Who is Pope Francis?

Pope Francis was elected pope on 13 March 2013 and is the first pope to take on the name of Francis. The pope is also the Bishop of Rome and the ruler or Sovereign of the State of the Vatican City, a tiny country of 44 hectares in Rome, Italy.

Early life of Pope Francis

Pope Francis was born Jorge Mario Bergoglio on 17 December 1936 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Jorge was the eldest of five children. His grandparents had migrated from Italy to Argentina in search of a better life. He was a good student and completed his secondary education. Today, Pope Francis has a great belief in the importance of education in shaping the hearts and minds of the next generation.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Pope Francis’ football team is San Lorenzo.
- He was once the doorman at a tango club.
- He worked in a laboratory as a technical chemist.
- He was a secondary school teacher.

“...A healthy family life requires frequent use of three phrases: ‘May I?’, ‘Thank you’ and ‘I’m sorry’ and never, never, never end the day without making peace.”

QUESTIONS

Family and school are important for growing in faith. What does it feel like to belong to the Catholic family of faith? Who has helped you in your faith journey so far?

USING THE BIBLE

Read Luke 10:25-37

In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus explains how a true friend and neighbour should act. Can you think of any examples where a person or a group of people has acted in a kind way towards others?

INQUIRY ACTIVITY

Who are your neighbours? Draw a picture of your family, friends or neighbours as part of God’s children on Earth.

POPE FRANCIS PROFILE

NAME: Jorge Mario Bergoglio

BORN: 17 December 1936 in Flores, Buenos Aires, Argentina

FAMILY: Parents – Mario and Regina Bergoglio
  Siblings – Alberto, Maria Elena, Oscar, Marta

LANGUAGEs: Spanish, Italian, French, German, Latin and some English

SIGNIFICANT TITLES:
  Jesuit priest (1969)
  Cardinal (2001–2013)
  Pope (13 March 2013)

THE TANGO IS A SPECIAL BALLROOM DANCE THAT ORIGINALLY CAME FROM ARGENTINA.
A Jesuit Priest

When he was twenty-one, Pope Francis entered The Society of Jesus to become a priest in the Jesuit order. As a young priest, and later as Archbishop of Buenos Aires, he worked with the poor: feeding them, listening to them, and loving them.

The Jesuit order

Jesuits work by helping others. They educate students at Catholic schools and universities, and often undertake missionary work in poor countries to help improve the lives of the locals. The Jesuits have a special loyalty to the pope.

Pope Francis is making a difference to many people in the world. As a Jesuit, he uses prayer as a powerful way of reflecting on how he can be of service to God.

I was always looking for community. I did not see myself as a priest on my own. I need a community ... I cannot live without people. I need to live my life with others.”

COAT OF ARMS

This is Pope Francis’ own coat of arms. On it are represented the papal keys and the IHS emblem representing The Society of Jesus. The star is symbolic of Mary as Mother of the Church. The spikenard (flower) represents Saint Joseph as patron saint of the Church. The motto ‘miserando atque eligendo’ is Latin, which means ‘lowly but chosen’.

ST IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) was a Spanish nobleman who founded the religious order The Society of Jesus in 1540. Those who belong to this Society are called Jesuits. Ignatius wanted the members of the Society to follow the ways of Jesus and to go on mission to help the poor and uneducated.

DID YOU KNOW?

• Pope Francis is the first Jesuit to be elected pope.
The Election of the Pope

Chosen by Jesus two thousand years ago, Saint Peter was the first pope of the Church. Pope Francis became the 266th pope when he was elected on 13 March 2013. The pope’s role is to bring people to God and to make God known and loved to people.

How a pope is elected

When a pope dies or retires, a new pope is elected by the members of the College of Cardinals who come from all around the world to gather in Rome.

Pope Benedict retired before Pope Francis was elected pope.

The crossed gold and silver keys represent the keys of the kingdom of which Jesus speaks when he appoints Peter to lead the Church.

“Leadership is an art ... that can be learned. It is also a science ... that can be studied. It is a job ... that demands dedication, effort and tenacity.”

DID YOU KNOW?

