



First pope of the *Americas*

MARCH 13, 2013



Pope Francis gives the *Urbi et Orbi* blessing for the city of Rome and the entire world on April 5, 2015. (L'Osservatore Romano)

White smoke rose from the Sistine Chapel chimney and bells rang out across Vatican City on March 13, 2013, shortly after 7 p.m. (Vatican City time) in announcement of the election of a new pope. Approximately an hour later, Proto Deacon Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauren stepped out onto the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica to inform the world that Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, S.J., of Buenos Aires, Argentina, had been made pope and would assume the name of Francis.

As the leader of the world's 1.3 billion Catholics, he became the first pope to take the name Francis, the first pope from the Americas, the first Jesuit pope, the 266th pope in the history of the Catholic Church, and the 265th successor of St. Peter.

The crowd in St. Peter's Square grew silent as Jorge Mario Bergoglio, 76, recited the Lord's Prayer and a Hail Mary. As he stepped out onto the balcony to greet the people for the first time as pope, he wore a simple white cassock rather than the red velvet *mozzetta* typically worn by his predecessors. As the world watched, he gave an unconventional blessing that would set the tone for his papacy.

"And now I would like to give the blessing, but first I want to ask you a favor. Before the bishop blesses the people, I ask that you would pray to the Lord to bless me — the prayer of the people for their bishop. Let us say this prayer — your prayer for me — in silence.

"I will now give my blessing to you and to the whole world, to all men and women of good will."

Why Francis?

Pope Francis wasted little time in explaining why he had chosen the name in honor of St. Francis of Assisi. The pope indicated to journalists just three days after his election that the inspiration had come to him after the Brazilian Cardinal Cláudio Hummes had whispered to him, "Don't forget the poor," when it was becoming apparent he was going to be elected the bishop of Rome. "And that's how in my heart came the name Francis of Assisi," who cared so deeply for the poor. According to the Associated Press, he then sighed, "Oh how I would like a poor Church and a Church for the poor." ●