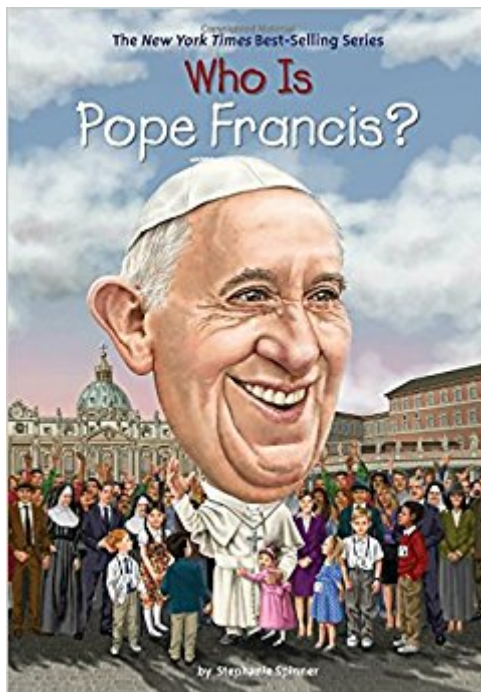


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# Who Is Pope Francis? (Who Was?)



## Synopsis

Follow the amazing journey of Pope Francis, whose warmth and humility have made him beloved around the world. Jorge Mario Bergoglio, aka Pope Francis, from Argentina, is the first Jesuit pope, the first from the Americas, and the first from the Southern Hemisphere. Since being elected pope he has shown a humbler, less formal approach to his office than his predecessors: a warm style that has been referred to as "no frills." His common touch and accessibility, as well as his insistence that the church  $\hat{A}$   $\hat{A}$  be more open and welcoming, has quickly endeared him not only to Roman Catholics but to millions of others around the world. This title in the New York Times best-selling series includes eighty illustrations that help bring Pope Francis's amazing story to life.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Stephanie Spinner is a full-time writer of children's books.

Who Is Pope Francis?  $\hat{A}$   $\hat{A}$   $\hat{A}$   $\hat{A}$  One day Jorge Mario Bergoglio was on his way to meet some friends. (Say: HOAR-hay MAH-ree-oh bear-GO-lyo). But instead he stopped suddenly and then turned around. He walked into his neighborhood church in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He told the priest that he wanted to devote his life to God. Jorge was only sixteen years old at the time. He

hadn't planned his words. They surprised him, yet they were completely heartfelt. From that moment on they shaped his life. Today Jorge Mario Bergoglio is known as Pope Francis, leader of the Roman Catholic Church. Ever since he became pope in 2013, Francis has worked to help the poor. Again and again, he delivers a message to everyone, not only Catholics, of hope and joy. Some say he will make important changes to the Catholic Church. This may happen or it may not. Either way, Pope Francis's faith still shapes every day of his life. And it inspires people everywhere.

### Chapter 1: A Close Family

Jorge Mario Bergoglio was born in South America in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1936. His parents, Mario and Regina, were part of the city's large Italian community. Like their neighbors, they were hardworking people who spoke Italian at home and went to church often. Argentina was a Catholic country, and this was important to the Bergoglios. It made their new home feel a little like their old one. Jorge was the oldest of five children. He was close to his parents and to his brothers and sisters. But the person who knew him best was his grandmother Rosa. Outspoken and warm, she took care of little Jorge during the day. She taught him about the Catholic saints, prayed with him, and took him to church. She also taught him to be open-minded. Her acceptance of people, whether they were Catholic or not, was something Jorge never forgot. Rosa also taught Jorge to love books. He was fascinated by the Italian novels she read to him, with their dramatic stories and many characters. And he looked forward to Saturday afternoons when the family gathered to listen to Italian opera on the radio. Jorge was an excellent student who worked hard in school. Yet as much as he enjoyed his studies, Jorge loved soccer more. He followed the sport closely with his friends and longed to be a great player. He settled for being a lifelong fan. Even as pope, he is still a member of the Buenos Aires soccer club of his boyhood. And when the team plays a game, he always knows the score. Jorge and his brothers and sisters went to Catholic schools. Every evening after their father, Mario, came home from work, he led the family in prayer. Their priest, Don Enrico Pozzoli, was a friend as well. He often came for dinner to eat Rosa's delicious homemade ravioli. The Bergoglio family lived in a city where many young men entered the priesthood. So Jorge's decision to become a priest was not unusual. It certainly did not surprise his grandmother Rosa, who knew him so well. Jorge's parents were another matter. They had expected him to continue his studies in chemistry. His mother had always hoped Jorge would become a doctor. With a medical degree, he would have a comfortable life. He would never have to worry about money the way she and Mario did. Being a priest also meant that Jorge would never marry or have children. Though Don Enrico did his best to change her mind, it was years before Regina could accept her son's decision. Yet Jorge was determined. In

1956, he enrolled at a seminary – a school for future priests – in Buenos Aires.

Great delivery - great book for our school library

Great. Thanks.

I was really disappointed in this book, as my son and I have enjoyed many books from this series of biographies. The Pope Francis book had numerous factual errors (e.g. he was ordained a priest before taking Jesuit vows). More seriously, it was written from a perspective of "rupture in the Church," both when it came to Vatican II and to Pope Francis's papacy. Of course this is a debatable perspective - whether one tends to emphasize rupture or continuity, and whether this is good or bad - but it's a bit of a complicated debate and here was simply presented as the Church was behind the times, but has finally advanced, or, in regard to the pope, prior popes loved living luxuriously but not Francis. The book also mentions complicated issues such as gay marriage and women's ordination and has, overall, a very Western-centric perspective of the Church. This is also indicated by the way it mentions once or twice that many, many Catholics have been leaving the Church. This is a point that might be worth noting for a kids' book about Catholicism's history in the U.S., but when it comes to the global Church (of which the Pope is the head), this doesn't reflect statistics. My least favorite line was probably when the book mentioned Pope Francis's reform of the Vatican Bank (another controversial topic) and stated that Pope Leo XIII had used it as his "piggy bank." There were definitely many oversimplifications of complicated topics and history in this book in a way that is not helpful (and could be harmful) to Catholic children not versed in history and theology enough to recognize the complexity. I got so tired of orally editing the material for my son that I basically skipped the last three chapters. From a charitable perspective, I can only hope these authors are not Catholic and that this excuses their ignorance in presenting the Church in this way. Overall, the book had enough cringeworthy moments to make me wonder if I'd be doing everyone a favor by NOT returning it to the public library. Too bad - a missed great opportunity for an informative (rather than biased) book on our current pope. I'd recommend instead Dear Pope Francis, where you can read letters from children to the Pope, with his own written responses.

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