- We have two modern popes who are now known as saints. On Sunday 27 April 2014, John Paul II and John XXIII were canonised at the Vatican by Pope Francis.

Research the countries where popes have come from. For example, Pope John Paul II was from Poland. Can you imagine an Australian pope in the future? What special qualities might they bring to the leadership of the Church?

In Italy the pope is called Il Papa or Papa Francesco. Normally a pope serves the people of God until he dies or he retires.
Pope Francis Chooses his Name

When Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio was elected pope, he decided to take the name ‘Francis’ in recognition of St Francis of Assisi. Saint Francis of Assisi is known as the saint of the poor, the saint of prayer, and the saint of peace. It is a constant reminder for Pope Francis to live and act as St Francis of Assisi did.

SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Francis of Assisi was born into a wealthy family. He had a change of heart while he was imprisoned during a war and decided to devote his life to preaching the gospel and helping the poor. Francis dressed in a simple tunic and travelled on foot, preaching his message of love for all. He survived on the donations he begged for. Francis believed in poverty and the connection of all creation.

- FEAST DAY: 4 October
- BORN: Italy, 1181
- DIED: 1226
- PATRON SAINT OF: the environment, animals, and merchants

“A history of popes

The first pope was St Peter and our current pope is Pope Francis. There have been 266 popes over hundreds of years.

John XXIII (1958–63)
Paul VI (1963–78)
John Paul I (1978)
John Paul II (1978–2005)
Benedict XVI (2005–2013)
Francis I (2013–)

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Pope Paul VI visited Australia in 1970.
Pope John Paul II chose to stop being the pope because of his poor health.
Pope Benedict chose to stop being the pope because of his poor health.
Pope Francis is the first pope to take the name Francis.

Pope Francis is also the man of peace. That is how the name came into my heart: Francis of Assisi. For me, he is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation.”

DID YOU KNOW?

The pope has a number of titles:
- Bishop of Rome
- Vicar of Jesus Christ
- Successor of the Prince of the Apostles
- Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church
- Primate of Italy
- Sovereign of the State of the Vatican City
- Servant of the Servants of God

INQUIRY ACTIVITY

Look up the original meaning of your name or find out how your name was first used and by whom. Is it connected to a saint or someone famous? Do you have a special name or nickname that is used by family and friends? Why are these names important too?

USING THE BIBLE

Read Exodus 33:12–17
Moses has developed a trusting relationship with God, who knows him by name. Is God pleased with Moses? Why? In what way do you think God knows each of us by name? How does that make us feel?

What’s in a Name?

Our Baptismal name is the name we will be known by all our lives, the name of our public identity in the world, and one which our parents chose carefully.
When we choose our Confirmation name, we are adding it to our own in the hope that we will act in a way that reflects the attitude and effort of that saint.
The Vatican

The pope lives in Vatican City, Rome. Vatican City is the smallest country in the world. It is only 44 hectares in size – that covers the area of around one hundred football fields.

Vatican Palace

The Vatican Palace is where the pope usually lives, although Pope Francis has decided to live with other priests in a hostel. This means he can talk easily to people and to live in a modest way that becomes the ideals of Saint Francis of Assisi.

Vatican Museum

Inside the Vatican are some of the most beautiful artworks. Each year, millions of visitors come to see the pope at St Peter’s Basilica and visit the treasures housed in the Vatican Museum.

St Peter’s Basilica

St Peter’s Basilica is the largest Christian church in the world. The basilica is built over the tomb of St Peter, who was martyred for his faith in the first century. Many popes are buried in the grottoes below the basilica.

St Peter’s Square

The basilica is approached by a huge square called St Peter’s Square that is surrounded on both sides by a colonnade made up of 300 columns. On top of the colonnades are 96 statues representing saints and martyrs and founders of religious orders.

Sistine Chapel

In the Vatican Palace is the Sistine Chapel. Here on the ceiling are scenes of the Bible painted by the famous artist, Michelangelo.

SAINT PETER – THE FIRST POPE

Peter was one of the twelve apostles and was chosen by Jesus to be leader of the Church. When he arrived in Rome, he was imprisoned for preaching the gospel. In 64 CE Peter was condemned to die on the cross by Emperor Nero. Peter asked to be crucified upside down.

