

**ATHOS CARRARA**

■ **THE STORY CONTINUES**

From Vatican II to Pope Francis

Pontedera after 1990

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## PRESENTATION

Already with His Holiness Pius XII, it would seem that it is opportune to leave "history" to enter the "chronicle" since not everything that refers to facts and figures has been fully explored. But what concerns the "science" of history has no meaning for the "divine" science since "for the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day" (2 Pet 3-8) and it is, perhaps, by this I mean that my father continued the "History of the Church" with three mini-biographies: Angelo Roncalli/S.S. John XXIII, Giovanni Battista Montini/S.S. Paul VI and Albino Luciani who in his simplicity chose that name that seemed an impossible challenge in the synthesis of two figures such as "Angelo Roncalli" and "Cardinal Montini": the impossible challenge that saw in Karol Wojtyla the person who took up the "challenge" and managed to go far beyond E..... THE.... "HISTORY" ....CONTINUE... BECAUSE... FOR .... "THE... LORD....".

Giuseppe Carrara

**I.**  
**JOHN XIII**  
1881-1963

We approach the life of Angelo Roncalli by capturing the figure of a child so simple, still so far from the selfishness and malice of the world, that only at the age of six will he be able to wear a pair of shoes to go to school, we can afford to let slip an authentic feeling of tenderness.

Without ceasing to amaze us if we think about what kind of life he was predestined. Surely we would never have imagined what so many hard jobs and sacrifices spent in the fields would lead to to contribute with their help to the survival of the family, born and raised peasant in "Sotto il Monte" in the province of Bergamo.

A fairly hard childhood, therefore, but frequent for that time when it was not possible to reconcile working the land with good school performance.

Finally obtaining his middle school diploma, Angelo entered the seminary in Bergamo, where in the peace of those walls and with adequate maintenance he began to study serenely, also deserving the praise of those around him.

It was precisely at this moment that he began to write his diary "**THE JOURNAL OF THE SOUL**", accompanied by his motto: "**Calm and patience**", a motto that he would not cease to use in the countless difficulties with the enemies of the Church.

In 1900, having won a scholarship, he went to Rome, where he began his great climb that knew neither pride nor impatience, but only simplicity and poverty: poverty to the point that he could not even pay for the 10 lire photograph to send it to Sotto il Monte, but Providence was again ready to help him.

Plot twist: call to arms, where it is useless to speak of the exemplary life of charity and love among his companions. After the war, his life as a seminarian also ended: Angelo was a priest in Rome under the pontificate of the new Pope Pius X.

Angelo Roncalli returned to his village where he remained for a few years, but here came an endless roundup of positions, humbly accepted one after the other, always saying: "Lord, I am not worthy".

And so he is President of Propaganda Fidae. After days and days of hard activity we find in his diary: "This is my real life! The altar, prayer, work for the missions: loving and suffering for others! I'm happy!".

In the meantime, the Pope dies and is replaced by Pius XI (Achille Ratti) who does not hesitate to turn to Angelo to resolve a rather precarious situation: in Bulgaria 50,000 Catholics are in danger. Don Angelo go! You are now an apostolic visitor.

As soon as it arrived, the earthquake: a shocking reality. The goodness and industriousness of Don Roncalli are therefore at work.

At the end of the event, he returned to Sofia where he proposed a dangerous initiative: it was a matter of going to visit the Catholics in the mountains, right where the bandits were. They are already aware of it, but the rumor is circulating "Who is he?", "Bishop Roncalli who loves poor people... that not a hair be taken out of him" and....so it will happen.

The phrase he said to the parish priest of a village in the mountains remained famous: "This money is for your church, but if your parishioners need it, give it to them".

Scandal in Sofia: Don Angelo marries King Boris, Orthodox, in a Catholic ceremony with Giovanna di Savoia, Catholic. The complaints and reproaches of the indignant Vatican were useless.

He was called back to Rome, but before leaving, in his Christmas homily, Roncalli expressed himself as follows: "Wherever I am, whoever comes, Catholic or Orthodox, it will be enough to say ***I am a Bulgarian brother***, he will be received and welcomed".

In Rome he found another position: Apostolic Delegate of Greece and Turkey. All that remains is to arm oneself with gentleness and charity to go out to meet those two peoples in conflict

with each other. And, in fact, he manages to prevent the Church of Istanbul from being transformed into a simple museum by making it a national monument.

But the most colossal episode for Don Roncalli, in those places, remains that of having saved two ships of Jewish children destined for death which, having arrived in Ankara, he manages to divert with the help of Von Papen, the Nazi ambassador.

Later he was appointed Apostolic Nuncio in Paris, where he headed with determination ready to challenge the rebel attacks of the communists whom he managed, however, to appease.

Thus began a long series of miracles that he worked in the name of God and his immense goodness. He continued to devote himself to his work with the "Worker Priests" until the Pope called him back to make him Cardinal and Patriarch of Venice.

There he became a kind of priest of the people with whom he also went by boat and to whom he did not hesitate to turn even for economic aid (in fact, he began to found new churches). He did not even fail to visit the workers in Porto Marghera: his charity was for everyone.

The death of His Holiness Pius XII gave him a new assignment, but this time it was something much more important: Don Angelo was elected Pope!

**II .**  
**PAUL VI**  
1897-1978

Giovanni Battista Montini was born in Concesio (Brescia) in Lombardy, his native land that made him attentive and involved in the problems that affected the Milanese and Northern Italy in general, letting himself be involved through an extraordinary conception of altruism.

Intellectual, from a noble family, endowed with a strong critical capacity, he denotes at the same time an innate sense of sweetness - his infallible weapon against anxieties and contradictions within a Milanese church just facing the '900.

He was ordained a priest on 29 May 1920 in Brescia. His life resembles that of John XXIII: a continuous movement for the sole purpose of witnessing with works and example to the Faith in God the Father that does not leave you alone.

After a series of moves from Rome to Poland, from Rome to Milan, and then back to Rome, John the Baptist will finally have the opportunity to live a great experience that we can define as a true school of formation, both cultural and moral.

It was precisely in this period that he came into contact with two great Popes, Pius XI first and Pius XII later, of whom he became secretary and to whom he owed his great inner growth; growth that, after extricating itself from big, but useful, contrasts, will lead him to the office of Pontiff.

We remember the appointment as Secretary of State, Archbishop of Milan, Cardinal and, finally, successor of Angelo Roncalli. Thus, in Rome, on June 30, 1963, he put on the papal robe with the new name of Paul VI, thus beginning his great work of persuasion and dialogue with the world, maintaining his ecumenical commitment with keen interest.

A characteristic of this pope is his persistence in wanting to remain apolitical, because he is the defender of individual freedom. He also devoted himself to the composition of two great encyclicals, *Mysterium Fidei* in 1965 and *Populorum Progressio* in 1967.

