leadership roles. In essence, he has taken steps to increase the visibility and influence of women in the Catholic Church, particularly through significant appointments and by promoting a more inclusive and participatory model of Church governance. He has called for a deeper reflection on the role of women in the Church, emphasising the need for their voices to be heard and their gifts to be fully utilized. The presence of women in the Church's workforce has increased during his papacy, from about 19% to 23.4%. The first women appointment of Rev. Sr. Raffaella Petrini, F.S.E, as President of Pontifical Commission and Governorate of Vatican City State and Rev. Sr. Simona Brambilla MC as Prefect of the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life are truly commendable. Pope Francis has established commissions to study

the possibility of women being ordained as deacons, based on historical evidence of women deacons in the early Church.

The Poor: In line with his emphasis on a “Church for the Poor,” Pope Francis has consistently prioritised the perspectives of those who suffer from poverty, injustice, and marginalisation. He sees the poor as a privileged source of theological insight, reminding the Church of its fundamental option for the vulnerable. In 2013, Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 49, aptly stated, “Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society. This demands that we be docile and attentive to the cry of the poor and to come to their aid, not



only with immediate assistance but also by 'helping them out of their poverty' through works of development that are truly concerned with the dignity of the person.” The World Day of the Poor, an annual Roman Catholic observance, was established by Pope Francis in 2017. It is celebrated on the 33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time and is dedicated to reflecting on poverty and its implications, encouraging acts of charity, and promoting social justice.

The Method of Spiritual Conversation

A synodal Church is a Church which listens, which realises that listening is more than simply hearing. It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful, the College of Bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other; and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the 'Spirit of Truth' (Jn 14:17), in order to know what he 'says to the Churches' (Rev 2:7).

To facilitate this process of listening and dialogue, Pope Francis has promoted the method of spiritual conversation. This method, rooted in Ignatian spirituality, emphasizes deep listening, discernment, and a shared search for God's will. It moves beyond mere debate or the exchange of opinions, seeking instead to create a space of mutual respect and openness where participants can listen to one another, to the Holy Spirit, and to the signs of the times.

Key Elements of Spiritual Conversation

In his *Vademecum* for the Synod on Synodality (3.1), Pope Francis states, “Spiritual conversation is offered as a key tool for this listening phase. It is not a debate where ideas are put forward and defended, but rather a moment of shared discernment in which the Holy Spirit can speak.” In his Address to the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (October 4, 2023), he states again that the Synod is not a parliament, it is not a survey of opinions; it is a time of grace, a process of spiritual discernment, a discernment carried out in adoration, in prayer, in contact with the Word of God. This spiritual discernment would include:

Listening: Participants are encouraged to listen attentively to one another, seeking to understand not only the words spoken but also the underlying experiences, emotions, and values. Pope Francis, in his *Vademecum* for the Synod on Synodality (1.4) prescribes, “Synodality is first and foremost about listening: listening to the Holy Spirit through the Word of God and the signs of the times, and listening to one another, especially to those on the margins.”

Speaking from the heart: Participants are invited to share their own experiences and perspectives honestly and authentically, speaking from the heart rather than simply presenting abstract ideas.

Discernment: The goal of the conversation is not to win an argument but to discern together what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church. This involves a process of prayerful reflection, dialogue, and a willingness to be open to new insights.

Consensus: Spiritual conversation seeks to move beyond mere majority rule, striving instead for a



consensus that reflects the shared wisdom of the community and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Ongoing Synod on Synodality

The most significant manifestation of Pope Francis's commitment to synodality is the ongoing Synod on Synodality, which was launched in 2021 and concluded in 2024, though the process continues. As we know, we have only concluded two phases: i) the preparatory phase and ii) the celebratory phase. The third phase of the implementation phase has just begun in 2025 in the wake of the Final Document which was issued after the second phase of Synod in 2024 in October. This multi-year process, involving every diocese in the world, represents an unprecedented effort to listen to the entire People of God.

The synod process has involved consultations at the local, national, and continental levels, with a particular emphasis on reaching out to those on the margins of the Church and society. The working documents for the synod have been shaped by the voices of millions of people around the world, reflecting a truly “from below” approach. Now it is a serious



concern of particular churches to put the teachings of the Final Document into practice in their own dioceses and these reports of implementation have to be submitted during the Ad limina visits of diocesan bishops.

The Synod on Synodality is not without its challenges and controversies. There are differing understandings of synodality within the Church, and some fear that a greater emphasis on listening to the laity could undermine the authority of the hierarchy. However, Pope Francis remains convinced that this synodal journey is essential for the renewal of the Church in the 21st century.

Conclusion: A call for missionary conversion

Pope Francis's emphasis on synodality represents a profound challenge and a great opportunity for the Church. By prioritizing listening, particularly to the voices of the marginalized, he is calling the Church to be more faithful to its identity as the People of God, a community of disciples who walk together in communion, participation, and mission. The ongoing Synod on Synodality, with its emphasis on spiritual conversation and a “from below” approach, offers a concrete pathway for the Church to become a truly listening Church, one that hears the cry of the poor and the groaning of creation, and that seeks to discern and follow the will of God in a world in need of hope and healing. As Pope Francis states in his address at the ceremony commemorating the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops, “the journey of synodality is the journey that God expects of the Church of the third millennium. What the Lord is asking of us is already contained in the word 'synod' itself. Walking together, lay people, pastors, bishops, the Bishop of Rome, is an easy-to-grasp concept, but not so easy to put into practice.” This calls for a missionary conversion of the heart.