The Vatican flag

The Vatican has its own stamps and post office. It also has its own money.

Did You Know?

- On Sundays at noon, the pope usually blesses the crowd in St Peter’s Square.

Questions

What are the things you notice when you go into a church? Do you see pictures or stained glass windows or statues? Are there any treasures at your church or school which hold a special meaning for the community?

Using the Bible

Read I Peter 5:2

Jesus is often called 'The Good Shepherd'. How does a leader shepherd his flock and what does that mean for those who lead the Church?

Inquiry Activity

Pope Francis’ favourite painting is Marc Chagall’s The White Crucifixion. Find this painting on the Internet. What do you like or not like about it? Do you have a favourite holy painting or picture? Obtain a copy of it and explain to a classmate why you like it and the significance of the story painted.
Qualities of Pope Francis

Pope Francis is a man of the people and he believes that the Church must learn from the poor. He has a vision for the Church that will renew the way it reaches out to its followers.

A humble man

Pope Francis is a humble man. For him, leadership is not about power or position, but about serving God and the people of God. He believes that the Church must go back to its original mission as a community of care, compassion, and connection.

Pope Francis believes that we all belong to a Church of mercy and that God’s love for us is boundless. God will never stop forgiving us if we are truly sorry for our sins. We can always start again with God when we repair the relationship we have broken with God.

“...And please don’t stop praying for me because, well, I need it.”

DID YOU KNOW?

- The pope’s ring is known as the Ring of the Fisherman. Saint Peter was a fisherman and the first pope. The ring is a symbol to show that the pope is a successor of St Peter. A new ring is made and designed for each pope.

Pope Francis is a God who believes in hope, joy, and mercy.

QUESTIONS

How can you try to live in a gospel way? What does the Good News mean to you? How can you share the Good News with others?

USING THE BIBLE

Read Luke 6:36-37

Think about how Jesus included all those who were outsiders and who were often looked down upon by others. Pope Francis, too, has asked, “Who am I to judge?” Think about how you have judged others. Have you been judged? How does this make you feel?

INQUIRY ACTIVITY

Pope Francis has made many statements about mercy and justice during his papacy, and he often speaks to the “dear young people” of the Church about the issues facing them. Go on the Internet or Twitter and select three of these statements and explain what they mean to you.
Pope Francis as a Leader

Pope Francis offers us a new model of leadership. His leadership is based on serving God and serving others. Pope Francis makes time to be with the people – to hug, embrace, talk and touch and to be the human face of the Church.

Pope Francis in action

Pope Francis knows about the lives of real people and follows the example set by Jesus. He:
- sleeps in a hostel in a modest bedroom
- walks wherever he can
- wears only simple white clothes
- goes out at night in Rome to help feed the homeless
- talks to those who work for him whether cardinal or cleaner
- embraces the disfigured and disabled
- has washed the feet of young prisoners, just as Jesus washed Peter’s feet.

For Pope Francis, leadership is about witness to the gospel in the loving service of others.

DID YOU KNOW?

Pope Francis has arranged for showers to be installed near St Peter’s Square so that the poor and homeless can bathe.

QUESTIONS
What qualities do you look for in a leader? Do you possess any of these qualities? Jesus was a leader who did not hold a public role. Can you think of other leaders, from history or living today, who are leaders in this way?

USING THE BIBLE
Read Matthew 20:28
Jesus says that he came to serve, not to be served. Can you think of faithful people, today or in history, who have served and sacrificed for others? What message does their service send to others?

INQUIRY ACTIVITY
Imagine you are being interviewed by Jesus to lead a group of young Christians. What qualities would you bring to this leadership role? Act out an interview with Jesus and share with the class.

“Every leader, to become a true leader, has to be, above all, a witness.”

Pope Francis

Pope Francis does not judge.

Pope Francis is greatly respected by other world leaders.

Pope Francis believes in the dignity of every human being because every human being is made in the image of Jesus.
Social Justice

Pope Francis’ commitment to social justice started when he was a young man. As a teenager he joined the Catholic Action group. Many of the people in Argentina had to live in slums or shanty towns during a time when the country’s rulers did not run a fair government. Pope Francis understood that there were barriers where those who were rich felt they did not have to share with the poor.