Despite his rational and reflective instinct, he did not fail to take indispensable initiatives, such as visiting factories and hospitals or meeting the crowds that gave him the nickname of "Archbishop of the workers".

He is the first Pope to cross the Atlantic to go to the O.O. U.N., where he had the opportunity to leave some emblematic phrases to a journalist's recorder, among which we remember: "Yes, they asked us to go to the U.N. to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of its establishment, so we accepted without too many justifications; After all, we couldn't answer *DON'T EVEN TALK ABOUT IT, DON'T YOU KNOW THAT THE POPE DOESN'T HAVE TIME?*".

Leaders around the world desire to hear the voice of Christ on earth, and it is for this reason that Paul VI will be forced to travel continuously and enormously.

In 1964 he was in the Holy Land, then in India and, the following year, in New York. In 1967 he went as a pilgrim to Fatima, Portugal, where he met Umberto of Savoy and, two months later, to Turkey. Without ever complaining about the inconveniences caused by the long and numerous journeys, he continued to Colombia and Africa (1969) preparing for a visit to the Far East (1970) and Oceania.

It was in the latter place that he suffered an attack at Manila airport, while he was talking animatedly with President Marcos, unaware of what was being maneuvered behind his back. He providentially escapes the blade of the knife raised against him by the painter Benjamin Mendoza. Thanks to the intervention of his Secretary Pasquale Macchi who, with a tug, managed to prevent the worst (for reasons still unknown today, the attacker would serve only 38 months of imprisonment): it would not, however, be this kind of episode that would change the travel program of our Pope.

So here he is in Samoa to receive the sign of "sorcerer" and, then, in Bali where he has the opportunity to attend the famous tribal dances. Arrived at the gates of China, he is not afraid to hope for a rapprochement between the Eastern and Western worlds.

Finally the journey is over: 45000 kilometers and 65 speeches to the leaders of the various nations.

He was back in Italy, where he immediately began to fight against a series of serious problems under continuous discussion such as abortion and divorce, not to mention, then, the incompatibility of the French Bishop Marcel Lefebvre with the novelties of the Council.

He continues to receive well-known and important personalities from all over the world including Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon and Gromiko: none of these heads of state will return to their country disgruntled or disappointed: this man's faith is unique and is destined not to die out with him.

Paul VI died in his summer residence in Castel Gandolfo on 6 August 1978 leaving these words (taken from his will): "I appoint the Holy See as universal heir. DUTY, GRATITUDE AND LOVE oblige me to do so. As for the things of this world I propose to die poor and simplify, so every question of respect. I want my funeral to be very simple and, I do not ask, neither a special tomb nor any monument. Only some suffrage, charity and prayers".

The judgment of history does not hesitate to affirm that Paul VI is the one who succeeded in getting the first constitution in history on religious freedom approved, amid great difficulties. The value of FREEDOM, understood until then only in a secular sense, has become with this Pope, the cornerstone of a different, tolerant and ecumenical Catholicism, devoid of anathemas, "humanist".

Therefore, in the hearts of those who knew him, these phrases he uttered will remain forever: "It is useless for the priest to ring the bell, no one listens to him: he must return to become a missionary". Or: "How difficult it is to be the driver of the Church", and "How wrong it is to say *WHAT A LIFE AS A POPE*".

And here is a message that he never tired of transmitting to the peoples he visited: "I would like to give you an appointment, the threshold of the afterlife is near and, therefore, I take this opportunity to greet you all, to bless you and your families, your work, your sufferings and your hopes". Even if the world will continue to change without ever stopping, there will always be a layman ready to claim that "**THE POPE OF FREEDOM**" **sleeps in the basement of the Vatican.**

**III.**  
**JOHN PAUL I**  
1912-1978

Albino Luciani, who would be Pope John Paul I, was born in Canale d'Agordo, in the Belluno area, to a family of poor mountain dwellers, on October 17, 1912 and died on September 28, 1978. His term as Pontiff was very short: just 33 days.

His sudden death, due to an acute myocardial infarction, earned him the symbolic nickname of "meteor" that passed into the sky of the Church. The world needed simple and exemplary men, a pope-parish priest rather than a royal pope.

It is almost superfluous to speak of his great evangelical humility that radiated everywhere a great spiritual and human strength accompanied, always and in any case, by a good dose of joy and optimism.

Particular was the bond that was created between the Venetian people and the pope who became Patriarch as John XXIII. Probably his modest origins discouraged him in the face of the project to continue the work of his predecessors (Roncalli and Montini).

He considered his office exclusively as a service to the immense Catholic community, just as the Second Vatican Council would have wanted, immersed in dialogue with the laity. Full of charitable ardor and always available to others, he dedicated his entire day to them: from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Rich in a unique faith, he was also a great reader and openly manifested his firm principles with regard to an ecclesiastical morality that was increasingly subject to concessions; hence his adamant on priestly celibacy and on the pro-divorce ideas of the FUCI (Italian Catholic University Federation) of Venice, which he did not hesitate to dissolve.

He also showed his opposition to the Venetian tendency to the movement of the "worker priests" because he saw in it the danger of uniting two incompatible doctrines such as socialism and Catholicism; he did not even forget to clash with the absurd thought of the Church of accepting Marxism by considering Jesus the Revolutionary against the wealthy classes.

He thus rejected any form of violence promoted by any revolution, in fact accepting the French one only from the point of view of Liberty and not from that of the guillotine. Needless to say, he accepted only the principle of "social justice" of the socialist doctrine, rejecting the methods of consumerism and capitalism. To practice charity and justice meant to commit oneself to the improvement of the living conditions of society.

An enemy of the ease of feminist customs and slogans, he reluctantly accepted his office with his usual humility and only out of a spirit of service: faithful to his style, he abolished the tiara and the most sumptuous manifestations of the investiture, tolerating only the use of the gestatorial chair only for the opportunity offered to him to be seen by everyone because he was higher.

He also did not fail to work in favor of the Third World and to transmit his sympathy to young people. Endowed with an exceptional journalistic and theological vein, he transmitted to us his moral guides based on common sense and moderation. He affirmed, however, his admiration for a past that was poorer materially, but richer spiritually, making implicit the admonition to conduct the present.

The morning after his death he was found in his room with the prayer book open and the lamp still lit: it was a cry for everyone.

Even today, in the Belluno area, his memory is very much alive, so much so that many people claim to have received miracles and graces through his intercession.

Thus began a laborious beatification procedure, which began with a collection of signatures, which took place after that of Pius XII and John XXIII his predecessors. But, in the meantime, Pope Luciani, the meteor of the modern church, is already sanctified in the hearts of his people.

**VI.**  
**JOHN PAUL II**  
1920-2005

**MANUSCRIPT**

It is difficult to speak of the life of our current Pope, perhaps because it is too full of events both in his private life and in the world.