*** Rev Dr Merlin Rengith Ambrose, a priest from the diocese of Kottar, is currently a professor of Canon Law at St Peter's Pontifical Institute in Bangalore, and the Executive Secretary of the Commission for Canon Law in the CCBI, and a member of the International Scientific Committee in the Pontifical Urban University, Rome. ♦**

Pope Francis and the missionary call to the peripheries

Fr Dr Antony Lawrence*

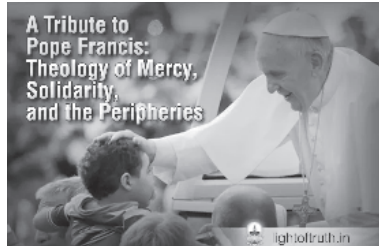
1. Introduction

The Church is part of the world, a world that is diverse

Though, technically, *Evangelii Gaudium* was supposed to be a post-synodal exhortation and hence response to the deliberations of the synod of Bishops, Pope Francis took the opportunity to set forth the agenda of his pontificate and set down some of his key priorities, thereby offering a radically transformative vision for the Church of today and the future. One should say, Pope Francis is radically new and yet authentically traditional in his post-synodal exhortation. His priority, beyond doubt, is pastoral care over doctrinal considerations to which he would return again and again in this document. Indeed, doctrines are at the service of the pastoral, and not the other way around, and the Church is very much part of this world and not over and above it. Church does not stand over and above the world but rather exists in the midst of it and in the midst of historical, cultural and political realities in order to serve humanity and help it realize the liberative salvation.

This integral understanding of relationship between the Church and world has an obvious consequence for her self-understanding and mission. Given this fact, the Christians must be ready and open to engage in analysis of socio, political, economic and cultural realities so as to do meaningful evangelization. The Church should ever be conscious of the fact that it has something not only to offer to the world, but also to learn from it. Thus doctrines should serve the mission and not the other way around. Having said this, we go on to affirm that the contexts in which she finds herself is no single but varied. The evangelization

is, therefore, plural, contextualised and inculturated. **The Diversity of Contexts:** The Christian community is a Hermeneutical



Community and she finds herself in the world of diverse contexts. No culture is superior; no culture is static. And, no single context can claim to have primacy over the other. Also as a matter of fact, culture and context never remain the same. Cultural diversity is a fact of life.

They keep evolving and this calls for hermeneutic dynamism on the part of the Church, as regards her evangelising mission is concerned. Put differently, this affirmation of cultural diversity has a number of implications for the Church's evangelising mission.

2. Implications of the diverse cultural contexts for the Church community

Because Pope Francis stresses the importance of diversity of cultures, he could speak of an authentically local Church and a decentralized Church; thus, he is also able to, in a more sensible way, promote his long-lived conviction or we can say that his “synthesis” could lay an emphasis on the Church which Goes Forth; the Church of the Poor, the Church in the Streets, the Pilgrim Church; the Pope here brings back the conciliar vision of the missionary nature of the pilgrim Church. For a pilgrim Church means that it constantly keeps changing its missionary strategies and tactics in a more creative and innovative ways, reading the signs of the time and animated by the Spirit of the Risen Lord but always in fidelity to her Master.

2. 1. A Poor Church on the Move

Pope Francis calls upon the Church to be “a Church on the move”. That is also the original identity of the Church in its first phase. Edward Schillebeeckx would call the community of Israel as the first phase of the Church. By its very nature, it was an exodus movement of God's chosen people, but of the oppressed against the then forces of imperialism, subjugation, and slavery. This movement character of the Church needs to be stressed much, given the pressing challenges of mass migration. It has to be prepared for a multi-cultural ministry. “Rather than being perceived as a problem, migration can be seen as offering new possibilities for Churches to rediscover themselves afresh...opportunities for the creation of intercultural and multicultural Churches at local level” (EG 210).



I dream of a 'missionary option' that is 'a missionary impulse', capable of transforming everything so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelized for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation (EG 27).



Christ himself who washed the feet of his disciples (Jn 13: 1-17). The Church is involved by word and deed in the world and abases itself if necessary and touches the suffering flesh of Christ in the poor and takes on the "smell of the sheep".

Bearing fruit: "An evangelising community is also supportive, standing by people

at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be. It is familiar with patient expectation and apostolic endurance". Here patience and endurance cannot be taken to mean passivity – maintaining the status quo. But they presuppose a faithful and creative commitment which consists in paying attention to the fruits and in not getting discouraged. Being conscious of the fact that the Lord wants her to bear fruit, the Church that goes forth "cares for the grain and does not grow impatient at the weeds."

Rejoicing: This is the last word used to characterize the Church. Filled with joy, "an evangelizing community knows how to rejoice always. It celebrates every small victory, every step forward in the work of evangelization.

3. Conclusion

Contextualization is no secondary aspect of evangelization. It is a fundamental dimension of it. "To go for," "to be in midst," and "to walk after," in Evangelii Gaudium, should be taken to suggest that ecclesial mission is plural, namely, inculturated and contextualised. And so, ecclesial renewal should not be understood as a static result of a project of reformation. Hermeneutical dynamism and decentralization are the key words to realise the ecclesial renewal for Pope Francis. Communication of divine message will remain incomprehensible to the world, if it is not true to man and true to God. Indian Christians are called upon to carry on the mission of our Lord following in the footsteps of Paul who did his mission in great fidelity to the Good News of his Master and with the creativity of the Spirit of Christ. But the important thing is not to walk alone but to rely on each other under the leadership of the bishops. Let us remember that community fellowship is the sign of the final redemption of the entire cosmos.

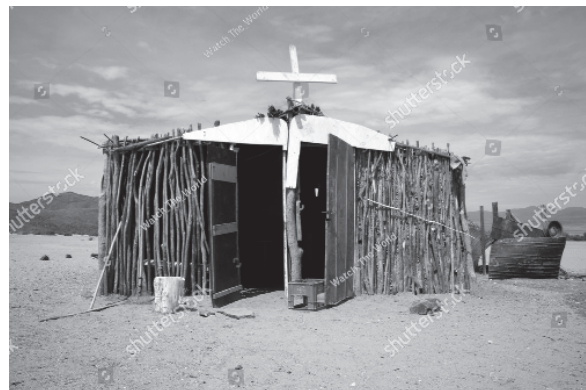
***The writer is a priest of the diocese of Kumbakonam. He teaches Missiology and Systematic Theology at St Peter's Pontifical Institute, Bangalore. Presently, he is the President of the same Institute . ♦**

2. 2. A Church Which Goes Forth, a Pilgrim Church

The Pope says: "The Church which 'goes forth' is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice" (EG 24). The expression, 'community of missionary disciples' has a number of implications. It means that Church is more than its structures. According to Pope Francis, the expression, "the Church which goes forth" forms the very basis of the identity of the Church. By detailing the essential functions of the community of missionary disciples, namely, taking the first step, being involved and supportive, bearing fruit and rejoicing, the Pope outlines the profile of the Church as dynamic, decentralized, synodal, welcoming and inclusive. Let us briefly discuss these important functions of the Church.

