

MISSION INTENTIONS

NOVEMBER 2023-2024

We pray for the Holy Father; may he continue to walk with the people of faith entrusted to him, as he fulfills his mission with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Country Focus: Argentina

The Catholic Church has been the largest church in Argentina, Pope Francis' home country, for centuries. Europeans brought Catholicism to Argentina, and it became a way of life for many, largely through the work of Jesuit missionaries. As Catholicism continued to spread throughout Argentina, its political and cultural influence also grew. Until 1994, the Argentinian constitution required the country's president to be Catholic, and it is common to see symbols of the faith, including rosaries and crucifixes, in public spaces.

Today, the Catholic Church in Argentina faces many of the same challenges as the Church in other countries. While the majority of the population is Catholic, only a fraction attend Mass regularly. Some Catholics are converting to Evangelicalism, and many young people are leaving the faith altogether. Let us pray for Pope Francis as he works to spread the Gospel, that he may continue to be a witness to all the world, especially in his home country of Argentina.



Leading to Knowledge of the Faith

The Catholic Church has long held that these words of Jesus in Matthew 16 help form the foundation for our belief in the office of the papacy: *"And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven"* (Matt. 16: 18-19). Catholic tradition teaches us that with these words, Jesus made Peter the first pope, and gave him authority over the entire Church. We will learn more about the office of the papacy on the second page of this newsletter.

The Holy Father

Pope Francis

He is the first pope from the Americas, the first Jesuit pope, and the first pope to honor Saint Francis of Assisi by taking his name.

Born Jorge Mario Bergoglio to Italian immigrant parents in Argentina, Pope Francis knew he wanted to be a Jesuit priest after graduating college. When he was 22, he entered the novitiate, and was ordained a priest 12 years later, in 1969. After four more years of training, he took his final vows as a Jesuit in 1973, and was appointed Provincial of the Jesuits in Argentina. After this appointment ended, he served as a parish priest and rector of the Colegio de San José. In 1992, he was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Buenos Aires, Coadjutor Archbishop of the same archdiocese in 1997, Archbishop in 1998, and created a Cardinal in 2001. He was elected pope on March 13, 2013.



Throughout his ministry, Pope Francis has always shown his deep commitment to caring for the poor. When he was created a Cardinal, he asked the faithful not to travel to Rome to celebrate, but instead to donate the money they would have spent on travel to the poor. He frequently visits the poor, was known to use public transportation as a Cardinal, often cooks his own meals, and has chosen to live in modest apartments rather than the more luxurious homes reserved for cardinals and the pope.

During his papacy, Pope Francis has written several encyclicals, including *Laudato si'*, visited more than 45 countries, and attended multiple World Youth Days. He consistently encourages all Catholics to care for and encounter the poor, and to be good stewards of the Earth. Let us pray that Pope Francis may continue to fulfill his mission as the Holy Father of the Church.

Formation for Life in Christ

There have been more than 260 popes in the 2,000-plus year history of the Catholic Church. In fact, Pope Francis is the 266th successor of St. Peter. In this section, we will learn more about how a pope is chosen and the history of the papacy.

The word “pope” comes from the Greek word “pappas,” which means “father.” As we learned on the first page of this newsletter, Catholics believe the office of pope was created by Jesus himself, when he gave the keys of the kingdom to St. Peter and made him the first pope (Matt. 16:19). The office of the pope is one way the Catholic Church establishes itself as the Church Jesus founded. Through the papacy, the Church is able to trace its history all the way back to the time of Jesus.

The Pope serves as the head of the Church and the Bishop of Rome, meaning he oversees the Diocese of Rome just as Archbishop Hebda oversees the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. The Pope is also the head of the Vatican or Holy See, which is the center of the Catholic Church. The Vatican is a sovereign city-state, or country, so in addition to overseeing the governance and finances of the worldwide Church, the Pope also has political duties, like meeting with

heads of state and maintaining diplomatic relationships.

Popes are elected for life, but they can retire, as Pope Benedict XVI did in 2013. When it is time to elect a new pope, the College of Cardinals gathers together to discuss the needs and challenges facing the Church. Then, when they are ready to vote for a new pope, they gather in what is called a “conclave.” Only 120 cardinals under the age of 80 can vote in the conclave. After prayer and Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica, they move to the Sistine Chapel where they take an oath of secrecy and then seal the doors.

Cardinals then vote by secret ballot. A candidate must receive two-thirds of the vote in order to be elected pope. If no one gets two-thirds of the vote, the cardinals keep voting until a decision is reached. Each time the cardinals fail to elect a



pope, the ballots are burned in a nearby stove using chemicals to produce black smoke, letting all those watching know that voting is not finished. Once a new

pope has been elected, the ballots are burned with chemicals producing white smoke, announcing the decision to the world. In this month’s video, we will learn more about how a pope is chosen.

Celebrating the Mystery

Even though all Catholics are part of a “common priesthood” by virtue of our Baptism, those who are ordained carry out this role in a special way.

The Sacrament of Holy Orders is a Sacrament at the Service of Communion. This means that the focus of someone who has received Holy Orders is the salvation of others.

Deacons are called to imitate Christ’s service to the poor and needy, to preach, and to celebrate baptisms and preside at funerals. Priests are called to serve the Church by teaching, celebrating the sacraments (except for Holy Orders), and being Christ’s representative in their parish or diocese. In addition to teaching and celebrating all sacraments, bishops also govern and guide the Church, and serve as a sign of unity. Let us pray for all those who are ordained, that they may carry out the Church’s mission.

Teaching Prayer

This newsletter encourages you to join the Holy Father in prayer by praying his monthly petition. But there are other ways you can join Pope Francis in prayer. You can pray for Pope Francis, and you can pray other prayers written by Pope Francis, on topics such as mercy and peace. To pray a prayer for Pope Francis, click [here>>](#). For prayers by Pope Francis, click [here>>](#).

How Do They Choose the Pope? Click Here>>



- ✚ How does the pope unite the Catholic Church?
- ✚ What is the pope’s mission, and how does this mission help the global Church?

- ✚ How can you respond to Pope Francis’ challenge to be a missionary disciple in your own community?