



JNANADEEPA

PJRS ISSN P-0972-3331

22/1 Jan-June 2018: 11-32

Cite as: Naluparayil, Jacob MCBS. (2018).
Making of Pope Francis. Jnanadeepa:
Pune Journal of Religious Studies, Jan
2018(22/1), 11–32.
<http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4067453>

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.4067453

Stable URL:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4067453>

Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies

Making of Pope Francis

Jacob Naluparayil MCBS

Smart Companion, Kochi

Abstract: Jorge Mario Bergoglio known as Pope Francis today is a unique gift to God. He stepped in at a moment when the Church was feeling very low with a dwindling self-esteem, fragile and defenseless, her moral authority challenged from within and out. He was chosen by God to guide his Church as a sacrament of God's mercy and forgiving love and to rejuvenate the Church to be powerful witness of God's kingdom. A brief life sketch of Pope Francis and an analysis of the events and experiences that molded and formed Pope Francis, a leader of unprecedented courage and qualities would show that this person is gifted to the Church by the Lord to renew the Church and re-awaken its mission to be the light and the salt of the earth. His self-awareness of his weaknesses and strengths, his complete trust in the providential care of the Lord and renewing power of the Spirit, his lived experience of Ignatian spirituality help him to guide the Church through dialogue, discernment and de-centralization. Pope Francis has brought in revolutionary change in Church, attitudes, approach and style in relating with those within the Church as well as outside the Church. In spite of considerable resistance, such attitudinal and stylistic changes have evoked greater confidence, hope and enthusiasm in the ordinary believers and a greater acceptance of Pope's spiritual and moral leadership by the entire world.

Keywords: Mercy, Dark Night of Soul, Dialogue, Discernment, De-centralisation

Introduction

Jorge Mario Bergoglio was elected the 266th Pope of the Catholic Church on 13 March 2013, following the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI. Bergoglio has opted to be called Pope Francis, in honour of Saint Francis of Assisi. He is the first Jesuit Pope, the first from the Southern Hemisphere, and the first non-European Pope since Pope Gregory III, 1272 years earlier.

Pope Francis is God's unique gift to the Church, in our times. In order to understand the 'surprise' that he is, we need to look back at the past four and a half years of his pontificate and the tremendous impact he has made on the various facets of the Church and on the world. What was the situation in the Church just before Jorge Bergoglio assumed the Chair of Peter? The scene was marred with growing unrest against the priests accused of pedophilia, the Curia in the shadow of blame regarding homosexuality, and to crown it all, the Vatileaks, which challenged the Church's moral power, and created a feeling of 'fence eating the crop.' Thus the Argentinean Pope stepped in at a moment when the Church was feeling very low with a dwindling self-esteem, fragile and defenseless, her moral authority challenged from within and out. However, within a short span of 4 ½ years he has succeeded to conquer the hearts of many, not only among the Catholics or Christians but globally, arousing assurances of hope in all categories of people. Pope Francis' language has been one of mercy and forgiveness, joy and welcome. As a result, the table has been turned over. As of now, the whole world keeps tuned to the moral voice of Pope Francis, especially at the wake of each fresh issue that has global implications. He is perceived as a leader who courageously yet compassionately and wisely analyses and delves into the moral dilemmas and humanitarian problems across the world.

The basic reason for such an amazing paradigm shift in the life of the Church has been due to the unique personality of Pope Francis and its unusual expressions, his extra-ordinary administrative talent and watchfulness. That is why this article is intent on understanding the making of this person called Pope Francis.

The article is comprised of two parts. The first considers in brief, the life sketch of Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the native of Buenos Aires, who later became Pope Francis. The second part is an analysis. We explore the events and experiences that molded and formed Pope Francis, a leader of unprecedented courage and qualities. Thus we concentrate on the ‘making of Pope Francis’, running through the significant turns and experiences in his life.