Taking the first step: The Church has to take the first step because the Lord has loved us first (1 Jn 4: 10). Mission is God's love for the world. Therefore, Church's obligation to take the first step is based on the divine initiative. The Church is after all the sacrament of Jesus. And so, it "can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcaste."

Being involved and supportive: Here again, the model for the Church is that of Jesus



Pope Francis and the revolution of tenderness

Fr Marceline Antoniraj A *



JUBILEE
OF MERCY

Introduction: the face of mercy

From the very beginning of his pontificate, Pope Francis made it clear that his vision for the Church would be marked by a return to the heart of the Gospel: mercy. His inaugural Angelus message in 2013 offered a profound insight: "The Lord never tires of forgiving. It is we who tire of asking for forgiveness." This radical emphasis was solidified with the 2015 Bull of Indiction *Misericordiae Vultus*, where Pope Francis declared, "Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy." With these words, he set in motion a revolution not of ideas, but of tenderness.

The Jubilee Year of Mercy: A Church without door

The Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy (2015–2016) was more than a celebration; it was a prophetic gesture inviting the Church to rediscover its vocation as a field hospital. Pope Francis opened the Holy Door in a war-torn Central African Republic before doing so in Rome, signalling that mercy must begin at the margins.



He reminded the world that God's mercy knows no borders geographic, moral, or ecclesial. Throughout the Year, Pope Francis encouraged the faithful to undertake the corporal and spiritual works of mercy as tangible expressions of grace: feeding the hungry, visiting the imprisoned, consoling the sorrowful, bearing wrongs patiently. Mercy, he taught, must be incarnated, not just proclaimed.

Missionaries of Mercy: Apostles of the forgiving God

A key initiative of the Jubilee Year was the commissioning of over 1,000 Missionaries of Mercy, specially appointed priests given the faculties to absolve sins reserved to the Holy See. These confessors were not just sacramental ministers but icons of a forgiving Church. They embodied Francis' belief that priests must be "shepherds living with the smell of the sheep." Their mission continues today, serving as a reminder that the Church's credibility is closely tied to how it heals and forgives. In a culture often dominated by judgment and division, the Missionaries of Mercy point toward a tenderer, Christ-like approach.

Touching the Wounds: Mercy as Encounter

One of Pope Francis' most powerful metaphors is his call to "touch the wounds" of Christ in others, especially the poor, the sick, the excluded. Just as the risen Jesus invited Thomas to place his hand in His side, so too does Francis urge the faithful to draw near to those who suffer. For him, mercy is not sentimentalism; it is a bold, healing encounter that involves vulnerability and action. This healing dimension of mercy finds expression in the Pope's attention to migrants, prisoners, the sick, and the forgotten. His visits to Lampedusa, to prisons on Holy Thursday, and to children's hospitals exemplify a Church that does not wait behind closed doors, but goes out to meet Christ in the wounded flesh of humanity.



The Revolution of Tenderness: A Path Forward

Francis speaks often of a "revolution of tenderness" a phrase that captures his vision of mercy in motion. Tenderness, for him, is not weakness; it is the power of love made humble. It is seeing with the heart, acting with compassion, and believing in the possibility of redemption for every person. Through *Misericordiae Vultus*, the Year of Mercy, and the ongoing ministry of the Church, Pope Francis invites us to rediscover mercy not as a concept, but as a lifestyle one that reflects the very heart of God.

Conclusion: Mercy as Mission

Pope Francis attempted to reorient the Church to embrace mercy as its identity and mission. His revolution is quiet, but transformative, not imposed from above, but lived from below, among the wounded and the weary. In a fragmented world, this revolution of tenderness offers a path of healing, communion, and hope. The Church, under Pope Francis' guidance, was being called upon to put mercy in motion in order to become, in his words, "an oasis of mercy" for all who seek the face of the Father.



***The writer is a priest of the Diocese of Kumbakonam. He is currently completing his Licentiate in Missiology and serves as the Parish Priest of St Francis of Assisi Church, Padalur.♦**

Proclaim. May - June 2025

Biography of Robert Francis Prevost



The first Augustinian Pope, Leo XIV is the second Roman Pontiff - after Pope Francis - from the Americas. Unlike Jorge Mario Bergoglio, however, the 69-year-old Robert Francis Prevost is from the northern part of the continent, though he spent many years as a missionary in Peru before being elected head of the Augustinians for two consecutive terms.

First Augustinian Pope

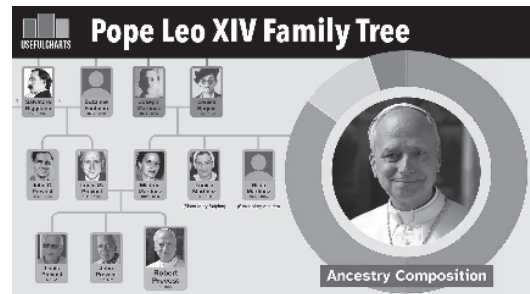
The new Bishop of Rome was born on September 14, 1955, in Chicago, Illinois, to Louis Marius Prevost, of French and Italian descent, and Mildred Martínez, of Spanish descent. He has two brothers, Louis Martín and John Joseph.

He spent his childhood and adolescence with his family and studied first at the Minor Seminary of the Augustinian Fathers and then at Villanova University in Pennsylvania, where in 1977 he earned a Degree in Mathematics and also studied Philosophy.



On September 1 of the same year, Prevost entered the novitiate of the Order of Saint Augustine (O.S.A.) in Saint Louis, in the Province of Our Lady of Good Counsel of Chicago, and made his first profession on September 2, 1978. On August 29, 1981, he made his solemn vows.

The future Pontiff received his theological education at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. At the age of 27, he was sent by his superiors to Rome to study Canon Law at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum).



In Rome, he was ordained a priest on June 19, 1982, at the Augustinian College of Saint Monica by Archbishop Jean Jadot, then pro-president of the Secretariat for Non-Christians, which later became the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and then the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue.

