



Giotto and the St Francis of Assisi Cycle: A Tribute to Pope Francis (Stories Behind the Art)

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In the words of the creators of this beautiful book:

This book has been lovingly compiled to celebrate the convergence of the life of St. Francis of Assisi and the groundbreaking frescoes of the 13th century artist, Giotto di Bondone, as seen by millions in the nave of the Upper Church of the Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi, Italy.

We started with three specific goals –

1. Illustrate the life of St. Francis, one of the most remarkable human beings to have walked on earth;
2. Highlight the art of Giotto which created the famous stories of St. Francis, his life and miracles – twenty eight scenes known today as the *Saint Francis cycle*; and
3. Create a modest handbook that may make a more fulfilling viewing experience for visitors to the Basilica of San Francesco.

As we worked on, examining the frescoes, delving into **G. K. Chesterton's classic *St. Francis of Assisi*** for excerpts to bring the Saint's story to life, not for scholars, but for so many who may know little or nothing about St. Francis, we wondered why, in a society like ours where 'role models' abound - self-proclaimed or publicly acknowledged – few perhaps think of saints as 'role models'.

It seems, however, that Saint Francis as a life to imitate must surely inspire the life of one who was once known as Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Even in his role as a 'prince' of the Catholic Church, Cardinal Bergoglio embraced a life of simplicity and boundless service to the poor and those in the margins of society. This exemplary life, not without its critics, distanced the Cardinal from mainstream social and religious orthodoxy even as he drew closer to some of the founding principles of that orthodoxy as embodied in the life of Jesus Christ.

Within the context of this paean to St. Francis of Assisi, and the formidable, though not impossible, role model that his life presents, Cardinal Bergoglio is relevant precisely because of the 'message' his choice of the name Francis as the new Pope conveys to us.

In dedicating this book to Pope Francis, some of us place in his hands, and in his voice, our hopes for a better world, more understanding, more caring, and in harmony with nature.

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