

Advance praise for *The Spirit of Saint Francis*

Francis our pope is revealing through his daily life what Jesus announced and the way he lived. This little book inspired by Francis of Assisi who is a model for our pope will help many to rediscover the gospel message for today.

—Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche International

Since his election in March 2013, many, many people have been inspired by Pope Francis's profound spirituality and ability to articulate the deep love that God has for all people. Editor Alicia von Stamwitz has done a superb job in arranging the messages of Pope Francis in a manner that makes this book easy to use as a resource for prayer and reflection. This book will be treasured in the years to come as a remembrance of the first year of Pope Francis's papacy and the transformation his deep understanding of the Gospel is bringing to the people of God.

—Ron Rolheiser, O.M.I., author, speaker, and president of the Oblate School of Theology

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Pope Francis is always so quotable that the challenge in a collection such as this is making smart choices. Fortunately, Alicia von Stamwitz is a (nearly) infallible guide!

—John L. Allen Jr., associate editor, *Crux* and *Boston Globe*

This is neither a pretentious book, nor a haughty one. Instead, it is a rich, quiet, assured book whose pages speak to, and about, the cumulative hope of the two millennia since Christ was here among us. As a body of selected writings and excerpts, it is both more deeply consoling and more religiously invigorating than I can even begin to say (and this from a life-long Protestant, no less) but this much I do know and can say: the Church Universal has arrived at a new and holier time. Thanks be to God.

—Phyllis Tickle, compiler, *The Divine Hours*

In his commitment to the poor, to peace, and to creation care Pope Francis is changing the status quo; challenging institutions of wealth and power, while inspiring the vulnerable and faithful around the world. The way Francis lives his life reminds us of Christ, and his message is reaching people of all religions and none. In *The Spirit of Saint Francis: Inspiring Words from Pope Francis*, Alicia von Stamwitz has compiled the pope's most powerful and

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uplifting words on a wide variety of critical topics for the health and future of God's children. I recommend this book to anyone looking for inspiration, vision, and spiritual guidance. These words of Pope Francis demonstrate why he is becoming such a life-changing, church-changing, and world changing leader—and a delightfully surprising gift from God.

—Jim Wallis, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The UnCommon Good* and president of Sojourners

Young people watch us: Do our actions match our words? In Pope Francis they—and we—find a person whose words about Jesus are illustrated by his actions on behalf of the young, the marginalized, the poor, and the oppressed. Pope Francis provides both insight and application on love, mercy, forgiveness, humility, joy, compassion. His words have power because his life is a powerful example of discipleship. He challenged the young Church at World Youth Day 2013 to go make a mess in the streets...and I would add, take this book along with you! It serves as a wonderful guide to encountering Jesus.

— Bob McCarty, executive director,
National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry

What a wonderful collection of reflections by Pope Francis! In such a short period of time, this relatively unknown shepherd who came from the ends of the earth has found a home in the minds and hearts of millions of people of good will around the world. He has managed to transmit to us the joy of the Gospel through simple words and profound gestures that have moved us deeply. Each Angelus address, daily homily, General Audience catechesis and major talk of Pope Francis contains gems of spirituality, pearls of Catholic doctrine and messages of hope for everyone. This little book offers a window onto Francis's Petrine Ministry and a doorway into his heart and mind.

—Fr. Thomas Rosica, C.S.B., CEO, Salt and Light
Catholic Media Foundation, English Language
Assistant to the Holy See Press Office

THE SPIRIT OF

Saint
Francis

~ ~ ~

INSPIRING WORDS
FROM

Pope
Francis

~ ~ ~

POPE FRANCIS

EDITED BY ALICIA VON STAMWITZ



Franciscan
MEDIA
Cincinnati, Ohio

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INTRODUCTION

Some people want to know why I wished to be called Francis. For me, Francis of Assisi is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation.