A Brief Life Sketch of Pope Francis

Jorge Mario Bergoglio was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on 17 December, 1936.¹ He was the eldest of the five children born to Mario José Bergoglio and Regina María Sívori. José was an Italian immigrant, employed as an accountant by the railways; his wife, a house-wife and a native of Buenos Aires belonged to a family of north Italian origin. In the sixth grade, Bergoglio attended Wilfrid Barón de los Santos Ángeles, a school run by the Salesians of Don Bosco, in Buenos Aires. He further attended the technical secondary school Escuela Nacional de Educación Técnica and graduated with a chemical technician’s diploma. He worked for a few years in the foods section at Hickethier-Bachmann Laboratory.² At the age of 21 he suffered from a life-threatening pneumonia and part of a lung was excised shortly afterwards, to do away with cysts.

1. Call to Priesthood

At first, Bergoglio entered the archdiocesan seminary, 'Immaculada Concepción,' in Villa Devoto, Buenos Aires City. Three years later, on 11 March 1958, he joined the Society of Jesus. At the conclusion of his novitiate on 12 March 1960, Bergoglio officially became a Jesuit, when he made the temporary religious profession of the vows.

During 1961-63, he studied Philosophy, graduating from the 'Colegio de San José' in San Miguel. From 1964 to 1965 he engaged a teacher of literature and psychology at The Immaculate Conception College in Santa Fé and in 1966 he taught the same subjects at the 'Colegio del Salvatore' in Buenos Aires. He studied Theology during the years 1967 to 70 graduating from the 'Colegio del San José'. He was ordained a priest on 13 December 1969, by the Archbishop Ramón José Castellano.

A Jesuit

Bergoglio completed his final stage of his spiritual formation as a Jesuit, the tertianship, at Alcalá de Henares, Spain during 1970-71, and took his perpetual vows in the Society of Jesus on 22 April 1973. Back in Argentina during 1971-72, he was appointed the novice master at 'Villa Barilari,' San Miguel and Professor at the Faculty of Theology of San Miguel.

He served as Provincial Superior of the Society of Jesus in Argentina from 31 July 1973 to 1979. After the completion of this term, in 1980, he was named the Rector of the Philosophical and Theological Faculty of 'San Miguel.' Before taking up this new appointment, he spent the first three months of 1980 in Dublin, Ireland, to learn English. He continued as Rector at 'San Miguel,' until 1986.³

He also spent few months at the Sankt Georgen Graduate School of Philosophy and Theology in Frankfurt, Germany,

considering possible dissertation topics. In Germany he saw the painting of 'Mary Untier of Knots' in Augsburg and brought a copy of the painting to Argentina where it has become a popular Marian devotion. After three months of intense study in Germany, Bergoglio opted to return to Argentina, where he was assigned to teach at the seminary in Buenos Aires. In 1990, he was transferred to the Jesuit house in Cordova, 500 miles from Buenos Aires. In many timelines of Pope Francis' life, the years of 1990-1992 remain an unexplained gap.⁴

Bergoglio as a Bishop

Cardinal Antonio Quarracino, Archbishop of Buenos Aires, who recognized his real mettle, wanted him to be his close collaborator.⁵ Thus on 20 May 1992, Bergoglio was named the auxiliary bishop of Buenos Aires. He chose his Episcopal motto as 'Miserando atque eligendo.' It has been drawn from the homily of Venerable Bede on Matthew 9:9 -13: "...he saw him through the eyes of mercy and chose him."

On 3 June 1997, Bergoglio was further appointed Coadjutor Archbishop of Buenos Aires, with the right of automatic succession. In February 1998, he became the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, succeeding Antonio Quarracino. One of Bergoglio's major initiatives as Archbishop was to increase the Church's presence in the slums of Buenos Aires. Under his leadership, the number of priests assigned to work in the slums doubled. On 6 November 1998, he was named ordinary for the Eastern Catholics in Argentina who lacked a prelate of their own rite.

Cardinal Bergoglio and Pope Francis

Three years later, in February 2001, he was elevated as cardinal by Pope John Paul II. On 8 November 2005, Bergoglio was elected president of the Argentine Episcopal Conference

for a three-year term (2005-08). He was reelected to another three-year term on 11 November 2008. While head of the Argentine Catholic Bishops' Conference, Bergoglio issued a collective apology for his Church's failure to protect the people from the *Junta* during the Dirty War. When he turned 75, in December 2011, Archbishop Bergoglio, as required by Canon Law, submitted his resignation to Pope Benedict XVI. But Divine Providence designed that Bergoglio be elected to the Chair of St. Peter succeeding Benedict XVI.