Prevost obtained his licentiate in 1984 and the following year, while preparing his doctoral thesis, was sent to the Augustinian mission in Chulucanas, Piura, Peru (1985–1986). In 1987, he defended his doctoral thesis on "The Role of the Local Prior in the Order of Saint Augustine" and was appointed vocation director and missions director of the Augustinian Province of "Mother of Good Counsel" in Olympia Fields, Illinois (USA).

Mission in Peru

The following year, he joined the mission in Trujillo, also in Peru, as director of the joint formation project for Augustinian candidates



from the vicariates of Chulucanas, Iquitos, and Apurímac.

Over the course of eleven years, he served as prior of the community (1988–1992), formation director (1988–1998), and instructor for professed members (1992–1998), and in the Archdiocese of Trujillo as judicial vicar (1989–1998) and professor of Canon Law, Patristics, and Moral Theology at the Major Seminary “San Carlos y San Marcelo.” At the same time, he was also entrusted with the pastoral care of Our Lady Mother of the Church, later established as the parish of Saint Rita (1988–1999), in a poor suburb of the city, and was parish administrator of Our Lady of Monserrat from 1992 to 1999.

In 1999, he was elected Provincial Prior of the Augustinian Province of “Mother of Good Counsel” in Chicago, and two and a half years later, the ordinary General Chapter of the Order of Saint Augustine, elected him as Prior General, confirming him in 2007 for a second term.

In October 2013, he returned to his Augustinian Province in Chicago, serving as director of formation at the Saint Augustine Convent, first councilor, and provincial vicar—roles he held until Pope Francis appointed him on November 3, 2014, as Apostolic Administrator of the Peruvian Diocese of Chiclayo, elevating him to the episcopal dignity as Titular Bishop of Sufar.

He entered the Diocese on November 7, in the presence of Apostolic Nuncio James Patrick Green, who ordained him Bishop just over a month later, on December 12, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, in the Cathedral of Saint Mary.

His episcopal motto is “In Illo uno unum”—words pronounced by Saint Augustine in a sermon on Psalm 127 to explain that “although we Christians are many, in the one Christ we are one.”

Bishop of Chiclayo, Peru, from 2015 to 2023

On September 26, 2015, he was appointed Bishop of Chiclayo by Pope Francis. In March 2018, he was elected second vice-president of the Peruvian Episcopal Conference, where he also served as a member of the Economic Council and president of the Commission for Culture and Education.

In 2019, Pope Francis appointed him a member of the Congregation for the Clergy (July 13, 2019), and in 2020, a member of the Congregation for Bishops (November 21). Meanwhile, on April 15, 2020, he was also appointed Apostolic Administrator of the Peruvian Diocese of Callao.

Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops



On January 30, 2023, the Pope called him to Rome as Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops and President of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, promoting him to the rank of Archbishop.

Created Cardinal in 2023

Pope Francis created him Cardinal in the Consistory of September 30, 2023, and assigned him the Diaconate of Saint Monica. He officially took possession of his titular church on January 28, 2024.

As head of the Dicastery, he participated in the Pope's most recent Apostolic Journeys and in both the first and second sessions of the 16th

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Proclaim. May - June 2025

Pope Francis never forgot his beginning

*Claudia Rebaza **

On March 13, 2013, Oscar Crespo was watching TV in his native Buenos Aires when he saw the white smoke appearing above the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican: a new pope was elected. As with millions of Catholics in Latin America, he was curious to know who would succeed Pope Benedict XVI. To his surprise he heard the name Bergoglio – the surname of his childhood friend – and was immediately overwhelmed by emotion, he recalled.

“Bergoglio, Pope! I couldn’t believe it! And right at that moment, my phone started ringing,” Crespo told CNN from Buenos Aires, explaining how he was deluged by callers who knew of their friendship. Shortly after, Crespo watched as Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio appeared at the S. Peter’s Basilica balcony, becoming the first Latin American pope.

His election took Crespo and all of Argentina by surprise, while the rest of the world wondered who Jorge Bergoglio was.

In the following months, the local government even organized a special tour, “the papal circuit,” so tourists and pilgrims could get a glimpse of Bergoglio’s early years in his native Buenos Aires.

Soccer with friends

Jorge Bergoglio was born in Argentina’s capital, Buenos Aires, on December 17, 1936. The son of Italian immigrants, Mario and Regina, he was the eldest of five siblings.

He spent his childhood and teenage years at his family’s house in the heart of the middle-class neighborhood of Flores. A plaque outside his former home, 531 Membrillar Street, now proudly announces: “Pope Francis lived here.”



Like many South American kids, Bergoglio played soccer with friends around his neighborhood. A plaque on the ground at the Herminia Brumana square in Flores says: “In this plaza neighborhood children used to gather. Here, Jorge M. Bergoglio chased the ball with his friends. Afternoons of games and friendship.”

Young Bergoglio became a big soccer fan, supporting the Argentine team San Lorenzo. His love of the sport and of his team never diminished as pope, with Francis often seen

holding San Lorenzo’s jersey, and hosting soccer teams at the Vatican.

“He loved music, dancing, and football. We went to watch so many football games,” Crespo said. He and Bergoglio became friends when they were 13 years old, a bond that endured when the latter became Pope Francis, even though he was never to return to his homeland. Bergoglio grew up learning about literature and chemistry, among other subjects, and enjoyed everything typical of a teenage boy, Crespo says.

When he was 12, the Argentine even had a girlfriend who, decades later, was chased by the press after his election to the papacy.

Amalia Damonte told reporters in 2013 that the new pope had sent her a letter when they were both children. “He said to me, ‘If I don’t marry you, I’ll become a priest,’” she recalled. Years passed and Bergoglio indeed opted for priesthood. His deep spirit of service made him choose the Church, according to Crespo. Bergoglio entered the Jesuit religious order as a novice in 1958, was ordained in 1969 and became the sole archbishop of his native Buenos Aires in 1998.

He was made a cardinal in 2001 and served as president of the Argentine bishops' conference from 2005 until 2011.