—POPE FRANCIS, MARCH 16, 2013

By taking the name of one of the most venerated figures in Christendom, Pope Francis set a high bar for his papacy. The legacy of Francis of Assisi (1182–1226) is epic, a breathtaking testament to divine love and the human capacity for compassion, joy, and peace. God opened Francis’s eyes to the reality of the spiritual world, and in response Francis divested himself of every personal and social encumbrance. Rejoicing in hope, burning with love, Francis set out to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. His words, together with the witness of his life, sparked thousands of conversions, long-overdue reforms in the Church, and a spiritual movement that continues to this day.

Since his election in March 2013, the pope’s Franciscan “accent” has become increasingly evident. His optimism,

creativity, courage, and playful sense of humor are reminiscent of the beloved saint. He too engages listeners with warmth and wit, embodying an irresistible, modern spirituality. The chapters of this book outline a manner of living that is at once faithful to the teachings of Jesus and illuminated by the spirit of “the poor little man” from Assisi. Moreover, they reveal the genius of a global leader whose message transcends religious boundaries. What, exactly, is Pope Francis’s message? In a sentence, his message is: “God is love” (1 John 4:8). Love is the energy at the heart of the universe. Love created the world, love sustains the world, and love unites the world. In God’s great heart, the heart that beats at the center of the universe, we are all connected, we are all one. More personally, the hope that Pope Francis articulates every day is that you will encounter the tender and transforming love of Jesus Christ.

A word about the genesis and development of this book. The quotations presented in these pages have been selected and arranged with care. They are taken directly from the official Vatican texts of Pope Francis’s homilies, speeches, tweets, audiences, prayers, daily meditations, and writings. Fr. Giuseppe Costa, S.D.B, director of the Vatican Publishing House, has reviewed the text. This is

notable because Pope Francis's words have sometimes been mistranslated or misrepresented. Be assured that the quotations in this book are accurate and are never taken out of context.

Finally, although the chapters and quotations have been arranged in a certain way, they may be read in any order. Let your experience and curiosity be your guide. Trust it, trust yourself, and trust that the message you most need to hear will find you. Whether you are at the beginning, middle, or end of your spiritual journey, may Pope Francis's words strengthen you and give you hope for the future. And may St. Francis of Assisi bless you as he blessed his companion Brother Leo nearly eight hundred years ago:

The Lord bless you and keep you.
 May he show his face to you and have mercy.
 May he turn his countenance to you and give
 you peace.
 The Lord bless you!

—BLESSING OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI TO
 BROTHER LEO

—*Alicia von Stammwitz,*
editor



CHAPTER ONE

~ **We Are Infinitely Loved** ~

Among other words used in ordinary conversation, [Francis of Assisi] could never hear “the love of God” without a kind of transformation within himself.

For immediately upon hearing “the love of God,” he would become excited, stirred, and inflamed, as though an inner chord of his heart had been plucked by the plectrum of the outward voice of the speaker. . . .

“The love of him,” he said, “who loved us much is much to be loved.”¹

—THOMAS OF CELANO,
The Second Life of Saint Francis

1. Celano quote from Marion A. Habig, *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies: English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis* Cincinnati: Franciscan Media, 2012), pp. 519–520. Hereinafter called *Omnibus*. A plectrum is a tiny piece of ivory or metal, used in playing a lyre or other such stringed instrument.

GOD IS WAITING FOR YOU

The love of God precedes everything. God is always first. He arrives before us, he precedes us. The Prophet Isaiah, or Jeremiah, I don't remember, said that God is like an almond blossom, because it is the first tree to flower in spring, meaning that God always flowers before us. When we arrive he is waiting for us, he calls us, he makes us walk. Always anticipating us. And this is called love, because God always waits for us.

“But, Father, I don't believe this, because if you only knew, Father; my life was so horrible, how can I think that God is waiting for me?”

God is waiting for you. And if you were a great sinner, he is waiting for you even more and waiting for you with great love, because he is first. This is the beauty of the Church, who leads us to this God who is waiting for us! He precedes Abraham, he precedes even Adam.