2. Making of Pope Francis

What exactly are the unique personality traits of Bergoglio, who is engaged to bring about such tangible transformation in the Church and the world scenario? How did the little Jorge transform into today's world acclaimed spiritual leader, Pope Francis? How can one decipher his journey of formation and transformation? One can guess beyond doubt that it was not just his life experiences, but more, his specific responses to them that shaped his life and personality. The modest attempt of this article is to decipher the key experiences and persons who contributed to the nurture of his unique personality.

I am a Sinner

Fr. Antonio Spadaro, in his first interview with Pope Francis on 19 Aug. 2013, put an abrupt question to Pope Francis, "Who is Jorge Mario Bergoglio?"⁶ The reply came after a reflective silence: "I do not know what might be the most fitting description.... I am a sinner. This is the most accurate definition. It is not a figure of speech, a literary genre. I am a sinner...I am a sinner whom the Lord has looked upon."⁷

The Pope further said, "Yes, perhaps I can say that I am a bit astute, that I can adapt to circumstances, but it is also true that I am a bit naïve. Yes, but the best summary, the one that

comes more from the inside and I feel most true is this is me, a sinner on whom the Lord has turned his gaze.”⁸

When asked about his unique experience of God’s mercy he said: “I don’t have any particular memories of mercy as a young child. But I do as a young man.”⁹ It was on September 21, 1953. He was on his way to meet his girlfriend together with the Catholic Action and school friends to celebrate National Student’s Day. As he was walking past the Basilica of St. Joseph, he felt an urge to go inside and he went in. Explaining this to Father Isasmendi, he said: “I looked, it was dark, it was a morning, may be 9.00 a.m. and I saw a priest walking, I don’t know him, he wasn’t one of the parish clergy. And he sits down in one of the confessionals... I don’t quite know what happened next, I felt like someone grabbed me from inside and took me to the confessional. Obviously I told him my things, I confessed... but I don’t know what happened... Right there I knew I had to be a priest; I was totally certain. Instead of going out with the others I went back home because I was overwhelmed.”¹⁰

When Bergoglio was appointed bishop, he placed mercy of God at the heart of his motto. He explains it: “I always felt my motto, *Miserando atque Eligendo* [Having Mercy and Choosing Him], was very true for me.” The motto is taken from the Homilies of Bede the Venerable, who writes in his comments on the Gospel story of the calling of Matthew: ‘Jesus saw a publican, and since he looked at him with feelings of love and chose him, he said to him, ‘Follow me.’” The Pope adds: “I think it is impossible to translate the Latin gerund ‘miserando’ both in Italian and Spanish. I like to translate it with another gerund that does not exist: ‘misericordiando’ [‘mercy-ing’].”¹¹

His ministry as a bishop has always been one of constant remembrance and reflection of the great mercy of God he experienced in his life. He discloses some of his habits of

recollecting God's mercy in his life: "...but when I had to come to Rome, I always stayed in (the neighborhood of) Via della Scrofa. From there, I often visited the Church of St. Louis of France, and I went there to contemplate the painting of 'The Calling of St. Matthew' by Caravaggio... That finger of Jesus, pointing at Matthew... that's me. I feel like him... like Matthew. It is the gesture of Matthew that strikes me: he holds on to his money as if to say, 'No, not me! No, this money is mine.' Here, this is me, a sinner on whom the Lord has turned his gaze. And this is what I said when they asked me if I would accept my election as pontiff." Then the Pope whispers in Latin: "I am a sinner, but I trust in the infinite mercy and patience of our Lord Jesus Christ, and I accept in a spirit of penance."¹²

We can guess for sure why the words and deeds of Pope Francis are mercy-laden. He is a man who always keeps alive his personal history of God's mercy on him. That is why he is capable of relating with merciful words and actions to every person who comes before him. That is why he could, without a moment's hesitation, draw closer to Vinicio Riva from Vicenza, who had a deformed and frightening face due to Neurofibromatosis, and embrace him warmly. As Pope he took the initiative to declare a special year of mercy and led it with his own examples of mercy to all categories of needy and distressed people. Yes, the intimate experience of divine mercy in his own life is the reason why he could enthrone mercy in the heart of Christian life, of ecclesial life.