Bergoglio the priest and archbishop

As a Jesuit living under a vow of poverty, Bergoglio led a humble and austere life, forgoing even the slightest of luxuries. His rejection of the trappings of status once he became archbishop gave the world a hint of how his papacy would unfold years later.

He declined to live in the archbishop's palace, choosing instead to live in a simple apartment. He also refused to use a chauffeured limousine, preferring to take the bus with ordinary people, and cooked his own meals.

"He never had a car, that was the reality. I used to travel with him on public transport. And when I bought a car, I used to give him a ride," Crespo said.

The journeys with Archbishop Bergoglio included visits to the "villas" – shanty towns outside the capital – where he became a familiar face.

"He went to the villas to see who he could help. He (had) told me clearly: Look, I am going to be a priest because my aim is to be at the service of the people. For that, I'm going to the villas, I am going to go to the heart of the country," Crespo recalled.

The austerity and simplicity of his life, along with a deep need to be close to the poor and marginalized, defined him as a priest and as a future pope, explained Argentine journalist Elisabetta Piqué, author of "Pope Francis: Life and Revolution."

"He was considered a moderate archbishop... He was known as an archbishop that used to go to the villas and (who) used to have a very, very simple life," Piqué told CNN.

Piqué met Bergoglio for the first time in 2001 for an interview in Rome, an encounter



which sparked a friendship that lasted for decades. At that time, she described him as a shy man who surprised her.

"He was really an open-minded priest with whom you could talk about everything," Piqué said.

A day after Cardinal Bergoglio became Pope Francis, on March 14, 2013, he called Piqué and asked her about the reaction in his native Argentina.

The new pope mentioned he had been to pray at the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, where he would years later request to be buried, and then went in person to pay his lodging bill at the Paulus VI hotel at which he stayed during the conclave – a gesture that surprised everyone.

Later that month, Francis's decision not to live in the papal apartment on the top floor of the Apostolic Palace but in the Casa Santa Marta, the Vatican City residence where cardinals stay during the conclave, was unexpected and considered a revolutionary act by the new pope, Piqué explained.

As archbishop in Buenos Aires, Bergoglio would celebrate Mass in a prison or a hospital or hospice, trying to reach the marginalized and open the church up to everyone, a tradition that continued during his papacy and became part of his legacy.

"His legacy is about an inclusive church, a church that is for all, not only for a small group of perfect people. This is a pope who speaks to everyone and who speaks specially to the sinners ... We have seen him going to prisons all over the world. We have seen him on Holy Thursdays going to prisons and washing the feet of the prisoners," Piqué said.

Emilce Cuda, an Argentine theologian who worked closely with Francis as secretary of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America,

described him as a strategist who used humor to navigate the Vatican as pope.

“Any person who arrived to meet him was absolutely nervous but, in two or three minutes, Pope Francis could change the situation,” Cuda told CNN, explaining how he had the knack of finding the right word to spark humor and make people feel better.

That gift could be traced back to his early years. Bergoglio’s sense of humor had been a key part of his character since he was very young, and was an essential part of him, according to his sister Maria Elena. She told CNN en Espanol in 2013: “(He has a) great sense of humour, I think he got that from my father. When he had to be firm for something, he was, but with good humour.”

Crespo said that despite Bergoglio’s obvious talents, it had never occurred to his

contemporaries that he would come to lead the Roman Catholic Church.

“I never imagined a classmate would become a pope. We would have thought that due to his intelligence he would become a minister, a position in public office, even president, but that he was going to be pope? It didn’t occur to any of us,” Crespo said.

He was a pope who never forgot his beginnings at the end of the world and always reached out to those on the peripheries, Piqué reflected. He stayed true to his friends too.

“One day in June 2013 the telephone rang, and a familiar voice said: ‘Hello Oscar, it is Jorge Mario,’ and I said, ‘The pope is calling me!’ Despite our friendship, I was still very surprised the pope called me,” Crespo said.

***<https://edition.cnn.com/2025/04/22/americas/vatican-pope-francis> Tue April 22, 2025♦**

Continued from Page 14: Biography of Robert Francis Prevost



Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on synodality, held in Rome from October 4 to 29, 2023, and from October 2 to 27, 2024, respectively.

Meanwhile, on October 4, 2023, Pope Francis appointed him as a member of the Dicasteries for Evangelization (Section for First Evangelization and New Particular Churches), for the Doctrine of the

Faith, for the Eastern Churches, for the Clergy, for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, for Culture and Education, for Legislative Texts, and of the Pontifical Commission for the Vatican City State.

Finally, on February 6 of this year, the Argentine Pope promoted him to the Order of Bishops, granting him the title of the Suburbicarian Church of Albano.

Three days later, on February 9, he celebrated the Mass presided over by Pope Francis in St. Peter's Square for the Jubilee of the Armed Forces, the second major event of the Holy Year of Hope.

During the most recent hospitalization of his predecessor at the “Gemelli” hospital, Prevost presided over the Rosary for Pope Francis's health in Saint Peter's Square on March 3.

----- vaticannews ♦



Pope Francis and children

Angela Rasmussen*



Pope Francis has had many humorous and poignant interactions with children over the last ten years that demonstrate his pastoral emphasis on dialogue and listening. Here are five of my favorite examples of the Pope's special consideration for children:

1.His response to the little boy whose father had died

Francis was visiting a parish in 2018 and had a question-and-answer session with children there. One boy, Emanuele, went up to ask him a question, and the exchange that followed impacted people around the world.

After he approached the microphone, Emanuele became overcome with emotion and said he couldn't speak. Eventually, Francis encouraged him to come up to him and whisper the question in his ear. He hugged Emanuele as they spoke quietly.

The Pope then addressed everyone, telling them that he received permission to share Emanuele's question: "A little while ago my father passed away. He was a nonbeliever, but he had all four of his children baptized. He was a good man. Is dad in heaven?" The report of the event continues:

"How beautiful to hear a son say of his father, 'He was good,' the pope told the children.



"And what a beautiful witness of a son who inherited the strength of his father, who had the courage to cry in front of all of us. If that man was able to make his children like that, then it's true, he was a good man. He was a good man."

"That man did not have the gift of faith, he wasn't a believer, but he had his children baptized. He had a good heart," Pope Francis said.