GENERAL AUDIENCE, ST. PETER'S SQUARE
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 18, 2014

TRUST IN GOD'S LOVE

God is love. And we move towards the light to find the love of God. But is God's love within us, even in the dark moments? Is the love of God there, hidden away? Yes, always! The love of God never leaves us. It is always with us. Do we trust in this love?

ADDRESS TO CHILDREN, PAUL VI AUDIENCE HALL
SATURDAY, MAY 31, 2014

.....
Pope Francis @Pontifex • November 11, 2013

“God loves us. May we discover the beauty of loving and being loved.”
.....

THE LORD CALLS YOU

I would like to say to those who feel far from God and from the Church—I would like to say respectfully—to all those who are fearful or indifferent: the Lord calls you too, he calls you to be a part of his people, and he does so with deep respect and love! The Lord is calling you. The Lord is seeking you. The Lord is waiting for you. The Lord does not proselytize, he loves, and this love seeks you, waits for you, you who at this moment do not believe this or are far away. And this is the love of God.

ANGELUS, ST. PETER'S SQUARE
MONDAY, JANUARY 6, 2014

GOD'S LOVE HAS A NAME AND A FACE

What is God's love? It is not something vague, some generic feeling. God's love has a name and a face: Jesus Christ, Jesus. Love for God is made manifest in Jesus. For we cannot love air.... Do we love air? Do we love all things? No, no we cannot; we love people and the person we love is Jesus, the gift of the Father among us. It is a love that gives value and beauty to everything else; a love that gives strength to the family, to work, to study, to friendship, to art, to all human activity. It even gives meaning to negative experiences, because this love allows us to move beyond these experiences, to go beyond them, not to remain prisoners of evil. It moves us beyond, always opening us to hope, that's it! Love of God in Jesus always opens us to hope, to that horizon of hope, to the final horizon of our pilgrimage. In this way our labors and failures find meaning. Even our sin finds meaning in the love of God because this love of God in Jesus Christ always forgives us. He loves us so much that he always forgives us.

ANGELUS, ST. PETER'S SQUARE
SUNDAY, AUGUST 11, 2013

THE LORD CHOSE YOU

“The Lord set his love upon you and chose you” (Dt 7:7). God is bound to us, he chose us, and this bond is for ever, not so much because we are faithful, but because the Lord is faithful and endures our faithlessness, our indolence, our lapses.... We can experience and savor the tenderness of this love at every stage of life: in times of joy and of sadness, in times of good health and of frailty and of sickness.

HOMILY, GEMELLI HOSPITAL AND
SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY
FRIDAY, JUNE 27, 2014

.....
Pope Francis @Pontifex • March 22, 2014

“Jesus is our hope. Nothing—not even evil or death—is able to separate us from the saving power of his love.”
.....

WHAT IS THE MEASURE OF GOD'S LOVE?

The charity of Christ, welcomed with an open heart, changes us, transforms us, renders us capable of loving not according to human measure, always limited, but according to the measure of God. And what is the measure of God? Without measure! The measure of God is without measure. Everything! Everything! Everything! It's impossible to measure the love of God: it is without measure! And so we become capable of loving even those who do not love us: and this is not easy. To love someone who doesn't love us... It's not easy! Because if we know that a person doesn't like us, then we also tend to bear ill will. But no! We must love even someone who doesn't love us! Opposing evil with good, with pardon, with sharing, with welcome.

ANGELUS, ST. PETER'S SQUARE
SUNDAY, JUNE 22, 2014

OUR GOD IS REAL

The light of Eastertide and of Pentecost renews in us every year the joy and amazement of faith: let us recognize that God is not something vague, our God is not a God “spray,” he is tangible; he is not abstract but has a name: “God is love.” His is not a sentimental, emotional kind of love but the love of the Father who is the origin of all life, the love of the Son who dies on the Cross and is raised, the love of the Spirit who renews human beings and the world. Thinking that God is love does us so much good, because it teaches us to love, to give ourselves to others as Jesus gave himself to us and walks with us. Jesus walks beside us on the road through life.