Dark Night of the Soul

When Pope Francis was the Cardinal of Buenos Aires, a political leader who was forced to resign, came to visit him. He was seeking strength and comfort from the Cardinal to be able to face his loneliness and defeat. After a significant silence Bergoglio spoke to him: "Manuel, you've got to live

your exile. I did. And afterward you'll be back. And when you do come back you will be more merciful, kinder, and you're going to want to serve your people more."¹³

While he gave this advice to this man, his mind must have been ruminating on his own experiences at Cordoba, during 1990-92. This was just before his becoming the Auxiliary bishop of Buenos Aires. He had completed his term as the Provincial of Argentinean Jesuit Province and had also served as rector for six years. He was just back from Germany after an aborted thesis plan. Many depict this period as the "dark night of his soul". We hardly know much about this period of his life in Cordoba.¹⁴ After Bergoglio became the Pope, CNN Editor Daniel Burke undertook a journey to the Jesuit residence in Cordoba to meet and converse with the confreres of Bergoglio during the period of his life in 'darkness.'¹⁵

One of them, Brother Louis Rausch had this to say: "Bergoglio spent many hours in solitude. He understood that he had to remain silent and obedient because he was being punished... When he arrived in room no. 5 in Cordoba, Bergoglio was a priest without a portfolio... His official duty was to hear confessions, listening in his room for the buzz of the doorbell to tell him that some guilt-wracked soul wanted to unburden itself of sin... Occasionally, Bergoglio would say Mass, filling in for the head priest of the Iglesia de la Compania."¹⁶

Ricardo Spinacci was the housekeeper at the residencia, when Bergoglio lived there. Now he has reached his good old age. He describes his old friend as a creature of habit. "He began each day with the same chore, washing one of his two pairs of socks, and ate the same meal for lunch every day - vegetables and chicken. In the early morning hours, he prayed in the Jesuits' domestic chapel, alone with the bones of the Jesuit saints. He knew he was being punished. He prayed like a saint."¹⁷

Juan Carlos Scannone, an elderly Jesuit who has known Bergoglio since the 1950s said that casting him out to Cordoba was clearly a punishment and that he was truly suffering. “I saw it in his face. I could see he was going through a spiritual purification, a dark night.”¹⁸

Javier Camara, a Catholic journalist who spoke to Bergoglio about this period said that Bergoglio was well aware of the ‘darkness’ of this period. He told Camara: “It was a time of purification. In darkness one can’t see things clearly. So I prayed much, read a lot, wrote even more and lived my life. What I did in Cordoba had more to do with my inner life.”¹⁹

Anyone can easily grasp the significance of this ‘dark period’ in the formation of the future Pope. Bergoglio was a person who handled the unpleasant experiences and the oppositions in his life with an attitude of prayerful and humble dependence on God. The antagonism towards him was the strongest in the Argentinean Jesuit Province, just after his term as the Provincial (1973-78) and rector (1980-86). His exile in Cordoba marked the climax of such opposition (1990-92). The state of his inner self in those ‘dark’ days had been transcribed in his writings of the time, which definitely held a mirror to his mind. One can conclude that the ‘failures’ and pains of his yonder days did have a significant role in his formation as today’s Pope Francis.

Provincial and the Dirty War

At the backdrop of this dark period one could see is the time he was the Provincial of the Argentinean Jesuit Province. He was then a young Jesuit of 36. At that time Argentina was under the Military Regime of Jose Rafael Videla. Human rights violations and atrocities were rampant under the Videla regime. Anyone who dissented would disappear and about 30,000 people were reported missing during this period. Leftist

Guerilla movements like the Montoneros (MPM) and the Marxist People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) fought against the Military rule.²⁰ Their policy was one of 'tit for tat' - fight violence with violence; fighting state terrorism with organized terrorism. These movements naturally had deep roots among the poor who were suffering in fear and distress.²¹

After the Vatican II with its thrust on renewal and openness to the world, Liberation Theology found a fertile soil in Argentina. These trends created at least two categories of people within the Church there. While one group silently supported the government, ignoring the pathetic state of the people, the other resorted to violence in order to free the people from the Army outrages.