"God is the one who says who goes to heaven," the Pope explained.

The next step in answering Emanuele's question, he said, would be to think about what God is like and, especially, what kind of heart God has. "What do you think? A father's heart.



God has a dad's heart. And with a dad who was not a believer, but who baptized his children and gave them that bravura, do you think God would be able to leave him far from Himself?" "Does God abandon His children?" the Pope asked. "Does God abandon His children when they are good?"

The children shouted, "No."

"There, Emanuele, that is the answer," the Pope told the boy. "God surely was proud of your father, because it is easier as a believer to baptize your children than to baptize them when you are not a believer. Surely this pleased God very much."

In this exchange, both with Emanuele and with all the children there, Francis showed the pastoral importance of listening. The topics were directed by children in their questions.

Francis did not share Emanuele's story without asking him for permission. Finally, he did not actually



provide the answer, but, after emphasizing God's goodness and love, he let the other children—Emanuele's peers—give the answer to Emanuele.

2. The book *Dear Pope Francis*

Francis's desire to listen to children and dialogue with them is also evident in his remarkable children's book, *Dear Pope Francis*, which is a joint effort between him and various children from around the world. The book is designed as a dialogue, so half of the pages are made up of a letter written by a child, translated into English, including their illustrations and a photo. On the opposite page of each child's letter is Francis's response. The questions range from personal to theological, funny to painful.

Just like his response to Emanuele, Francis engaged each child's concern directly, not avoiding the hard issues, while also keeping the answer short and conversational.



3. The “beautiful homily” of crying babies at Mass

Francis's listening extends to crying babies, too. I was particularly encouraged by the Pope's words on this subject in January of 2020, when my youngest daughter was a baby. During a service in which 32 babies were being baptized, Francis told the parents: “Let the children cry. It is a beautiful homily when a child cries in church, a beautiful homily.”

As many parents can attest, not everyone at Mass feels the same way as the pope about crying children. I remember repeating those words over and over in my mind while attending Mass with a noisy one-year old. What I especially love about this statement is that he didn't speak about the babies' future potential as adults in the Church.

He described them as contributing to Mass now, filling the church with their beautiful homilies.

4. His encouragement to parents to feed and nurse babies during Mass

Another example of Francis's pastoral care of infants occurred when he encouraged their parents to feed them, including breastfeeding them during Mass. While some women have been discouraged from breastfeeding in public places, including church, or expected to leave while their baby nurses, the Pope's words set a different standard. His repeated encouragement to breastfeed babies when they cry at Mass, rather than leave, shows inclusivity to babies and their parents—especially nursing mothers—at Mass. What he described as a “concert” of crying babies at Mass is not a problem, but an opportunity. He says that to feed them is “a language of love.”

5. Impromptu encounters with children

Finally, the Pope's impromptu interactions with children, during Mass or while out in public, highlight the personal touch that has characterized his papacy. For example, he has invited kids to ride in the popemobile with him on multiple occasions. The popemobile provides a means for as many people as possible to see the Pope, but it also keeps him separated from the people as it zips along past the crowd, kept behind barriers and security guards. The Pope's invitation to children to join him shows his desire to be with the people.

My personal favorite interaction of the pope in the popemobile was on his visit to Philadelphia, when he was delighted at the sight of an infant dressed up as the pontiff. A security guard brought the baby to him for a kiss.

All in all, the Pope's interactions with children show a personal, particular love and a model for all to follow. May we be encouraged by the Holy Father's interactions with children and people of all ages, that we, too, may be love and light in this world.

* **Source:** <https://wherepeteris.com/pope-francis-and-children/> ♦

SAINT OF THE MONTH – I

St Ubaldo of Gubbio

1085 – 1160

Feast Day: 16 May

Born to the nobility in Gubbio, Italy, in 1085, Ubaldo was the son of Rovaldo Baldassini, who died when the boy was very young, and Guiliana Baldassini.

Ubaldo was baptized in the church of San Giovanni and named after his uncle. Ubaldo's parents died while he was still very young, and he was raised by his uncle, the bishop of Gubbio. He was educated by the prior of the cathedral church of his native city Gubbio. Ubaldo found solace in the Church and committed his life to God at an early age. Unlike many other children of his time, Ubaldo was blessed with a profound spirituality that would shape his entire life in God's service.

At the age of 15, Ubaldo joined the monastic community at St Secondo in Gubbio, demonstrating an immense dedication to spiritual pursuits, where he also became a canon regular.

Through trials and tribulations, his commitment to the Church never wavered. Recognizing his fidelity, he was ordained in 1115 a priest, marking a significant milestone in his journey of faith. As a pastor, priest Ubaldo tirelessly worked to heal and soothe his flock, exemplifying Christ's love for humanity. Later he was appointed as the Dean of the Cathedral clergy. Though he had a great desire to live as a hermit, he was advised against it.

As the years passed, Ubaldo's reputation as a caring shepherd and devout servant of God grew. Recognizing his sanctity, the Church appointed him as the Bishop of Gubbio 1128. As a bishop, Ubaldo dedicated himself to promoting peace, defending the poor and the oppressed and bringing God's mercy into the lives of the people

who entrusted him with their spiritual care. Stories abound of Ubaldo calming storms, healing the sick, and driving out evil spirits. His faith, humility, and devotion to God made him a conduit of divine grace.

It so happened that the "chapter" of canons of Gubbio (the chief diocesan priests) were living unseemly lives. As their immediate superior, Father Ubaldo determined to reform them. His approach was deft. First he persuaded three of the canons to join him in accepting a rule of life like that of religious orders. The plan worked out well, so that eventually the other canons embraced the same rule, and the whole chapter began to set a better example.



Ubaldo's life is a testament to the transformative power of faith. His unwavering devotion to serving God teaches us that living a life of faith is not about comfort or convenience. Instead, it is about surrendering ourselves to God and allowing His grace to guide our steps. Furthermore, Ubaldo's miracles remind us that God can use ordinary people to achieve extraordinary things when

they devote their lives to Him.

