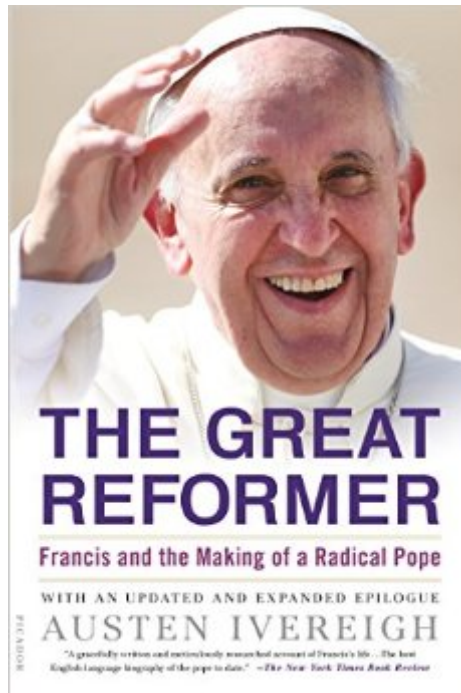


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The Great Reformer: Francis And The Making Of A Radical Pope



Synopsis

A Philadelphia Inquirer Best Book of the Year A biography of Pope Francis that describes how this revolutionary thinker will use the power of his position to challenge and redirect one of the world's most formidable religions. Based on extensive interviews in Argentina and years of study of the Catholic Church, this biography provides never-before-explained context on how one man's ambitious program began—and how it will likely end—through an investigation of Francis's youth growing up in Buenos Aires and the dramatic events during the Perón era that shaped his beliefs; his ongoing conflicts and disillusionment with the ensuing doctrines of an authoritarian and militaristic government in the 1970s; how his Jesuit training in Argentina and Chile gave him a unique understanding and advocacy for a "Church of the Poor"; and his rise from cardinal to the papacy.

Book Information

Paperback: 480 pages

Publisher: Picador; Upd Exp edition (August 25, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1250074991

ISBN-13: 978-1250074997

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.9 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (201 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #162,962 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #85 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Biographies > Popes & the Vatican](#) #278 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Churches & Church Leadership > Church Leadership](#) #1056 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Religious](#)

Customer Reviews

The most elusive figures are often the most intriguing, and this is true of Ivereigh's Pope Francis. Ivereigh traces the rise of Jorge Bergoglio from the transient immigrant, to the poorest areas of Argentina, all the way to the halls of power within the Vatican itself. When the media is paying attention, Pope Francis has signaled a sea-change for the Catholic church. If Bergoglio's past is any indication, he is ushering in even greater change, particularly when no one is paying attention. Ivereigh's mostly complete examination of the highlights, and the low lights, of Bergoglio's ascent through the ranks is a vital primer for understanding the forces that drive this pope, and the forces

quietly re-shaping the Catholic church. Eschewing "ologies" and "isms", this book lays bare Bergoglio's commitment to serving the poor. If there are any short-comings in Ivereigh's contribution, it is perhaps not in the material but in the end-user. This pope is as closely tied to modern Argentina as Argentina is to this pope. The casual observer may struggle to stay engaged with the history and the culture and the regional tensions that shaped both. As is the risk with any work this in-depth, Ivereigh sometimes assumes that the reader is as passionate and as well informed about the subject as he is, resulting in early chapters that sometimes feel slow and overwhelming. Ivereigh rewards the dedicated reader though, as he deftly succeeds in painting a rich portrait of a pope whose commitment to a new course entices all of us to take a second, studied look. Even among the most casual of observers. This review was based on an advance reader's copy provided by the publisher at no cost, in exchange for an honest and fair review.

I began this book thinking I would learn a little bit about Pope Francis. I was wrong. I learned a mountain of information about not only Pope Francis, but about the Jesuits, the Argentinian people, South America, the Roman church, and everything in between. For me this was quite a journey. The author is to be congratulated for the thoroughness, comprehensiveness, the tenderness of some of the stories. This is a must read for anyone committed to understanding the history of the Catholic Church over the last 75 years, particularly the period following Pope John XXIII and the second Vatican council. Brilliant leadership skills, prayerfulness, humility, all was brought to life in this rendering of Pope Francis. Thank you.

There is only one world leader in our day who is consistently positive and uplifting in his gestures, words and focus. He is Pope Francis. I have read most of the books, articles and his writings that have come out since he was elected and this book is the best. It offers broad background on his life situations that have made him the man he is and gives a clear insight into his Jesuit spirituality which has so directed and enlivened him. The writing itself is beautiful and the historical situations are made clearly accessible to anyone, Catholic or otherwise. It is most encouraging to read about such a man, immersed in the people, with God as his focus. A great book.

The main defect of this book is that there are several serious historical errors that have been presented as facts, distorting Argentine history. This is especially the case when analyzing the 1976-1983 period and the position of certain human rights figures towards Bergoglio, who they were, what they thought and did. The first example that epitomizes this is on pg. 11, where it states

that Manuel Dorrego was Argentina's first president (first president of Argentina was Bernardo Rivadavia). This is similar to saying that Robert. E Lee was the United States' first president instead of George Washington. (politicians from Rivadavia's Unitarian party, which he had formerly led, ordered Dorrego to be captured and killed) You can understand how these type of errors can distort history if a premise is built from it. This is the main problem which I find in the book and it's done repeatedly. Getting more specific-Another claim Ivereigh makes is that Argentina's Nobel Peace Prize winner Adolfo Perez Esquivel always rejected accusations of Bergoglio's complicity with the last Argentine military dictatorship. (pg.153) But that is false. This is used to make a point that the late Human rights leader Emilio Mignone was alone and not supported by other human rights leaders when he presented this accusation against the church. This is misleading, as several human rights leaders supported Mignone's version before Bergoglio was elected Pope. In 2005, Nobel Peace prize winner Perez Esquivel stated he didn't want Bergoglio to be elected because of his complicity with the last military dictatorship. Here is the youtube video in spanish:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?...> And before that, he wrote the forward to Emilio Mignone's Witness to the truth: The complicity of Church and Dictatorship in Argentina (1988). Where he supported its version of events. This is the first book to present accusations against Bergoglio. Furthermore, Ivereigh gets wrong the story about CELS (an ngo), today one of Argentina's leading human rights organizations, which Mignone founded and led to gather evidence from victims of state repression and report crimes. He states that the Pope's intimate friend Alicia Oliveira founded the organization, that it was created in 1975 and that journalist Horacio Verbitsky (who continued Mignone's investigation into the church 10 years later after Mignone's death in 1998) was his colleague in CELS. (pg.144) All these claims are false, CELS was not founded by Alicia Oliveira, it was founded four years later in 1979 and Verbitsky only became part of CELS two years after Mignone's death. Nor is Verbitsky a marxist, he had been part of a Peronist left wing guerrilla movement. There are many more errors, but these are a few I pointed out that have come to my attention. My worry is that these mistakes end up misleading the English speaking public that aren't experts in Argentine history. A better biography is untying the knots by Paul Valley.

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