A shanty town in South America

Pope Francis speaks out for peace

When there is an issue of global concern, Pope Francis speaks out. He has spoken out for peace in the Middle East. He wants political and business leaders to help the poor improve their working and living conditions.

Champions of social justice

Pope Francis believes the Church should look after the poor and those who cannot care for themselves. He is asking us to stop and help those who are in trouble, just as the Good Samaritan helped the man attacked by robbers on the road to Jericho.

Catholic organisations like Caritas and St Vincent de Paul work hard for those in need, whether it’s to help people in everyday situations or in times of crisis.

“‘All of us, each day, are presented with the option of being Good Samaritans or indifferent passers-by.’”

POPE FRANCIS HELPS THE POOR

• In Buenos Aires, as both Cardinal and Archbishop, Pope Francis organised teams of young priests to go out to live with and look after the poor.
• He authorised the building of shelters and schools, soup kitchens, and refuges.
• He spoke up against business practices that were wrong.

QUESTIONs

Have you been a Good Samaritan or shown kindness to someone you don’t know? Has someone shown an unexpected kindness to you? Have you, by yourself or in class, assisted people in need?

USING THE BIBLE

Read Luke 12:16-21

This is a parable about how the rich man does not share his abundant harvest. He has more than he needs but does not think of sharing with the poor. Why does the rich man not want to share with the poor? What are things of value that you can share with others?

INQUIRY ACTIVITY

Every Lent we make contributions to the Project Compassion box at church, at home or in the classroom. Go to www.caritas.org.au for some ideas and create a poster for Project Compassion which you could put up around your school.

POPE FRANCIS HELPS THE POOR

Pope Francis wants us to be champions of social justice wherever we are. Even in small ways, we can show that we are happy to assist others who need a helping hand.
A Church for All

In Australia, we live in a multi-cultural and multi-faith country. The stories of the Dreamtime are part of Indigenous spirituality. We are home to Christianity, Judaism and Islam, as well as Buddhism, Hinduism and many other faiths. We respect the other and understand that we have different views and ways of looking and being in the world.

Friendships with other faiths

Pope Francis believes in the importance of friendships with other faiths. He made great friendships with the Jewish and Muslim leaders in Buenos Aires, where they held interfaith gatherings. For Pope Francis, learning about and respecting other faiths is about building bridges of understanding and tolerance.

Dialogue is born from an attitude of respect for the other person ...

DID YOU KNOW?

Pope Francis is highly respected as a world leader and as the spiritual head of the Catholic Church. He was honoured as the Time ‘Man of the Year 2013’ on the cover of this very popular magazine.

COMING TOGETHER

At Pope Francis’ inauguration ceremony there were leaders of many faiths, including the Orthodox Christian leader. Together with the pope, all these leaders recognised that this was a new opportunity to come together and share ideas on how to make the world a better and fairer place.

QUESTIONS

Do you know someone of another faith tradition? How do they live out their faith every day? Do they wear special symbols or clothes that help to identify their faith? Do you know any stories from the Dreamtime?

USING THE BIBLE

Read John 13:34–35

In this scripture Jesus showed that he was not afraid to love. He listened to people and heard their stories. How did Jesus invite them to change their lives? How can you practise understanding and tolerance for people who are of a different faith tradition to you?

INQUIRY ACTIVITY

Look up some famous places of worship in your own tradition, e.g. St Peter’s in Rome, your local cathedral or another parish church. Now look at a local or global example of a mosque, synagogue, temple or other house of worship. Can you see different styles of architecture?
A Man of Joy

Pope Francis believes that the joy of the gospel comes from actions in our lives. Our actions should always speak louder than our words. Some of the ways we can do this is to make time to pray and try to help others. Pope Francis reminds us that we should be joyful about the message of the Good News which we share.

In 2013 Pope Francis wrote a long letter about the joy of the gospel.

Living the gospels

For Catholics, being joyful is a way of living the gospel message of hope and love every day. Pope Francis believes that gospel people are not gloomy.

A letter from Pope Francis

Dear young people ... I think of you ... expressing your joy at being with him. You have an important part in the celebration of faith!