There is a phrase by "Zanussi", the director who had the courage to make a film about him: "You can see in the background a Poland tormented by the Germans, then Karol Wojtyla: Comrade, Archbishop, Priest, Archbishop, Cardinal, Pope!"

Priest, Archbishop, Cardinal but also: worker, actor, sportsman, writer, philosopher! And all this in the midst of Atheistic Marxism. Of course, his life is a set of "cases", encounters, social conditions that always make one think of a guiding ribbon that comes from Heaven.

1st Pope of the East.

Vatican City, it is 7:30 p.m. on Monday, October 16, 1978: after 2 days and 8 votes, Karol Wojtyla was elected pope, choosing the name John Paul II. He appears to greet the crowd in St. Peter's Square. He is only 58 years old. He is the first foreign pope in 455 years (from the time of the Dutchman Adrian VII in 1523) and after 45 Popes, all Italian. First Pope in history to come from Eastern Europe.

Karol seems to start his life badly because he is orphaned of his mother, he is just 3 years old and the lack of this mother remains a wound in his heart. At the age of 18 he wrote a beautiful poem about her: "Mother, my love off".

This suffered love will lead him throughout his life to love for Our Lady who will make him add the motto "Totus Tuus" to his papal coat of arms.

In his youth a strange episode: in a visit made by the Archbishop of Krakow Mons Adam Sapieha, who had observed Karol serving Mass at a very young age, asked him: "Have you ever thought of becoming a priest?" The answer was negative.

Then there was the death of his father and brother, the Resistance to Nazism also with the theater, his performances also made in the streets, to encourage the people, his poems and...

The Archbishop calls him to help illegal seminarians, this time the call is decisive.

His father had died killed by the Germans while he was going to buy medicines, his brother doctor had also left him had been infected with scarlet fever.

Karol felt that despite the theater, his friends, his studies he had to devote himself to the Church, he retired to the archbishop's palace and after the liberation of Poland in January 1945 he entered the Major Seminary which had been reopened

In 1946 he was ordained a priest, shortly afterwards he was sent to Rome to perfect himself. After 2 years, in 1948, he graduated in ethics from the Angelicum, where he also learned Italian, Spanish and French.

In 1949 he returned to his homeland and became a professor at the Universities of Lublin and Krakow (Poland). He exercised his priestly ministry and practiced various sports with his students. He publishes articles and poems.

Four characters have a great importance in his decision to dedicate himself to the Church.

First his father who took care of his religious formation by reading the Bible together and they discussed it, the catechist of the elementary school, Archbishop Adam Saopieha and another person an accountant who was a "tailor" and who had a great passion, that of talking and discussing spiritual problems with young people and his influence was important for Wojtyla

His life flows in an almost dizzying way, in fact in 1958 at the age of 38 he is bishop, in January 1964 at the age of 44 he is archbishop and cardinal in 1967.

When you think that six million Poles were killed by the Germans during the war, you can understand the horror that the Polish people must have felt when a letter sent to Germany by the Polish Episcopate (of which Wojtyla was a member) contained these words from the Gospel

"We forgive and ask for forgiveness."

Only in the Gospel can these words be found and our Pope in 1965 allowed this letter to be sent to Germany, which had slaughtered Poland, as a Gospel cry.

Another episode that makes us know the humility of our Pope is this: one of his parishioners, at the time when he was still parish priest in Krakow, had criticized his sermons that were too "polished" and full of smiles and not severe, but now they become truly severe and imposing.

John Paul II willingly accepts "heavy observations" and does not feel humiliated to put them into practice, this simplicity of his makes him particularly likeable.

Even during the period that he was a cardinal he never stopped attending the theater, reading books and visiting friends without neglecting his work for pastoral commitments, and even more extraordinarily he was able to practice sports.

Many journalists remember a small episode that caused quite a stir.

When Cardinal Wojtyla was elected Pope, one thing he wanted was to have a swimming pool and to which he made some remarks he said: "If you want a healthy Pope you have to give him a swimming pool!".

His first trip was to Mexico and the words that began his conversation in Puebla was: "You gather here not as a political parliament but as a fraternal meeting of pastors of the Church.

In his early years, as pope, he returned to Poland twice in 1979 and in 1983 he prayed before the Black Madonna and the crowds that cheered him were immense.

He does not forget to kneel in front of the wall of death that encloses the famous Lager in which the Nazis exterminated hundreds of Poles.

Before his second visit, Lech Walesa and other workers in Gdansk founded the independent trade union Solidarnosc (Solidarity), which fights for all workers' rights: wages adjusted to the cost of living, insurance provisions, and also, if necessary, the right to strike.

John Paul II, back in Poland the second time, says: "This Poland is like a banner of freedom."

The Pope's pilgrimages to the Philippines, Spain, Poland give the possibility of electing new Saints (out of the glory of Bernini) not in Rome but in their own countries.

Of course, he had enough sorrow when from Rome he was able to observe the percentage of low attendance of Christians at religious services in Roman churches and even more so the civil downgrading of the Thursday dedicated to Corpus Christi. In another field, the high result of abortions and divorce.

There are some things that should be remembered; in Paris on 1/6/1980 he spoke in front of 13 Nobel Prize winners and among many he said two very important things.

1°. Condemn science when it is devoid of morals (see the latest discussions on births etc.)

2°. Saying that the French motto of the Revolution is Christian freedom equality fraternity, *liberty, equality, fraternity*

The French were amazed (but Ida always thought so!). This great sympathy of his for the workers, and you can feel when he talks to them that he is reciprocal, why?, because he really experienced the hard backbreaking work and his hands wounded by the boulders and the Solvay they still prove it (he says it shows!) even today.

This last part of John Paul II's life makes us think so much. These last five popes of which he is the last make us bow before so much goodness, so much intelligence, so much holiness and we understand well that these men have truly been chosen by the Holy Spirit!

Writing about what he did and what he continues to do even today in 1991 is a wonderful thing, how he manages to get to everything, to think about everything, to overcome his wounds, to accept them as knowledge of "sister suffering", he became their master: one more medal.

No "star" of the century in any field could rival him and in fact no one tries, neither a King, nor a President, nor an idol of the stadiums, no one.

And to think that in 48 when Woytjla was still a simple priest Padre Pio revealed to him that he was Pope and also a Martyr, this news has never been confirmed but neither has it been confirmed denial.

And we all hope that these gunshots are the only ones in his life that have martyred him for many months and perhaps he still suffers from them.

Perhaps this is not why he rushes to write Encyclicals, he has written a huge number of them.

