

Bishop John Barres greets Pope Francis during the November 2019 Ad Limina Visit to Rome.

HOLINESS AND MISSION



Photo by L'Osservatore Romano

The Catholic Intellectual Foundation OF POPE FRANCIS' GLOBAL MISSIOLOGY AND EVANGELIZATION



BISHOP JOHN O. BARRES
is the fifth bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Rockville Centre. Follow him on Twitter, @BishopBarres



On November 15, 2019, the New York Bishops had their ad limina visit audience with the Holy Father, Pope Francis. The Holy Father began the meeting by putting all the Bishops at ease and encouraging them to raise for discussion with him anything they wanted to raise.

For 90 minutes, we spoke with the Holy Father about abortion, immigration, the plight of global refugees, the challenges to the family and the need for the missionary witness of families, his approach to global evangelization grounded in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, pastoral outreach to survivors of clergy sexual abuse and best child protection practices, the need for bishops to be close to Jesus in constant prayer, close to their priests and close to the people in their parishes.

The exchange was a great moment of grace for the New York bishops and a great moment of grace too, I believe, for the Holy Father.

Every one of us has a host of mentors, influences, experiences that have providentially guided our path in life. The same is true for Pope Francis and these providential influences were very much in play in our conversation with him that day.

There have been a number of recent books that have traced the Catholic intellectual influences on Pope Francis' global missiology and evangelization.

The books include: Austen Ivereigh's *The Great Reformer: Francis and the Making of a Radical Pope* (published by Henry Holt and Company in 2014), Massimo Borghesi's *The Mind of Pope Francis: Jorge Mario Bergoglio's Intellectual Journey* (published by Liturgical Press Academic in 2018) and *Discovering Pope Francis: The Roots of Jorge Mario Bergoglio's Thinking* (a collection of addresses from an October 2018 Conference held at Sacred Heart Seminary in Milwaukee, Wis., and published by Liturgical Press Academic in 2019). Anyone interested in delving more deeply into the Catholic intellectual foundation that has formed Pope Francis and led to his bold global mission vision will enjoy and be enriched by these books.

In referring to the contribution of Massimo Borghesi's analysis, papal nuncio Archbishop Christophe Pierre describes a vital dynamic between the Catholic intellectual life and the Catholic pastoral-formatonal-evangelizing life of Jorge Bergoglio:

"His work explores how the Holy Father's pastoral activity, his words, and his gestures have been influenced by the theologians and philosophers whom he has studied and appropriated over the years including Fessard, Guardini, von Balthasar, de Lubac, and Giussani...the pope's ability to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5 >

*synthesize many great thinkers allows him not only to touch the reality of people's concrete situations and circumstances but also provides him with an instrument for dialogue with today's culture."*¹

In addition to Fessard, Guardini, von Balthasar, de Lubac and Giussani, we also remember that the Jesuit Pope Francis is a son of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, his *Spiritual Exercises* and his rules of discernment which have guided the Pope's own life and his discernment of the Church's global missiology grounded in the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

Pope Francis' immersion in a wide range of classic European and Latin American comparative literature has enriched his perspective. For instance, his references to Alessandro Manzoni's *The Betrothed/I Promessi Sposi* (1827) and the historical figure of Cardinal Federico Borromeo (1564-1631) and the fictional Capuchin friar Father Cristoforo — who heroically risk their lives to tend to the suffering and dying in bubonic plague *field hospitals* — echo so much of Pope Francis' own speaking, writing and pastoral approach to touching the wounds of humanity through the wounds of Christ.

One of the critical and foundational experiences for Pope Francis was the 2007 V General Conference of the Episcopate of Latin America and the Caribbean in Aparecida, Brazil, at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida. This Conference produced the *Aparecida document*, a visionary approach to evangelization in the modern world.

Pope Francis often sees parallels between the *Aparecida* document of 2007 and St. Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975). Austen Ivereigh writes:

*"In May 2007 the bishops of Latin America met collectively there for the first time in twenty-five years to define their continental mission. Bergoglio was not just a key contributor to the discernment process, but redactor-in-chief of the concluding document...Francis has often compared Aparecida to Evangelii Nuntiandi, Paul VI's great 1975 document on evangelization. Evangelii Gaudium is, in turn, the fruit of both, drawing on the five years from 2007 to 2012 in which Bergoglio and the other bishops of the Buenos Aires region sought to implement Aparecida. It was this experience that flowed into Cardinal Bergoglio's famous brief speech to the cardinals prior to the conclave, in which he imagined Jesus not on the outside knocking to be let in, but on the inside, asking to be let out; and in which he portrayed the church as paralyzed by introversion, reflecting its own light rather than Christ's."*²

The *Aparecida* document and vision in 2007 continues to have a powerful impact on Latin America and the Caribbean but it providentially prepared the way for a more global application of its missiology and evangelization in the Pontificate of Pope Francis.

The Introduction of the 2007 *Aparecida* document foreshadows so much of Pope Francis' 2013 *Evangelii Gaudium*:

"The church is called to a deep and profound rethinking of its mission and relaunch it with fidelity and boldness in the new circumstances of Latin America and the world. It cannot retreat in response to those who see only confusion, dangers, and threats, or those who seek to cloak the variety and complexity of situations with a mantle of worn-out ideological slogans, or irresponsible attacks. What is required is confirming, renewing, and revitalizing the newness of the Gospel rooted in our history, out of a personal and community encounter with Jesus Christ that raises up disciples and missionaries. That depends not so much on grand programs and structures, but rather on new men and women who incarnate that tradition and newness, as disciples of Jesus Christ and missionaries of his Kingdom, protagonists of new life for a Latin America that seeks to be rediscovered with the light and power of the Spirit." (#11)

The same bold global missiology and evangelization applied to Latin America in *Aparecida* is expressed in a very similar way to the entire world in *Evangelii Gaudium*:

"Jesus can also break through the dull categories with which we would enclose him and he constantly amazes us by his divine creativity. Whenever we make the effort to return to the source and to recover the original freshness of the Gospel, new avenues arise, new paths of creativity open up, with different forms of expression, more eloquent signs and words with new meaning for today's world. Every form of authentic evangelization is always 'new.'" (#11)

In his Foreword to *Discovering Pope Francis: The Roots of Jorge Mario Bergoglio's Thinking*, Pope Francis writes: "Precisely at this time, for the sake of evangelization, theologians and philosophers must engage in research, dialogue, and, above all, in prayer to develop a creative synthesis that proposes the attractiveness of Christ to a world that desperately needs his mercy."³

As we continue to be inspired and motivated by Pope Francis' global vision of evangelization and implement that vision in the Diocese of Rockville Centre, I encourage you to make the effort to understand, with the help of some of the resources mentioned, the intellectual, spiritual, ecclesial and experiential foundations of Pope Francis' rich and compelling approach to global mission. †

¹Brian Y. Lee and Thomas L. Knoebel (editors), Foreword by Archbishop Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, *Discovering Pope Francis: The Roots of Jorge Mario Bergoglio's Thinking*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Academic Press, 2019), xviii

²Brian Y. Lee and Thomas L. Knoebel (editors), Austen Ivereigh, *Discovering Pope Francis: The Roots of Jorge Mario Bergoglio's Thinking*, 27

³Brian Y. Lee and Thomas L. Knoebel (editors), Pope Francis, *Discovering Pope Francis: The Roots of Jorge Mario Bergoglio's Thinking*, xiii.