Among his most noteworthy deeds was his role in maintaining peace in Gubbio during a period of great civil unrest. When the city was about to erupt in violence due to disputes between different factions, Ubaldo successfully negotiated a peaceful resolution, thus preventing unnecessary bloodshed. He is also known for his dedication to the poor and sick. Despite reaching high ecclesiastical rank, Ubaldo never lost touch with the needs of the less fortunate. His commitment to helping others was so great that

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SAINT OF THE MONTH - II

St Mary Elizabeth Hesselblad

1870 - 1957

Feast Day: June 4

Mary Elizabeth was born in the little village of Faglavik, in the province of Alvsborg, on the 4 June 1870, the fifth of thirteen children born to Augusto Roberto Hesselblad and Cajsa Pettesdotter Dag. The following month she was baptized and received into the Reformed Church of Sweden in her parish in Hundene. Her childhood was lived out in various places, since economic difficulties forced the family to move on several occasions.

In 1886, in order to make a living and to support her family, she went to work first of all in Karlosborg and then in the United States of America. She went to nursing school at the Roosevelt Hospital in New York and dedicated herself to home care of the sick. This meant that she continually had to make many sacrifices, which did not do her health any good, but certainly helped her soul to flourish. The contact she had with so many sick Catholics and her thirst for truth helped to keep alive in her heart her search for the true flock of Christ.

Through prayer, personal study and a deep daughterly devotion to the Mother of the Redeemer, she was decisively led to the Catholic Church and, on the 15 August 1902, in the Convent of the Visitation in Washington, she received conditional baptism from Fr. Giovanni Giorgio Hagen, S.J., who also became her spiritual director. Looking back on that moment of grace, she wrote, "In an instant the love of God was poured over me. I understood that I could respond to that love only through sacrifice and a love prepared to suffer for His glory and for the Church. Without hesitation I offered Him my life, and my will to follow Him on the Way of the Cross." Two days later she was nourished by the Eucharist, and then she left for Europe.

In Rome she received the Sacrament of Confirmation and she clearly perceived that she was to dedicate herself to the unity of Christians. She also visited the church and house of Saint Bridget of Sweden (+ 1373), and came away with a deep and lasting impression: "It is in this place that I want you to serve me." She returned to the United States but, her poor health notwithstanding, she left everything and on 25 March 1904 she settled in

Rome at the Casa di Santa Brigida, receiving a wonderful welcome from the Carmelite Nuns who lived there.

In 1906 Pope Saint Pius X allowed her to take the habit of the Order of the Most Holy Saviour of Saint Bridget and profess vows as a spiritual daughter of the Swedish saint. In the years that followed she strove to bring back to Rome the Order of the Most Holy Saviour, and to that end she visited the few existing *Brigettine* monasteries in Europe, an experience that brought joys, disappointments and no concrete help.

In 1931 she experienced the great joy of receiving the Holy See's permission to have permanent use of the church and house of Saint Bridget in Rome. These became the centre of activity for the Order which, driven on by its missionary zeal, also established foundations in India (1937). She promoted a movement for peace that involved Catholics and non-Catholics; she multiplied her ecumenical endeavours and for many people who belonged to other religions or other Christian confessions, she was part of their journey towards the Catholic Church.

From the very beginning of her Foundation she was particularly attentive to the formation of her spiritual daughters, for whom she was both a mother and a guide. Throughout her life she remained faithful to what she had written in 1904:





"Dear Lord, I do not ask to see the path. In darkness, in anguish and in fear, I will hang on tightly to your hand and I will close my eyes, so that you know how much trust I place in you, Spouse of my soul." Hope in God and in His providence supported her in every moment, especially in times of testing, solitude and the cross. She put the things of Heaven before the things of earth, God's will before her own, the good of her neighbour before her own benefit.

She walked with God, clinging to the cross of Christ, who was her companion from the days of

her youth. "For me," she said, "the way of the Cross has been the most beautiful of all because on this path I have met and known my Lord and Saviour." Unremittingly her physical suffering went hand in hand with her moral suffering. The cross became particularly heavy and painful during the final years of her life, when the Holy See prepared the Canonical Visit of her Order as her health got progressively worse. In prayer and peaceful submission to God's will she prepared herself for the final meeting with the Divine Spouse, who called her to Himself in the early hours of 24 April 1957.

The reputation for holiness which surrounded her in life increased after her death, and almost immediately the Vicariate of Rome began the cause for Beatification. She was beatified on April 9, 2000, by Pope John Paul II and was canonized on June 5, 2016, by Pope Francis

Source: www.catholic.org/saints;
www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy;
www.ncregister.com/blog ♦

◆ **Continued from Page 20: St Ubaldo of Gubbio** ◆



he sometimes personally took care of the sick, demonstrating profound humility and charity.

Ubaldo died at the sunrise on Monday 16 May, 1160, at Gubbio of natural causes. He was canonized by Pope Celestine III in 1192. Since then, he has been venerated as the patron saint of Gubbio. His legacy of peace, humility, and service continues to inspire Catholics worldwide.

In a world fraught with turmoil, the story of Ubaldo's faithfulness offers a beacon of hope. His unwavering trust in God's providence, even in life's most tumultuous moments, provides a model for modern believers grappling with contemporary challenges.

Ubaldo's life reminds us that saints were once ordinary people, just like us. Their transformation was rooted in their decision to follow Christ wholeheartedly. Thus, inspired by Saint Ubaldo, let us also strive to commit our lives to the service of God and others, seeking to emulate his faith, patience, and love. Indeed, the life and miracles of Ubaldo not only remind us of God's miraculous power but also inspire us to live our lives as authentic witnesses of His unending love and mercy.

As we navigate the complexities of our lives, we can be comforted knowing that through the intercession of saints like Ubaldo, we have access to a divine reservoir of hope, strength, and peace. Like his humble servant Ubaldo, may we too strive to serve the Lord with a faithful heart, trusting in his guiding hand, even amidst the storms of life.