ANGELUS, ST. PETER’S SQUARE
SUNDAY, MAY 26, 2013

THE STUPENDOUS MYSTERY OF GOD’S LOVE

Awareness of the marvels that the Lord has wrought for our salvation disposes our minds and hearts to an attitude of thanksgiving to God for all that he has given us, for all that he has accomplished for the good of his people and for the whole of humanity. This marks the beginning of our conversion: it is the grateful response to the stupendous mystery of God’s love. When we see the love that God has for us, we feel the desire to draw close to him: this is conversion.

GENERAL AUDIENCE, ST. PETER’S SQUARE
ASH WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5, 2014

.....
Pope Francis @Pontifex • February 7, 2014

“What zest life acquires when we allow ourselves to be filled by the love of God!”
.....

TO LOVE AND BE LOVED

The heart of the human being aspires to great things, lofty values, deep friendships, ties that are strengthened rather than broken by the trials of life. The human being aspires to love and to be loved. This is our deepest aspiration: to love and be loved; and definitively. The culture of the temporary does not honor our freedom, but deprives us of our true destiny, of our truest and most authentic goals. It is a piecemeal life. It is sad to reach a certain age, to look back over the journey we have made and find that it was made up of different pieces, without unity, without decisiveness: everything temporary.... Do not allow yourselves to be robbed of the will to build great and lasting things in your life! This is what leads you forward. Do not content yourselves with little goals. Aspire to happiness, have courage, the courage to go outside of yourselves and bet on the fullness of your future together with Jesus.

ADDRESS TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF ABRUZZI
AND MOLISE, CASTELPETROSO CHURCH SQUARE
SATURDAY, JULY 5, 2014

GOD IS LIKE A MOTHER WITH HER BABY

As when a mother takes her child upon her knee and caresses him or her: so the Lord will do and does with us. This is the cascade of tenderness which gives us much consolation. “As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you” (Is 66:13). Every Christian, and especially you and I, is called to be a bearer of this message of hope that gives serenity and joy: God’s consolation, his tenderness towards all. But if we first experience the joy of being consoled by him, of being loved by him, then we can bring that joy to others. This is important if our mission is to be fruitful: to feel God’s consolation and to pass it on to others!... Do not be afraid, because the Lord is the Lord of consolation, he is the Lord of tenderness. The Lord is a Father and he says that he will be for us like a mother with her baby, with a mother’s tenderness.

HOMILY, ST. PETER’S BASILICA
SUNDAY, JULY 7, 2013

LOVE ALWAYS KINDLES NEW LOVE

The love of Jesus Christ lasts forever, it has no end because it is the very life of God. This love conquers sin and gives the strength to rise and begin again, for through forgiveness the heart is renewed and rejuvenated. We all know it: our Father never tires of loving and his eyes never grow weary of watching the road to his home to see if the son who left and was lost is returning. We can speak of God's hope: our Father expects us always, he doesn't just leave the door open to us, but he awaits us. He is engaged in the waiting for his children. And this Father also does not tire of loving the other son who, though staying at home with him the whole time, does not share in his mercy, in his compassion. God is not only at the origin of love, but in Jesus Christ he calls us to imitate his own way of loving: "As I have loved you, may you also love one another" (Jn 13:34). To the extent to which Christians live this love, they become credible disciples of Christ to the world. Love cannot bear being locked up in itself. By its nature it is open, it spreads and bears fruit, it always kindles new love.

HOMILY, ST. PETER'S BASILICA
FRIDAY, MARCH 28, 2014

.....
Pope Francis @Pontifex • May 30, 2013

“The whole of salvation history is the story of God looking for us: he offers us love and welcomes us with tenderness.”
.....

CARRY THE GOSPEL EVERYWHERE

Dear families, dear brothers and sisters, I encourage you to carry the Gospel of Jesus Christ everywhere, even to those most de-Christianized, especially in the margins of life. Evangelize with love, bring God’s love to all. Tell all those you meet on the streets of your mission that God loves man as he is, even with his limitations, with his mistakes, even with his sins. That is why he sent his Son, that he might take our sins onto himself. May you be messengers and witnesses of the infinite goodness and inexhaustible mercy of the Father.

