

“Pope Francis: A Man of His Word”

By Helen Lutz

Our family always attended 11 o'clock Mass on Sunday mornings, sitting in the front row of St. Louis Church in Kansas City. We always dressed up and all the ladies wore hats. My mother explained that the Catholic Church was the most powerful organization in the entire world. That anyone could go to church on any day and hear the same Mass in the same language – Latin. Latin was a required course for my mom when she attended Catholic high school. I really wanted to be an altar boy even though they had to study Latin in order to qualify; but girls weren't allowed on the altar (some exceptions were made for the nuns who were setting up for Mass).



When in Catholic high school Pope John the XXIII called Vatican II and the Catholic Church changed dramatically. The altar was turned to face the people, Mass was said in the prevailing language of the area and we added bands to the music. My mother was aghast and never the same. I embraced a lot of the change, especially since the Latin language requirement was dropped and I could study French – *Je ne parle pas francias* – much.

A new documentary, currently in theaters “Pope Francis: A Man of His Word”, examines the life of Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina, more popularly known as Pope Francis. Director Wim Wenders follows the pope as he shows that he is a simple man of the people ministering to the sick, imprisoned and desperate. He's turned his back on the luxurious life style of the Vatican and encourages the current clergy to do likewise (have you seen the bishop's place in Corpus?). He travels in an unassuming used car where he is accessible to the people. Pope Francis is greeted warmly by people everywhere, but also has levied some sharp words when speaking at the United Nations or to the Roman Curia criticizing an “economy of exclusion and inequality.” His Papal Encyclical warns against environmental waste and destruction.

Wenders takes the audience along with Pope Francis as we watch him in action, caring for his flock and addressing some tough questions such as gays within the Catholic Church and slightly touching on the sexual abuse plaguing the church. The focus of the film remains positive for the most part showing the Pope to be a caring and humble rock star but preaching mainly to the choir, in that the folks who will see this film already understand him and try to live as he suggests.

Having grown up Catholic I found “Pope Francis: A Man of His Word” to be interesting but not enlightening. My background in the study of Political Science places Pope Francis right in the middle of socialism with leanings toward communism as he scolds the rich and wealthy for hoarding the world's wealth and resources. My history with the church spans several decades of change. In recent revisions to the Mass we pray for ‘men of good will’; a change to the approved prayer verbiage. I argued this point with my older sister, a devout Catholic, who strongly disagreed with me until we attended Mass together and I pointed it out. She was flabbergasted that she hadn't noticed it. I believe that we should pray for ‘men of good will’ and even harder for those men who are not of good will and wish others harm. Pope Francis loves the people and the movie shows that the people love him; however, we may be less effective as a church in reaching out to those who take issue with the words of Jesus that you love God with your whole heart and that you love your neighbor as yourself. Perhaps we should spend more time praying for ‘men of ill will.’” On a scale of one to four Hart Beats I give “Pope Francis: A Man of His Word” TWO STARS. It's nice, but sugar-coated; could have been so much more.