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# Who Is Pope Francis?



by Stephanie Spinner



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by Stephanie Spinner  
illustrated by Dede Putra

Penguin Workshop  
An Imprint of Penguin Random House

For Richard Straub, who is saintly—SS

To the memory of my dad, who always supported  
me to pursue my dream—DP

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## Who Is Pope Francis?

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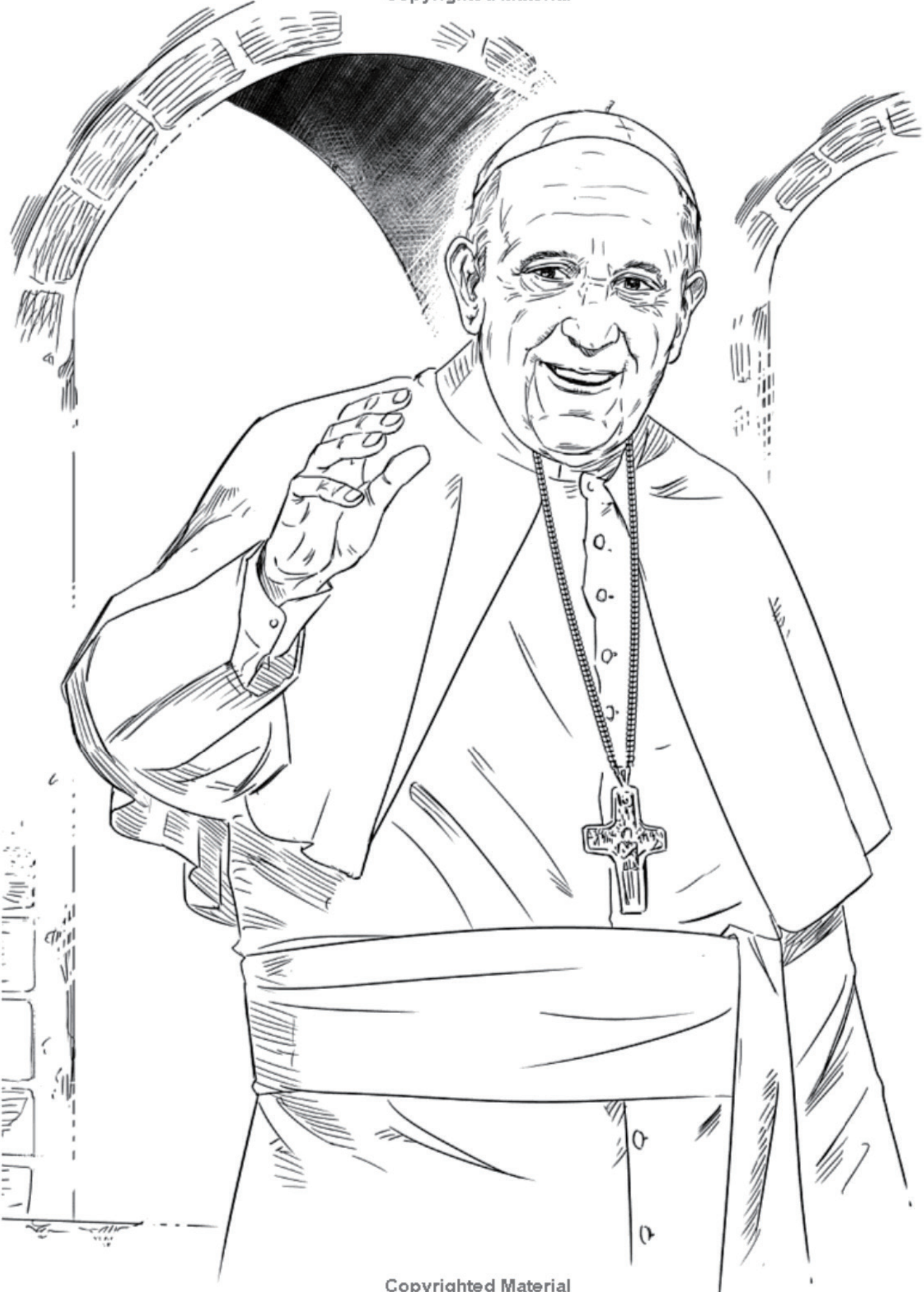
One day Jorge Mario Bergoglio was on his way to meet some friends. (Say: HOAR-hay MAH-ree-oh bear-GO-lyo). But instead he stopped suddenly and then turned around. He walked into his neighborhood church in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He told the priest that he wanted to devote his life to God. Jorge was 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.







## Who Is the Pope?

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The pope is the leader of the Catholic Church. The first pope was Peter, one of Jesus's twelve followers. Because of his faith, Peter was killed by the Roman emperor Nero in the year 67. Many more popes were killed during the days of the Roman Empire. But in 313, the emperor Constantine recognized Christianity as a religion and became a Christian himself. After that, the papacy (the job of being pope) became a lot safer.



Statue of St. Peter

By the Middle Ages, Catholicism had spread throughout Europe, and the Church was extremely powerful. Back then, being a pope was like being an emperor. Popes could call up armies and lead them. They could appoint kings. They could hire great

The inside of St. Peter's Basilica



**artists to build and decorate magnificent cathedrals. They could lead lives of great luxury.**

**Today the pope is still the final authority on all questions of morals and faith. Catholics are expected to obey him on matters of religion. Modern popes have worked with the United Nations and addressed the US Congress. They meet with presidents, queens, and kings. But they are not political leaders; they are spiritual leaders.**



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# CHAPTER 1

## A Close Family

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Jorge Mario Bergoglio was born in South America—in Buenos Aires, Argentina—in 1936.