The Jesuits at large stood for the cause of the people. Bergoglio kept a low profile, neither praising nor condoning the Military rule. As Provincial, his prime aim was to protect the priests under his care.²² But the activities of two Jesuits in particular made his ministry very difficult. Inspired by the Liberation Theology, Franz Jalics and Orlando Yorio organized a 'base community' in a Buenos Aires barrio. Bergoglio allowed the priests to engage but warned them to be wary of the military.²³ Eventually as the situation turned risky for their life, they were asked to choose either the *barrio* or the Society of Jesus.²⁴ They preferred to choose the *barrio*. A few days later, the military arrested both of them and took them away. After two months they were left in a farmland, drugged and half naked.²⁵

Bergoglio had to face a lot of criticism on account of the arrest and torture of these young priests. Yorio, for years, blamed the Provincial for their kidnapping, accusing him of leaving them unprotected, and even of pointing them out to the military. Instead, Jalics said he would not blame Bergoglio for his capture.²⁶

Although this was a major issue during Bergolio's provincialship, what led him to Cordoba may not have only been this. The Jesuits in Buenos Aires had serious differences of opinion regarding his style of functioning and his priorities.²⁷ He has spoken about his style of performance at this time and the shortcomings he perceived in himself: "In my experience as a superior in the Society, to be honest, I have not always done the necessary consultation. And this was not a good thing. My style of government as a Jesuit at the beginning had many faults. That was a difficult time for the Society: an entire generation of Jesuits had disappeared. Because of this I found myself provincial when I was still very young. I was only 36 years old. That was crazy. I had to deal with difficult situations, and I made my decisions abruptly and by myself. Yes, but I must add one thing: when I entrust something to someone, I totally trust that person... But despite this, eventually people get tired of authoritarianism."²⁸

One could not be more candid in acknowledging one's drawbacks as when he said, "My authoritarian and quick manner of making decisions led me to have serious problems and to be accused of being ultraconservative. I lived a time of great interior crisis when I was in Cordoba. It was my authoritarian way of making decisions that created problems."²⁹ Obviously, young Bergoglio, who as Provincial led the Argentinean Jesuits in a very critical historical period, learned some extremely hard lessons for life, from his own sufferings. It brought about solid changes in his life and behaviour. He said, "History and time has taught me many lessons. The Lord allowed me to grow in my administrative skills through my own sins and liabilities."³⁰ One can see how Bergoglio took life's lessons wisely and learnt from his mistakes with openness and humility - specific characteristics we see in him now as he goes through the many tensions of being a Pope in difficult times.

After the ‘dark night’ of Cordoba, we next see Bergoglio as the Auxiliary bishop of Buenos Aires. Later he was made the Archbishop. We can easily observe a U-turn in the style of his functioning in the new service. He was making a conscious effort to make decision-making more participative. He observes, “As Archbishop of Buenos Aires, I had a meeting with the six auxiliary bishops every two weeks, and several times a year with the council of priests. They asked questions and we opened the floor for discussion. This greatly helped me to make the best decisions.”³¹

Dialogue, Discernment, Decentralisation

It was the person of Bergoglio who had been fashioned in the crucible of time, turmoil and grace, who stood as Pope Francis in the balcony of the St. Peter’s Basilica, on 13 March, 2013, waving at the huge crowd gathered down square. After five days of his election as the Supreme Pontiff, he spoke to Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez about the formation of a consultative body to assist him in the new governance. Thus was formed a consultative body with eight cardinals. The number rose to nine when later Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Secretary of State, was brought in. The first sitting of the consultants was in October 2013. Ever since, Francis has convened the body of consultants 20 times, the last being on 6-8 June, 2017.

Pope Francis is very committed to this consultative body and faithfully follows up every detail. His perception about the advisory group is significant: “The consultation group of eight cardinals, this ‘outsider’ advisory group, is not only my decision, but it is the result of the will of the cardinals, as it was expressed in the general congregations before the conclave. And I want to see that this is a real, not ceremonial consultation.”³² The shift from his old authoritarian style to the new consultative style is obvious. This consultative and

decentralized style is yielding good results in his ministry as Pope.