## THE ENCYCLICALS OF JOHN PAUL II

Encyclicals are those letters that the Pontiffs write to the whole of Christianity. In the first nine years of his pastoral ministry (1978-1987) John Paul II issued (published) seven encyclicals

Redemptor Hominis	04.03 1979	on the Son Jesus
Dives in Misericordia	30.11.1980	about the Father
Work Exercises	14.09.1981	on human work
Slavorum Apostoli	12.06.1985	on SS. Cyril and Methodius
Dominum et Vivificantem	18.05.1986	on the Holy Spirit
Redemptoris Mater	25.03.1987	on the Blessed Virgin Mary
Sollicitudo Rei Socialis	30.12.1987	su Populorum Progressio

In addition to these Encyclicals, John Paul II published about fifteen Apostolic Letters and also several Apostolic Exhortations, which is what a very large number of documents do. Many already know that these apostolic letters are prepared by very competent people but then manually retouched by the Pope; while the Encyclicals feel good that they are entirely compiled by this Pontiff because they are entirely in his style and temperament.

## EVANGELIZER

Until 1989 John Paul II's international trips were more than 40, in Italy more than 80. Jesus' message to the Apostles, especially to Saint Peter: "Go into all the world and make disciples of the

Gospel out of all creatures..." and he who is now personally the successor of St. Peter has put it into practice perfectly.

International trips made in this century are many. The first nine are from Paul VI who unfortunately had to interrupt due to poor health. After eight years, John Paul II took over the legacy of Pope Montini and evangelized in first person the world with the Gospel and with the Second Vatican Council.

The Catholic Church wants to be present among the peoples and not even a year after the attack of 1981 John Paul II begins to travel again because he himself explained this evangelizing anxiety in his message for Mission Sunday in 1985: in fact he says: "The ever-present problem in the Church is that of the expansion of the Kingdom of God among non-Christian peoples, this problem presented itself to me in its greatness on that very day 22/10/1978 during World Mission Sunday.

In fact, from year to year I have become an "itinerant catechist" to make contact with people who do not yet know Christ so that the Christian faith may be ever deeper in their cultures, so that young people in particular may be credible witnesses of the Gospel message that they make known in their environments.

John Paul II got into the habit of recounting the account of his travels on the first Wednesday after his return to Rome.

After his trip to Colombia he exclaimed: "I have carried out an ecclesial service in the name of Christ". And on his return from Benelux: "Why shouldn't the pope go where his brothers work and suffer for the Gospel of Christ?"

Then he doesn't say more, for example, what he did: get out of the car to visit a sick person or go to the home of a poor person and thus meet marginalized people.

The meetings with the various categories of the People of God also became the basis for his encyclicals.

In these 40 journeys that the Pope has made around the world there have also been many difficulties. In 1983, the difficulties in Poland were due to political tensions in the government. In Nicaragua there have been protests in the local religious sectors. In San Salvador, Panama, the pope's visit to the tomb of Archbishop Romero was not viewed well by the government. In Holland numerous internal problems in the Catholic Church, etc.

In John Paul II's travels one can feel his passion for the freedom of peoples.

In India he visited Mother Teresa with her poor and the Pope said: "The Gospel speaks of the poor and these are those who lack the foundations for physical and spiritual life and advises the people to have their needs and rights recognized but advises against rebellions and revolts".

In Peru in 1985 he addressed the guerrillas, imploring them to direct their forces towards constructive actions that will contribute to the progress of the country.

In Canada 1984, speaking to the rulers, he recalled that danger in rich countries can be unleashed by the wrath of the poor.

On the other hand, there are the joyful encounters, for example the 1980 meeting with the young people of Paris that will remain unforgettable.

Visits to shrines: Fatima, Lourdes, Czestochowa in Poland and also silent meetings in the places of martyrdom in the concentration and elimination camps in Poland Auschwitz. etc.

Then, moreover, the Pope speaks himself; he knows many languages, but he also tries if possible to have some dialectal expression of the people he has in front of him. He wants to make

himself understood, dialogue and then we hope that he can make his big dreams come true: trips to the great China and Russia.

For the pleasant encounters, one must not forget the Pope's friendship with Sandro Pertini, the one venerated father of Catholics, the other agnostic but president of the Italian Republic. For religion Pertini had only one good thing, he always envied his mother's great faith.

When John Paul II and Pertini were together, they were two men who talked about many beautiful things and they were in perfect agreement.

He had many other good encounters; for example with Mitterrand, with Reagan, with Walesa and Jaruzelski, with Mother Teresa, with Gorbachev, with the Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I, and many many meetings all useful for peace in the world.

This peace that everyone desires and that unfortunately does not come, but certainly if we think that the former goalkeeper of the Wadovice football team and now porter of the Church like St. Peter we will end up being calm too!

After all, the enormous change in Catholic theology where, thanks to John Paul II and all the great theologians who worked with him, they allowed a flourishing development that will continue in the future.

In theology, three themes have already been identified and changed: ecclesiology, that is, the historical commitment of the Church, Christology, and the relationship with other religions.

The search for unity among all Christians has led to a good confrontation that has enriched everyone. The discussion on lay ministries, the role of women in the Church, the new conditions of the experience of faith, are cornerstones that we are going to reflect.

When the theology of the laity is studied more deeply, there will be more clarity, and a broader understanding will enable the laity to better understand its great mission.

In the future we will certainly have good opportunities to clarify the theology concerning the love of the Son for the Father.

Then also the treatment of the Holy Spirit and that makes us turn to Him to understand Him better. It will be the Holy Spirit who will make the world understand that He truly is "salvation". And finally in Redemptoris Mater the Pope's love for Our Lady blossoms.

All the Encyclicals are wonderful but sometimes it is enough to list them to understand them but these three give us a certainty that it is worth rereading them without tiredness.

## BIOGRAPHY

Source: [\\_Karol-Woityla.org](http://_Karol-Woityla.org)

Karol Józef Wojtyła, elected Pope on 16 October 1978, was born in Wadowice, a city 50 km from Krakow, on 18 May 1920. He was the second of two children of Karol Wojtyła and Emilia Kaczorowska, who died in 1929. His older brother Edmund, a doctor, died in 1932 and his father, a non-commissioned officer in the army, in 1941.

At the age of nine she received her First Communion and at eighteen the sacrament of Confirmation. After completing his studies at the Marcin Wadowita High School in Wadowice, he enrolled at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow in 1938.

When the Nazi occupation forces closed the University in 1939, the young Karol worked (1940-1944) in a quarry and, later, in the Solvay chemical factory in order to earn a living and avoid deportation to Germany.

From 1942, feeling called to the priesthood, he attended the formation courses of the clandestine major seminary in Krakow, directed by the Archbishop of Krakow, Cardinal Adam Stefan Sapieha.

At the same time, he was one of the promoters of the "Rhapsodic Theater", which was also clandestine. After the war, he continued his studies at the newly opened major seminary in Krakow and at the Faculty of Theology of the Jagiellonian University, until his ordination to the priesthood in Krakow on 1 November 1946.