Source: <https://catholic.net/op/articles>;
<https://saints-alive.siministries.org>;
<https://catholicsaints.day/ubald/> ♦

Awakening missionary responsibility among all the baptised

*Address of the Holy Father presented to the Pontifical Mission Societies
at the Clementine Hall on Thursday 22 May 2025*



Your Eminence, Your Excellencies,
General Secretaries, National Directors and
Personnel of the Pontifical Mission Societies,
Dear brothers and sisters,

I offer a warm welcome to all of you, who
have gathered from over one hundred and twenty
countries to take part in the annual General
Assembly of the Pontifical Mission Societies. I
want to begin by expressing my gratitude to you
and your associates for your dedicated service,
which is indispensable to the Church's mission of
evangelization, as I can personally attest from my
own pastoral experience in the the "primary
means" of awakening missionary responsibility
among all the baptized and supporting ecclesial
communities in areas where the Church is young
(cf. Decree *Ad Gentes*, 38).

We see this in the Society for the
Propagation of the Faith, which provides aid for
pastoral and catechetical programmes, the
building of new churches, healthcare, and
educational needs in mission territories. The
Society of the Holy Childhood, too, provides
support for Christian formation programmes for
children, in addition to caring for their basic
needs and protection. Likewise, the Society of
Saint Peter the Apostle helps to cultivate
missionary vocations, priestly and religious,
while the Missionary Union is committed to
forming priests, religious men and women, and
all the people of God for the Church's missionary
activity.

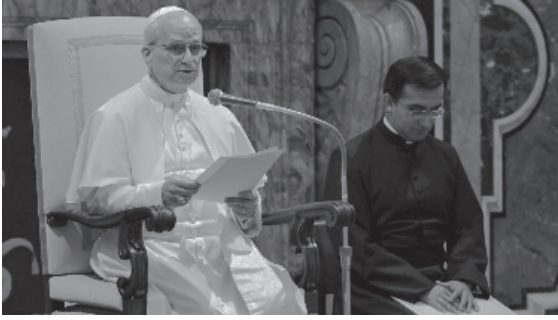
The promotion of apostolic zeal among
the People of God remains an essential aspect of

the Church's renewal as envisioned by the
Second Vatican Council, and is all the more
urgent in our own day. Our world, wounded by
war, violence and injustice, needs to hear the
Gospel message of God's love and to experience
the reconciling power of Christ's grace. In this
sense, the Church herself, in all her members, is
increasingly called to be "a missionary Church
that opens its arms to the world, proclaims the
word ... and becomes a leaven of harmony for
humanity" (Homily, Mass for the Beginning of the
Pontificate, 18 May 2025). We are to bring to all
peoples, indeed to all creatures, the Gospel
promise of true and lasting peace, which is
possible because, in the words of Pope Francis,
"the Lord has overcome the world and its
constant conflict 'by making peace through the
blood of his cross'" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 229).

Hence we see the importance of fostering
a spirit of missionary discipleship in all the
baptized and a sense of the urgency of bringing
Christ to all people. In this regard, I would like to
thank you and your associates for your efforts
each year in promoting World Mission Sunday on
the second-to-last Sunday of October, which is of
immense help to me in my solicitude for the
Churches in areas which are under the care of the
Dicastery for
Evangelization.

Today, as
in the days after
Pentecost, the
Church, led by
the Holy Spirit,
pursues her





journey through history with trust, joy and courage as she proclaims the name of Jesus and the salvation born of faith in the saving truth of the Gospel. The Pontifical Mission Societies are an important part of this great effort. In their work of coordinating missionary formation and animating a missionary spirit on the

local level, I would ask the National Directors to give priority to visiting dioceses, parishes and communities, and in this way to help the faithful to recognize the fundamental importance of the missions and supporting our brothers and sisters in those areas of our world where the Church is young and growing.

Before concluding these words with you this morning, I would like to reflect with you on two distinctive elements of your identity as Pontifical Mission Societies. They can be described as, communion and universality. As Societies committed to sharing in the missionary mandate of the Pope and the College of Bishops, you are called to cultivate and further promote within your members the vision of the Church as the communion of believers, enlivened by the Holy Spirit, who enables us to enter into the perfect communion and harmony of the blessed Trinity. Indeed, it is in the Trinity that all things find their unity. This dimension of our Christian life and mission is close to my heart, and is reflected in the words of Saint Augustine that I chose for my episcopal service and now for my papal ministry: *In Illo uno unum*. Christ is our Saviour and in him we are one, a family of God, beyond the rich

variety of our languages, cultures and experiences.

The appreciation of our communion as members of the Body of Christ naturally opens us to the universal dimension of the Church's mission of evangelization, and inspires us to transcend the confines of our individual parishes, dioceses and nations, in order to share with every nation and people the surpassing richness of the knowledge of Jesus Christ (cf. Phil 3:8).

A renewed focus on the Church's unity and universality corresponds precisely to the authentic charism of the Pontifical Mission Societies. As such, it should inspire the process of renewal of the statutes that you have initiated. In this regard, I express my trust that this process will confirm the members of the Societies worldwide in their vocation to be a leaven of missionary zeal within the People of God.



Dear friends, our celebration of this Holy Year challenges all of us to be "pilgrims of hope." Taking up the words that Pope Francis chose as the theme for this year's World Mission Day, I would conclude by encouraging you to continue to be "missionaries of hope among all peoples."

Commending you, your benefactors and all associated with your important work to the loving intercession of Mary, the Mother of the Church, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of lasting joy and peace in the Lord.

Source: <https://press.vatican.va/content> ♦

Holy Father's Prayer Intentions

May 2025

For working conditions Let us pray that through work, each person might find fulfilment, families might be sustained in dignity, and that society might be humanized.

June 2025

That the world might grow in compassion: Let us pray that each one of us might find consolation in a personal relationship with Jesus, and from his Heart, learn to have compassion on the world.

POPE LEO XIV

*“We have to seek together to
be a **missionary church**,
a Church that builds bridges
and dialogue.”*





We thank God for the gift of **Pope Leo XIV**
to the Church and to the world.
May your leadership bring peace, healing, and
courage to all people.
The Pontifical Mission Organizations - India
promise you our prayers and support.

*+ Most Rev. Ambrose Pitchaimuthu
Director, PMO, India
Bishop of Vellore*



📍 #10, 3rd Cross, Ulsoor Road, Bengaluru 560 042, Karnataka, INDIA

☎ +91 9606840089 ✉ secretariat@indiapms.com 🌐 www.pmoindia.org