In fact, decentralization of power in the Church is a dream in his mind, and is often explicated in his discourses about a participatory Church. He writes: “Like the ancient patriarchal Churches, Episcopal conferences are in a position ‘to contribute in many and fruitful ways to the concrete realization of the collegial spirit’. Yet this desire has not been fully realized, since a juridical status of Episcopal conferences which would see them as subjects of specific attributions, including genuine doctrinal authority, has not yet been sufficiently elaborated. Excessive centralization, rather than proving helpful, complicates the Church’s life and her missionary outreach.”³³

He has very clear vision about the National/Regional bishops’ conferences and their specific role in the life of the Church. He specifies the orientation regarding the authority and mission of these Conferences as follows: “I would make it clear that not all discussions of doctrinal, moral or pastoral issues need to be settled by interventions of the magisterium. Unity of teaching and practice is certainly necessary in the Church, but this does not preclude various ways of interpreting some aspects of that teaching or drawing certain consequences from it... Each country or region, moreover, can seek solutions better suited to its culture and sensitive to its traditions and local needs.”³⁴

To peak it all, one can see that the utmost influence and motivation in his multifarious interventions, probably, is the Ignatian Spirituality. He seems to be rooted in it. To the question “Which aspect of Ignatian Spirituality does help you the most in the papal mission?” he responds with hardly any hesitation: “Discernment... It is one of the things that worked inside St. Ignatius. For him it is an instrument of struggle in order to know the Lord and follow him more closely.”³⁵

Pope Francis explains: “This discernment takes time. For example, many think that changes and reforms can take place in a short time. I believe that we always need time to lay the foundations for real, effective change. And this is the time of discernment... Discernment is always done in the presence of the Lord, looking at the signs, listening to the things that happen, the feeling of the people, especially the poor... Discernment in the Lord guides me in my way of governing.”³⁶

The Ignatian spirituality did play a definite role in the formation of this great spiritual leader. Not only during the period of 34 years from 1958 to 1992, but also, throughout his life and ministry, it was Jesuit formation and the spirituality of St. Ignatius, their Founder, that stood by him through thick and thin.³⁷

Grandmother, Parents

On the occasion of the homily on a Palm Sunday, Francis drifted from the pre-prepared text and switched over to his spontaneous style: “My grandmother used to tell us children, ‘A funeral shroud has no pockets!’ As a child, I did not fully grasp the meaning of what she said. When I grew up I understood that a dead body does not need to carry a pocket full of things. Its journey is differently destined”.³⁸ This is not the only occasion when Francis made references to his grandmother Rosa. It is obvious that she has had the greatest influence on young Bergoglio. Responding to a question, he said “...I feel a special devotion to my grandmother for all that she gave me in the first years of my life.”³⁹

Bergoglio recalled: “My strongest childhood memory is that of the life shared between my parents’ house and my grandparents’ house. The first part of my childhood, from the age of one, I spent with my grandmother.” Rosa began taking

care of Jorge after his brother Oscar was born, collecting him each morning and dropping him back in the afternoon.⁴⁰

Again, it was his grandmother Rosa, who introduced him to Jesus and taught him to pray. She was a wonderful transmitter of faith. “On Good Friday she took her grandchildren to see the crucified Christ and told them how he was dead but would rise on Sunday.”⁴¹ When she was widowed and frail, Rosa was looked after by the Italian nuns in San Miguel. As she lay dying, Jorge kept vigil by her bed, holding her body until life left it. Sister Catalina, one of the sisters, recalls: “He told us: ‘At this moment my grandmother is at the most important point of her existence. She is being judged by God... A few minutes later, he got up and left, as serene as ever.’”⁴²

It was from her mother that Jorge learned a simple and thrifty life style. María Elena, sister of Bergoglio recalled: “We were poor, but with dignity... Mama succeeded in salvaging some article of clothing for us, even from our father’s things: a ripped shirt or fraying pants got repaired and sewn up, became ours. May be the extreme frugality of my brother and mine comes from this.”⁴³

When Rubin and Ambrogetti asked about his culinary skills, Jorge said: “My mother became paralyzed after giving birth to her fifth child, although she recovered over time. But during that period, when we got home from school we’d find her seated, peeling potatoes, with all the other ingredients laid out. Then she’d tell us how to mix and cook them, because we didn’t have any clue. ‘Now put this in the pot and that in the pan...’ she’d explain. That’s how we learned to cook.”⁴⁴