Subsequently, he was sent by Cardinal Sapieha to Rome, where he obtained a doctorate in theology (1948), with a thesis on the theme of faith in the works of St. John of the Cross. During this period, during his vacations, he exercised pastoral ministry among Polish emigrants in France, Belgium and Holland.

In 1948 he returned to Poland and was coadjutor first in the parish of Niegowić, near Krakow, and then in that of St. Florian, in the city. He was chaplain to university students until 1951, when he resumed his philosophical and theological studies.

In 1953 he presented a thesis at the Catholic University of Lublin on the possibility of founding a Christian ethic starting from Max Scheler's ethical system. Later, he became a professor of Moral Theology and Ethics at the major seminary in Krakow and at the Faculty of Theology in Lublin.

On 4 July 1958, Pope Pius XII appointed him titular bishop of Ombi and auxiliary of Krakow. He received episcopal ordination on 28 September 1958 in the cathedral of Wawel (Krakow), from the hands of Archbishop Eugeniusz Baziak.

On 13 January 1964 he was appointed Archbishop of Krakow by Paul VI who created him Cardinal on 26 June 1967.

He participated in the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) with an important contribution to the drafting of the constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. Cardinal Wojtyła also took part in the 5 assemblies of the Synod of Bishops prior to his pontificate.

He was elected Pope on 16 October 1978 and on 22 October he followed the solemn beginning of his ministry as Universal Pastor of the Church. Since the beginning of his pontificate, Pope John Paul II has made 146 pastoral visits to Italy and, as Bishop of Rome, has visited 317 of the current 332 Roman parishes.

There have been 104 apostolic journeys around the world - an expression of the constant pastoral solicitude of the Successor of Peter for all the Churches.

His main documents include 14 Encyclicals, 15 Apostolic Exhortations, 11 Apostolic Constitutions and 45 Apostolic Letters.

Pope John Paul II is also credited with 5 books: "Crossing the threshold of hope" (October 1994); "Gift and Mystery: On the Fiftieth Anniversary of My Priesthood" (November 1996); "Roman Triptych", meditations in the form of poetry (March 2003); "Get up, let's go!" (May 2004) and "Memory and Identity" (February 2005).

Pope John Paul II celebrated 147 beatification ceremonies - in which he proclaimed 1338 blessed - and 51 canonizations, for a total of 482 saints. He held 9 consistories, in which he created 231 (+ 1 in pectore) Cardinals. He also presided over 6 plenary meetings of the College of Cardinals.

Since 1978 it has convoked 15 assemblies of the Synod of Bishops: 6 ordinary generals (1980, 1983, 1987, 1990; 1994 and 2001), 1 extraordinary general assembly (1985) and 8 special assemblies (1980, 1991, 1994, 1995, 1997, 1998 [2] and 1999).

No Pope has met as many people as John Paul II: the Wednesday General Audiences (over 1160) were attended by more than 17 million and 600 thousand pilgrims, not counting all the other special audiences and religious ceremonies (more than 8 million pilgrims during the Great Jubilee of the year 2000 alone), as well as the millions of faithful met during pastoral visits in Italy and around the world; numerous government personalities were also received in audience: suffice it to recall the 38 official visits and the other 738 audiences or meetings with Heads of State, as well as the 246 audiences and meetings with Prime Ministers

He died in Rome, in his lodgings in Vatican City, at 9:37 p.m. on Saturday, April 2, 2005. The solemn funeral in St. Peter's Square and burial in the Vatican Grottoes followed on April 8. The liturgical feast is inscribed in the general Roman Calendar on 22 October, with the degree of optional memorial.

V.  
**BENEDICT XVI**

1927-2022

*Fonte: <http://www.vatican.va> › content › biography › documents*

Joseph Ratzinger - Cardinal since 1977, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith since 1981, Dean of the College of Cardinals since 2002 - was born in Marktl am Inn, in the territory of the Diocese of Passau (Germany), on 16 April 1927. His father was a gendarmerie commissioner and came from a family of farmers in Lower Bavaria, whose economic conditions were rather modest. His mother was the daughter of craftsmen from Rimsting, on Lake Chiem, and before getting married she had been a cook in several hotels.

He spent his childhood and adolescence in Traunstein, a small town near the border with Austria, about thirty kilometers from Salzburg. In this context, which he himself called "Mozartian", he received his Christian, human and cultural formation.

The time of his youth was not easy. The faith and education of his family prepared him for the harsh experience of the problems connected with the Nazi regime: he recalled seeing his parish priest beaten by the Nazis before the celebration of Holy Mass and having known the climate of strong hostility towards the Catholic Church in Germany.

But it was precisely in this complex situation that he discovered the beauty and truth of faith in Christ, and the role of his family was fundamental, which always continued to live a crystalline witness of goodness and hope rooted in conscious belonging to the Church. Towards the end of that tragedy that was the Second World War he was also enlisted in the auxiliary anti-aircraft services.

From 1946 to 1951 he studied philosophy and theology at the Higher School of Philosophy and Theology in Freising and at the University of Munich.

On June 29, 1951, he was ordained a priest.

Just a year later, Fr. Joseph began his teaching activity in the same school in Freising where he had been a student.

In 1953 he graduated in theology with a dissertation on the theme: "People and House of God in the Doctrine of the Church of St. Augustine".

In 1957 he was a lecturer with the well-known professor of fundamental theology in Munich, Gottlieb Söhngen, with a work on: "The theology of history of St. Bonaventure".

After teaching dogmatics and fundamental theology at the Freising University of Applied Sciences, he continued his teaching activities in Bonn (1959-1969), Münster (1963-1966) and Tübingen (1966-1969). Since 1969 he has been Professor of Dogmatics and History of Dogmas at the University of Regensburg where he also held the position of Vice Dean of the University.

His intense scientific activity led him to carry out important positions within the German Bishops' Conference, in the International Theological Commission.

Among his numerous and qualified publications, "Introduction to Christianity" (1968), a collection of university lectures on the "profession of apostolic faith," had a particular echo. In 1973, then, the volume "Dogma and Preaching" was published, which collects essays, meditations and homilies dedicated to pastoral care.

His harangue delivered before the Bavarian Catholic Academy on the theme: "Why am I still in the Church?" had a very wide resonance. He declared with his usual clarity: "Only in the Church is it possible to be a Christian and not alongside the Church".

The series of his pressing publications has continued copiously and punctually over the years, constituting a point of reference for many people and certainly for those who are engaged in the in-depth study of theology. Think, for example, of the volume "Report on Faith" of 1985 and "The Salt of the Earth" of 1996. Also worth mentioning is the book "At the School of Truth" published on the occasion of his seventieth birthday.

Of great value, central to the life of Pastor Ratzinger, was the high and fruitful experience of his participation in the Second Vatican Council with the title of "expert" which he also lived as a confirmation of his own vocation that he defined as "theological".

On 25 March 1977 Pope Paul VI appointed him Archbishop of München und Freising.