ADDRESS TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
NEOCATECHUMENAL WAY, PAUL VI AUDIENCE HALL
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2014

MAKE KNOWN OUR BELOVED GOD

The primary reason for evangelizing is the love of Jesus which we have received, the experience of salvation which urges us to ever greater love of him. What kind of love would not feel the need to speak of the beloved, to point him out, to make him known? If we do not feel an intense desire to share this love, we need to pray insistently that he will once more touch our hearts. We need to implore his grace daily, asking him to open our cold hearts and shake up our lukewarm and superficial existence. Standing before him with open hearts, letting him look at us, we see that gaze of love which Nathaniel glimpsed on the day when Jesus said to him: “I saw you under the fig tree” (Jn 1:48).

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION, *EVANGELII GAUDIUM*, 264
NOVEMBER 24, 2013

PROCLAIM THE MESSAGE: “GOD IS LOVE!”

We are all called to witness and proclaim the message that “God is love,” that God isn’t far and insensitive to our human affairs. He is close to us, always beside us, walking with us to share our joys and our sorrows, our hopes and our struggles. He loves us very much and for that reason he became man, he came into the world not to condemn it, but so the world would be saved through Jesus (cf. Jn 3:16–17). And this is the love of God in Jesus, this love that is so difficult to understand but that we feel when we draw close to Jesus. And he always forgives us, he always awaits us, he loves us so much. And we feel the love of Jesus and the love of God.

ANGELUS, ST. PETER’S SQUARE
SUNDAY, JUNE 15, 2014

GOD MAKES ALL THINGS NEW

You see, the new things of God are not like the novelties of this world, all of which are temporary; they come and go, and we keep looking for more. The new things which God gives to our lives are lasting, not only in the future, when we will be with him, but today as well. God is even now making all things new; the Holy Spirit is truly transforming us, and through us he also wants to transform the world in which we live. Let us open the doors to the Spirit, let ourselves be guided by him, and allow God's constant help to make us new men and women, inspired by the love of God which the Holy Spirit bestows on us! How beautiful it would be if each of you, every evening, could say: Today at school, at home, at work, guided by God, I showed a sign of love towards one of my friends, my parents, an older person! How beautiful!

HOMILY, ST. PETER'S SQUARE
SUNDAY, APRIL 28, 2013

ONE HEART, ONE SOUL

John's Gospel states that, before his Passion, Jesus prayed to the Father for communion among his disciples with these words: "That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (17:21). The Church, in her most profound truth, is communion with God, intimacy with God, a communion of love with Christ and with the Father in the Holy Spirit, which extends to brotherly communion. This relationship between Jesus and the Father is the "matrix" of the bond between us Christians: if we are intimately part of this "matrix," this fiery furnace of love, then we can truly become of one single heart and one single soul among us. For God's love burns away our selfishness, our prejudices, our interior and exterior divisions. The love of God even burns away our sins.

GENERAL AUDIENCE, ST. PETER'S SQUARE
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2013

NO ACT OF LOVE FOR GOD WILL BE LOST

We may be sure that none of our acts of love will be lost, nor any of our acts of sincere concern for others. No single act of love for God will be lost, no generous effort is meaningless, no painful endurance is wasted. All of these encircle our world like a vital force. Sometimes it seems that our work is fruitless, but mission is not like a business transaction or investment, or even a humanitarian activity. It is not a show where we count how many people come as a result of our publicity; it is something much deeper, which escapes all measurement. It may be that the Lord uses our sacrifices to shower blessings in another part of the world which we will never visit. The Holy Spirit works as he wills, when he wills and where he wills; we entrust ourselves without pretending to see striking results. We know only that our commitment is necessary. Let us learn to rest in the tenderness of the arms of the Father amid our creative and generous commitment. Let us keep marching forward; let us give him everything, allowing him to make our efforts bear fruit in his good time.

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION, *EVANGELII GAUDIUM*, 279
NOVEMBER 24, 2013