Bergoglio recalls with great gratitude the positive influence his father had in his life: “I’m so grateful to my father for making me work. The work I did was one of the best things I’ve done in my life. In particular, in the laboratory I got to see the good and bad of all human endeavour.”⁴⁵ It was when he

finished elementary school, barely thirteen years old, his father asked him to take up a part-time job. Thus he started working in a hosiery factory, where his father worked for. For the first two years, he worked as a cleaner, and then he was shifted to administrative work. When he attended a technical school, he managed to find work in a laboratory, where he would work from 7a.m. to 1p.m. Thereafter he attended classes until 8 p.m.⁴⁶

One of the three key women in his childhood was Sister Dolores Tortolo, a Mercy nun. She was the one who prepared him for his First Holy Communion at the age of eight. Later, when he was seriously sick as a young seminarian, she was there at his sick bed as a source of strength. As a priest and later archbishop, he used to visit her in the convent. When she died in 2006, he spent the whole night in prayer next to her body in the convent chapel.⁴⁷

The childhood experiences and the persons whom he associated with in his younger years of life had tremendous influence in molding and forming Jorge Bergoglio: especially his grandmother Rosa, his parents and Sister Dolores.

3. Conclusion

Some say that the changes in the Church during the past four and a half years are more than what happened in last four centuries. While there has been absolutely no change in the dogmatic teachings of the Church, there has been a revolutionary change in her attitudes, approach and style. In spite of considerable resistance, such attitudinal and stylistic changes have evoked greater confidence, hope and enthusiasm in the ordinary believers. This shift has come about due to Pope Francis, his approach to the world, humanity and the environment.

As for everyone else, Bergoglio's life in the family and his childhood experiences definitely had a major share in his formation as a person. However, what made him the magnetic, charismatic, humble and trusting person he is today is his incomparable capacity to be open to his own experiences, to accept his failures and learn new lessons from them all. He was willing to 'walk humbly before his God' and to make desirable changes in his life, learning from the hard lessons, life taught him. Thus we have today Pope Francis, whose unparalleled brilliance and truth-based humility take him closer to humanity.

Notes

- 1 For an official life sketch of Pope Francis, see <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/biography/documents/papa-francesco-biografia-bergoglio.html>
- 2 For details, see Austen Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer. Francis and the Making of a Radical Pope*, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 2014, 33.
- 3 For a brief description on that period, see Paul Vallely, *Pope Francis: Untying the Knots*, Bloomsbury, 2013, last part of chapter 3. Also Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 205-209.
- 4 <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/biography/documents/papa-francesco-biografia-bergoglio.html>
- 5 The interview of Father Antonio Spadaro S.J., the editor of the Jesuit Journal *Civiltà Cattolica*, published under the title, "A Big Heart Open to God." It was a very significant and unprecedented papal interview and was simultaneously published in 15 Jesuit journals across the world. Cf. Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 167-168. For the full text of the interview, see <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2013/09/30/big-heart-open-god-interview-pope-francis>.
- 6 <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2013/09/30/big-heart-open-god-interview-pope-francis>
- 7 <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2013/09/30/big-heart-open-god-interview-pope-francis>. See also Sergio Rubin - Francesca Ambrogetti, *Pope Francis: Conversations with Jorge Bergoglio: His Life in His Own Words*, Hodder & Stoughton, 2013, in Chapter 4.

- 8 Pope Francis, *The Name of God is Mercy*, Random House, New York, 2016, 11.
- 9 Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 35-36. <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2013/09/30/big-heart-open-god-interview-pope-francis>.
- 10 <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2013/09/30/big-heart-open-god-interview-pope-francis>. Pope Francis, *The Name of God is Mercy*, 11-12.
- 11 <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2013/09/30/big-heart-open-god-interview-pope-francis>. Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 207.
- 12 Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 207.
- 13 For a brief description on that period, see Valley, *Pope Francis: Untying the Knots*, final part of chapter 3.
- 14 Daniel Burke, *The Pope's Dark Night of the Soul*, See <http://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2015/09/specials/pope-dark-night-of-the-soul/>
- 15 <http://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2015/09/specials/pope-dark-night-of-the-soul/>
- 16 <http://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2015/09/specials/pope-dark-night-of-the-soul/>
- 17 <http://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2015/09/specials/pope-dark-night-of-the-soul/>; For a brief presentation of his life in Cordoba, see Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 205-209.
- 18 <http://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2015/09/specials/pope-dark-night-of-the-soul/>
- 19 Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 98.
- 20 The political scenario of Argentina was more complex at that time. To have a summary description on that, see Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 96-99.
- 21 In his conversations with Rubin and Ambrogetti, Jorge Bergoglio opens his heart on this issue. See Rubin-Ambrogetti, *Pope Francis: Conversations*, Chapter 14.
- 22 On this see, Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 129-131, 151-164.
- 23 When asked on this, Jorge Bergoglio responds: "To answer that I must start by saying that they were planning to set up a religious