He received episcopal ordination on May 28 of the same year: the first diocesan priest to assume, after eighty years, the pastoral government of the great Bavarian diocese. He chose as his episcopal motto: "Collaborators of the Truth".

Pope Montini also created and proclaimed him Cardinal, of the Title of Santa Maria Consolatrice al Tiburtino, in the Consistory of 27 June 1977.

He was relator at the Fifth General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (1980) on the theme of the Christian family in the contemporary world. On that occasion, in his first Report, he carried out a broad and precise analysis of the situation of the family in the world, emphasizing in this regard the crisis of traditional culture in the face of the technical and merely rational mentality. Alongside the negative aspects, he did not fail to highlight the rediscovery of true Christian personalism as the leaven that fertilizes the conjugal experience of many married couples, and he also addressed an invitation to a correct evaluation of the role of women, which must be counted among the fundamental questions in reflection on marriage and the family. In the second part of the report, dedicated to God's plan for today's families, he recalled above all that masculinity and femininity are an expression of the communion of persons as an original sign of the Creator's gift of love.

It follows, he emphasized, that the love of man and woman is not something private, nor profane, nor merely biological, but something sacred that introduces a "state," a new form of life, permanent and responsible. Marriage and the family, he forcefully recalled, in some way precede public affairs, and the latter must respect the proper law of marriage and the family and its intimate mystery. In the third part, the Cardinal addressed the pastoral problems related to the family: from that of building a community of persons to that of the generation of life, from the educational role of parents to the need to prepare young people for marriage and family life, from social tasks to cultural and moral ones. The family, he concluded, can bear witness before the world to a new humanity in the face of the domination of materialism, hedonism and permissiveness.

He was also President Delegate of the Sixth Assembly (1983) which had as its theme reconciliation and penance in the mission of the Church. In his speech at the meeting, he reiterated the pastoral norms promulgated by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith regarding the Sacrament of Reconciliation and deepened, in particular, the questions related to two questions that emerged several times during the assembly: the one concerning the obligation to confess grave sins already absolved during the general absolution and the one concerning personal confession as an essential element of the Sacrament.

His words offered a fundamental contribution of reflection and discussion in the conduct of all the Synods of Bishops.

On 25 November 1981 John Paul II appointed him Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. He also became President of the Pontifical Biblical Commission and of the International Theological Commission. On 15 February 1982 he resigned from the pastoral care of the Archdiocese of München und Freising.

His service as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was tireless and it is impossible to list this work in the space of a biography. His work, as a collaborator of John Paul II, was continuous and precious.

Among the many fixed points of his work, his role as President of the Commission for the Preparation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church should be noted.

On 5 April 1993 he was called to join the Order of Bishops and took possession of the Title of the Suburbicarian Church of Velletri-Segni.

On 6 November 1998 he was appointed Vice-Dean of the College of Cardinals and on 30 November 2002 he became Dean: he took possession of the Title of the Suburbicarian Church of Ostia. Until his election to the Chair of Peter he was a member of the Council of the Second Section of the Secretariat of State; of the Congregations for the Oriental Churches, for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, for Bishops, for the Evangelization of Peoples, for Catholic Education; of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity; of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America and of the Pontifical Commission "Ecclesia Dei".

On the occasion of his fiftieth anniversary of priestly ordination, John Paul II sent him a message in which, referring to the coincidence of his jubilee with the liturgical solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, with words that were in some way "prophetic" he reminded him that "in Peter the principle of unity stands out, founded on the firm faith of the Prince of the Apostles; in Paul the intrinsic requirement of the Gospel to call every man and every people to the obedience of faith.

These two dimensions are joined to the common witness of holiness, which cemented the generous dedication of the two apostles to the service of the Immaculate Bride of God. How can we fail to see in these two components, John Paul II asked, the fundamental coordinates of the journey that Providence has arranged for you, Your Eminence, calling you to the priesthood?"

Cardinal Ratzinger was entrusted with the meditations of the 2005 Way of the Cross celebrated at the Colosseum. On that unforgettable Good Friday, John Paul II, as if clinging to the Crucifix, in a poignant "icon" of suffering, listened in silent recollection to the words of the one who would become his Successor on the Chair of Peter. Significantly, the leitmotif of the Way of the Cross was the word spoken by Jesus on Palm Sunday, with which - immediately after his entry into Jerusalem - he responded to the question of some Greeks who wanted to see him: "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if he dies, he bears much fruit" (Jn 12:24). With these words the Lord offered a "Eucharistic" and "sacramental" interpretation of his Passion. It shows us - was the Cardinal's reflection - that the Way of the Cross is not simply a chain of pain, of harmful things, but it is a mystery: it is precisely this process in which the grain of wheat falls to the ground and bears fruit. In other words, he shows us that the Passion is an offering of himself and this sacrifice bears fruit and thus becomes a gift for all.

His reflections, which resounded on the evening of Good Friday in the evocative setting of the Colosseum, have remained etched in the consciences of men. "Must we not also think," was his vibrant invitation in the meditation of the ninth station, "how much Christ must suffer for his own

Church? How often is the holy sacrament of his presence abused, into what emptiness and wickedness of heart he often enters! How often do we celebrate only ourselves without realizing him! How many times his Word is distorted and abused! How little faith there is in so many theories, how many empty words! How much filth there is in the Church, and even among those who, in the priesthood, should belong completely to Him! How much pride, how much self-sufficiency!" Lord," was the prayer that sprang from his heart, "your Church often seems to us like a boat that is about to sink, a boat that is leaking water on all sides. And even in your wheat field we see more weeds than wheat. The dirty robe and face of your Church dismays us. But we are the ones who dirty them! We ourselves betray you every time, after all our great words, our great gestures. Have mercy on your Church... You got up, you rose again and you can get us up too. Save and sanctify your Church. He saves and sanctifies us all."

Just twenty-four hours before the death of John Paul II, receiving the "St. Benedict Prize" in Subiaco promoted by the Subiaco Foundation "Life and Family", he had reiterated in words that are particularly eloquent today: "We need men like Benedict of Norcia, who in a time of dissipation and decadence, sank into the most extreme solitude, succeeding, after all the purifications he had to undergo, to go back to the light. He returned and founded Monte Cassino, the city on the mountain that, with so many ruins, brought together the forces from which a new world was formed. Thus Benedict, like Abraham, became the father of many peoples."

On Friday, April 8, he - as Dean of the College of Cardinals - presided at the funeral Mass of John Paul II in St. Peter's Square. His homily, it can be said, expressed his great fidelity to the Pope and his own mission. "Follow me," says the risen Lord to Peter, as his last word to this disciple, chosen to feed his sheep. "Follow me" - these lapidary words of Christ can be considered the key to understanding the message that comes from the life of our late and beloved Pope John Paul II, whose remains we place today in the earth as the seed of immortality - the heart full of sadness, but also of joyful hope and deep gratitude".

"Follow me!" was the key word, the leitmotif of the homily that Cardinal Ratzinger addressed to the whole world during the funeral of the Holy Father. A word that tells the mission of John Paul II and is at the same time an exhortation that reaches every person.

"Follow me!" Together with the mandate to feed his flock, Christ announced his martyrdom to Peter - these are the pressing words of Cardinal Ratzinger in his vibrant and moving funeral homily -. With these concluding and summarizing words of the dialogue on love and on the mandate of universal pastor, the Lord recalls another dialogue, held in the context of the Last Supper. Here Jesus had said: "Where I am going, you cannot come". Peter said, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going for now you cannot follow me; you will follow me later" (Jn 13:33, 36). Jesus goes from the supper to the cross, he goes to the resurrection - he enters into the paschal mystery; Peter still cannot follow him.

Now - after the resurrection - this moment has come, this "later". By feeding the flock of Christ, Peter enters into the Paschal Mystery, he goes towards the Cross and the Resurrection. The Lord says it in these words, "... when you were younger... you went where you wanted, but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and take you where you do not want to" (Jn 21:18). In the first period of his pontificate, the Holy Father, still young and full of strength, under the guidance of Christ went to the ends of the earth. But then he entered more and more into the communion of Christ's sufferings, more and more he understood the truth of the words: "Another will gird you...". And it was precisely in this communion with the suffering Lord that he tirelessly

and with renewed intensity proclaimed the Gospel, the mystery of love that goes to the end (cf. Jn 13:1)".

"He - said Cardinal Ratzinger - interpreted for us the paschal mystery as the mystery of divine mercy... The Pope suffered and loved in communion with Christ and therefore the message of his suffering and silence was so eloquent and fruitful." And so he concluded, with words that constitute a "synthesis", one can say, of the Pontificate of John Paul II but also of his own mission as faithful, direct and close collaborator of the Pope since 1981 as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: "Divine Mercy: The Holy Father has found the purest reflection of God's mercy in the Mother of God. He, who had lost his mother at an early age, loved the divine Mother all the more. He heard the words of the crucified Lord as if he were spoken to him personally: "Behold your mother!" And he did as the beloved disciple did: he welcomed her into the depths of his being - *Totus tuus*. And from his mother he learned to conform himself to Christ. For all of us it remains unforgettable how on this last Sunday of Easter of his life, the Holy Father, marked by suffering, looked out once again at the window of the Apostolic Palace and one last time gave the blessing "*Urbi et orbi*". We can be sure that our beloved Pope is now standing at the window of the Father's house, seeing us and blessing us. Yes, bless us, Holy Father. We entrust your dear soul to the Mother of God, your Mother, who has guided you every day and will now guide you to the eternal glory of Her Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

On the eve of his election to the Papal Throne, on the morning of Monday, April 18, in the Vatican Basilica, he celebrated Holy Mass "*pro eligendo Romano Pontifice*" together with the 115 Cardinals, a few hours before the beginning of the Conclave that would elect him. "In this hour of great responsibility," he exhorted in his homily, "let us listen with particular attention to what the Lord tells us." Referring to the readings of the Liturgy, he recalled that "divine mercy sets a limit to evil. Jesus Christ is divine mercy in person: to encounter Christ means to encounter the mercy of God. Christ's mandate has become our mandate through priestly anointing; we are called to promulgate - not only in words but with our lives, and with the effective signs of the sacraments - 'the year of the Lord's mercy'". "Christ's mercy," he stressed, "is not a cheap grace, it does not presuppose the trivialization of evil. Christ bears in his body and on his soul all the weight of evil, all its destructive force. He burns and transforms evil into suffering, into the fire of his suffering love." "The more we are touched by the Lord's mercy," he added, "the more we enter into solidarity with His suffering - we become willing to complete in our flesh 'what is lacking in Christ's sufferings.'"

"We should not remain children in the faith, in a state of minority," he then urged. How many winds of doctrine have we known in recent decades, how many ideological currents, how many fashions of thought... The little boat of thought of many Christians has not infrequently been tossed by these waves - thrown from one extreme to the other: from Marxism to liberalism, to libertinism; from collectivism to radical individualism; from atheism to a vague religious mysticism; from agnosticism to syncretism and so on. Every day new sects are born and what Saint Paul says about the deceit of men, about the cunning that tends to lead into error (cf. Eph 4:14) is fulfilled. Having a clear faith, according to the Creed of the Church, is often labeled as fundamentalism. While relativism, that is, letting oneself be carried "hither and thither by any wind of doctrine," appears to be the only attitude worthy of today's times. A dictatorship of relativism is being established that recognizes nothing as definitive and that leaves as the ultimate measure only one's own self and its desires.

We, on the other hand, have another measure: the Son of God, the true man. He is the measure of true humanism. "Adult" is not a faith that follows the waves of fashion and the latest novelty; adult and mature is a faith deeply rooted in friendship with Christ. It is this friendship that opens us to all that is good and gives us the criterion for discerning between true and false, between deception and truth. We must mature this adult faith, we must guide the flock of Christ to this faith." "Our ministry - he recalled in conclusion - is a gift of Christ to men, to build his body - the new world. Let us live our ministry in this way, as a gift of Christ to men! But at this hour, above all, let us pray insistently to the Lord, that after the great gift of Pope John Paul II, he may once again give us a pastor after his own heart, a pastor who will guide us to the knowledge of Christ, to his love, to true joy."

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**VI.**  
**FRANCIS**  
1936-2025

Source:

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/biography/documents/papa-francesco-biografia-bergoglio.html>

The first Pope to arrive from the Americas was the Argentine Jesuit Jorge Mario Bergoglio. He was born in Buenos Aires on December 17, 1936, the son of Piedmontese emigrants.

After graduating as a chemical technician, he then chose the path of the priesthood by entering the diocesan seminary. On 11 March 1958 he passed into the novitiate of the Society of Jesus. He completed his humanistic studies in Chile and, returning to Argentina, graduated in philosophy (1963) and theology (1970). On 13 December 1969 he was ordained a priest and in 1973 he made his perpetual profession in the Jesuits. The same year he was appointed provincial of the Jesuits of Argentina.

Cardinal Quarracino wanted Jorge Mario Bergoglio as his collaborator in Buenos Aires. In 1992 John Paul II appointed him titular bishop of Auca and auxiliary of Buenos Aires. On 27 June he received episcopal ordination. In 1998 he succeeded Cardinal Quarracino as archbishop, primate of Argentina, ordinary for the faithful of the Eastern rite and grand chancellor of the Catholic University. From 2005 to 2011 he also presided over the Argentine Bishops' Conference.

In the consistory of 21 February 2001, John Paul II created him cardinal, of the title of Saint Robert Bellarmine. Thus, in April 2005, he participated in the Conclave in which Benedict XVI was elected.