congregation and they gave the first draft of the Rules to Monsignors Eduardo Pironio, Vicente Zazpe, and Mario José Serra. I still have the copy they gave me. The superior general of the Jesuits, who then was Father Pedro Arrupe, told them they had to choose between the community they were living in and the Company of Jesus, and ordered them to move to a different community. As they persisted in their project and the group broke up, they were asked to leave the Company. It was a long internal process that lasted more than a year. It was not a hasty decision of mine. When Yorio's resignation was accepted, along with that of Father Luis Dourrón, who was working with them. Jalics's couldn't be accepted, as he had taken the solemn vow; only the Pope could accede to the request - it was March 1976, the nineteenth, to be exact, that is five days before the government of Isabel Perón was overthrown. In view of the rumors of an imminent coup d'état, I told them to be very careful. I remember I offered them the chance to come and live in the Company's provincial house, in the interests of their safety." See Rubin-Ambrogetti, *Pope Francis: Conversations*, Chapter 14.

- 24 Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 161.
- 25 Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 164. To read the version of Pope Francis on this incident, see Rubin-Ambrogetti, *Pope Francis: Conversations*, Chapter 14.
- 26 To read more about the rift originated in the Jesuit province around the personality of Bergoglio, see Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 106-164. Valley, *Pope Francis: Untying the Knots*, in Chapter 3: "The tension which was to grow between what developed into Bergogliano and anti-Bergogliano factions divided the province in two. There were two main areas of conflict. One was religious, the other political."
- 27 <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2013/09/30/big-heart-open-god-interview-pope-francis>
- 28 <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2013/09/30/big-heart-open-god-interview-pope-francis>.
- 29 <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2013/09/30/big-heart-open-god-interview-pope-francis>.
- 30 <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2013/09/30/big-heart-open-god-interview-pope-francis>.

- 31 <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2013/09/30/big-heart-open-god-interview-pope-francis>.
- 32 Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)*. Apostolic Exhortation, 2013, 32.
- 33 Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love)*. Apostolic Exhortation, 2016, 3.
- 34 <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2013/09/30/big-heart-open-god-interview-pope-francis>. See also, Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 170. Explaining ‘discernment,’ Pope Francis put it as “the Jesuit means of distinguishing good and bad spirits as the ‘instrument of struggle in order to know the Lord and follow him more closely.’ Discernment, he said, ‘guides me in my way of governing.’”
- 35 <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2013/09/30/big-heart-open-god-interview-pope-francis>
- 36 To read more on this, see Alejandro Bermúdez, *Pope Francis: Our Brother, Our Friend. Personal Reflections about the Man who Became Pope*, Igantius, 2013.
- 37 <http://www.catholicworldreport.com/2013/03/24/the-palm-sunday-homily-of-pope-francis/>
- 38 Rubin - Ambrogetti, *Pope Francis: Conversations*, in Chapter 1.
- 39 Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 13. Rubin- Ambrogetti, *Pope Francis: Conversations*, in Chapter 1.
- 40 Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 14.
- 41 Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 16.
- 42 Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 17.
- 43 Rubin- Ambrogetti, *Pope Francis: Conversations*, in Chapter 1. Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 25.
- 44 Rubin- Ambrogetti, *Pope Francis: Conversations*, Chapter 2.
- 45 Rubin- Ambrogetti, *Pope Francis: Conversations*, Chapter 2. See also, Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 33.
- 46 Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 12.
- 47 Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer*, 35-36 See also <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2013/09/30/big-heart-open-god-interview-pope-francis>.

Article received: Feb 7, 2017
Article approved: Sept 12, 2017
No of words: 6282