Following the latter's resignation from the Petrine ministry, on March 13, 2013, at the age of 76, Cardinal Bergoglio was elected 266th Pope of the Catholic Church by the Cardinals gathered in Conclave. He takes the name of Francis after the example of the Saint of Assisi, "the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and cares for creation".

In his first public appearance as Pontiff, he invited the faithful to pray for him: "I ask you to pray to the Lord to bless me: the prayer of the people, asking for the blessing for their Bishop." On March 19, 2013, the Solemnity of St. Joseph, he officially began his Petrine ministry.

Among the first gestures of his pontificate was the historic visit to Castel Gandolfo to his predecessor, Benedict XVI. Francis met periodically with the Pope Emeritus until two days before his death in 2022.

Always attentive to the last and those discarded by society, since the first Holy Thursday of his pontificate he wanted to celebrate the Mass *in Coena Domini* outside the Vatican, going each time to prisons, reception centers for the disabled or drug addicts. Several times her voice has been raised in defense of the innocent, especially children "who are not allowed to be born" or victims of wars. His love for the least, the elderly and the little ones prompted him to start the World Days of the Poor, Grandparents and Children. He also instituted the Sunday of the Word of God.

During his pontificate he celebrated two Jubilees. With the Bull *Misericordiae Vultus* of 11 April 2015, Pope Francis proclaimed an Extraordinary Jubilee dedicated to the mercy of God.

As a sign of the Church's closeness to the Central African Republic, affected by civil war, the Holy Father opened the Holy Door of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame in Bangui. And, for the first time, the "door of mercy" was also opened in the cathedrals of the world, in shrines, hospitals and prisons.

For the occasion, he instituted the Missionaries of Mercy to whom he entrusted the faculty to forgive the sins reserved for the Pope. Nine years later, with the Bull *Spes non confundit*, Pope Francis proclaimed the Jubilee of Hope for 2025.

Precisely as a pilgrim of hope, during his 12 years of pontificate Pope Francis visited 66 countries on all continents, making 47 apostolic journeys. On his last trip - December 2024 - he traveled to Corsica, becoming the first Pope to visit the island.

In addition to the apostolic journeys, there are 40 pastoral visits to 49 different cities and localities in Italy. As bishop of Rome, he visited 18 parishes in his diocese, focusing mainly on the outskirts of the city. On these occasions he has dialogued with priests and faithful on pastoral issues related to the challenges of the communities. With his closeness to the people, he gave an example of what he asked of priests: to be shepherds with "the smell of the sheep", shepherds in the midst of one's flock.

To reach everyone, even non-believers, Pope Francis has maintained an active presence on social media with his @Pontifex and @Franciscus accounts, through which he has spoken of God's mercy and tenderness, sowing words of hope and accompanying the daily lives of millions of people everywhere in the world.

In addition, Pope Francis has exercised the Petrine ministry with tireless dedication to dialogue with Muslims and representatives of other religions, sometimes convening them in prayer meetings and signing Joint Declarations for the promotion of harmony among members of different faiths, such as the Document on Human Fraternity signed on February 4, 2019 in Abu Dhabi with the Sunni leader al-Tayyeb.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, on the evening of March 27, 2020 he wanted to pray alone in St. Peter's Square, whose colonnade symbolically embraced Rome and the world, for humanity frightened and plagued by the unknown disease. The image of Pope Francis praying in the rain has remained etched in history and in the hearts of many people.

Pope Francis' doctrinal magisterium has been very rich. A witness to a sober and humble style, based on openness to missionary spirit, apostolic courage and mercy, careful to avoid the danger of self-referentiality and spiritual worldliness in the Church, the Pontiff proposed his apostolic program in the Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium (24 November 2013).

Among his main documents are 4 Encyclicals: Lumen Fidei (29 June 2013) which deals with the theme of faith in God; Laudato si' (24 May 2015), which touches on the care of Creation and the responsibility of the human race in the climate crisis; Fratelli tutti (3 October 2020), on human fraternity and social friendship; and Dilexit nos (24 October 2024) on devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

He has promulgated 7 Apostolic Exhortations, 39 Apostolic Constitutions, numerous Apostolic Letters, the majority of which in the form of Motu Proprio, in addition to the Catecheses proposed in the General Audiences and the allocutions delivered in different parts of the world.

After establishing the Secretariat for the Economy, and the Dicasteries for Communication, for the Laity, for the Family and Life, and for Promoting Integral Human Development, Pope Francis undertook the reform of the Roman Curia, to promote more effective evangelization, by issuing the Apostolic Constitution Praedicate Evangelium (19 March 2022).

In addition, it has modified the canonical process for causes of declaration of matrimonial nullity in the CCEO (Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium. Code of Laws common to all the Eastern Catholic Churches) and in the Code of Canon Law (Code of Canon Law) (M.P. Mitis et misericors Iesus and Mitis Iudex Dominus Iesus) and has tightened legislation regarding crimes committed by representatives of the clergy against minors or vulnerable persons (M.P. Vos estis lux mundi).

He has convened 5 Assemblies of the Synod of Bishops: 3 ordinary generals dedicated to the family, young people and synodality; an extraordinary anchor on the family, and a special one for the Pan-Amazon Region.

Pope Francis has canonized 942 saints, of whom 23 by equivalence; and he beatified more than 1500 venerable servants of God, including numerous martyrs.

More than any predecessor, he enlarged the College of Cardinals, convening ten Consistories in which he created 163 cardinals, of whom 133 were electors and 30 non-electors, from 73 nations, of which 23 had never had a cardinal before.

The last years of his pontificate have been punctuated by numerous appeals for peace, against the piecemeal Third World War, taking place in various countries, especially in Ukraine, as well as in Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, Myanmar and in various African countries.

On February 14, 2025, Francis went to the Agostino Gemelli Polyclinic for a 38-day hospitalization, due to bilateral pneumonia. Back in the Vatican, he spent the last weeks of his life at Casa Santa Marta, dedicating himself to his Petrine ministry until the end.

On Easter Day, April 20, 2025, he appeared for the last time from the loggia of St. Peter's Basilica to impart the solemn *Urbi et Orbi* blessing. He then wanted to greet the faithful by going down to St. Peter's Square, to caress and bless the sick babies and children. Pope Francis thus ended his pontificate as he had begun it: together with the people of God. A few hours later he died at the *Domus Sanctae Marthae* in the Vatican, on April 21 of the Holy Year 2025, Easter Monday, at 7:35 a.m.

The funeral in St. Peter's Square and the burial at the Papal Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore were celebrated on Saturday, April 26, 2025. The whole Christian community, especially the poor, has given praise to God for the gift of his courageous and faithful service to the Gospel and to the Church.

Francis left everyone an admirable testimony of humanity, holy life and universal fatherhood. His memory remains in the heart of the Church and of all humanity.  
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