DID YOU KNOW?

- Pope Francis has millions of people following him on Twitter@Pontifex
- Pope Francis uses Instagram to reach people from all over the world.

Using the Bible

Read Philippians 4:4-9

This scripture reading gives us good advice. What are the beautiful things that you think about that bring you closer to God?

Inquiry Activity

Write an email or tweet to Pope Francis suggesting ways in which young people like you can shape the Church in the future. Join his millions of followers on Twitter!

Here are some of Pope Francis’ tweets:

- With Jesus there is true joy. (25 December 2014)
- God’s love is unbounded; it has no limits! (26 August 2014)
- A Christian is never bored or sad. Rather the one who loves Christ is full of joy, radiates joy. (2 July 2013)
- There is so much noise in the world. May we learn to be silent in our hearts before God. (18 Nov 2014)
- True love ... rejoices in doing good. (29 January 2015)
- Slaves no more. We are all brothers and sisters. (2 December 2014)
A Church of Mercy

Pope Francis believes that we must be a Church of mercy. He encourages us to ask God for forgiveness because God can change everything if our hearts are open. With God’s mercy shown towards us, we should in turn be merciful to others.

The Prodigal Son

The Parable of the Prodigal Son is also known as the Parable of the Loving Father (Luke 15:11–32).

It is the story of the mercy of the father towards his son, who was truly sorry for what he had done. This is the same mercy God has for us when we are truly sorry for our sins and return to God. It also shows that God is so delighted that we have returned that it deserves a celebration.

LUKE 15: 21–24

21 Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

22 But the father said to his servants, ‘...let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

Praying for mercy and forgiveness

Pope Francis frequently prays for mercy and forgiveness between nations that are fighting over land, or for practices that hurt people. He has prayed for peace in the Middle East and in Syria. He is a man of word and action.

We can be merciful in small ways every day by thinking and acting for others. This can change someone’s life and bring them back to God.

A little bit of mercy makes the world less cold and more just.”
The Power of Prayer

Pope Francis believes in the power of prayer. After his election as pope, he asked the crowds gathered in St Peter’s Square to pray for him.

Pope Francis prays:
• when he gets up at 4.00 a.m.
• with the Scriptures
• the Rosary every day
• before the Blessed Sacrament in the evening.

We pray in many different ways. We pray at Mass all together or in the classroom. We can praise, ask, thank and say sorry to God. God listens to every word we say, every thought we have, every hope and every concern.

“God listens to everything ... and he doesn’t just listen; he loves to listen.”

POPE FRANCIS’ FIVE FINGERS FOR FAITH

This is a good way of remembering who and what to pray for. When Pope Francis was Archbishop of Buenos Aires, he encouraged praying with fingers as a special way for children to learn the power of prayer.

1. Your thumb is used most often and is closest to you. Pray about the people you are with most often and who are closest to you – your family and your friends.

2. Your index or pointing finger is next to your thumb. Pray for those who point you in the right direction – your teachers, guides and coaches and the priests and nuns who are examples of faith.

3. The third finger is the longest or tallest. It can remind us of our leaders and those in authority. Pray that they make the right decisions to look after all in the community. Remember especially to pray for Pope Francis as he leads the Catholic Church.

4. The ring finger is the weakest finger. Pray for those who are sick or those on the fringes of society who have problems that prevent them from living full lives.

5. We have all made pinkie promises with our little fingers. Here we can make a promise in prayer of trying to do our best for God, for others and for ourselves every day.

QUESTIONS

What is your favourite prayer? When do you pray? What does it feel like to pray with others? Do you remember to thank as well as ask? Do you remember to praise and to ask for forgiveness?

USING THE BIBLE


Jesus teaches his disciples the “Our Father.” This traditional prayer, loved by all Christian churches, reminds all those who pray it of their special relationship with God.

Write the “Our Father” in your own words.

INQUIRY ACTIVITY

Prayer can take many different forms. A hymn is a prayer with music. Compile a list of hymns or songs that make you think about God and your relationship with God. Use a theme, like joy or peace, thanks or praise. Have a poll to see which hymn or song is the class favourite.
Mary and the Saints

Pope Francis has a special devotion to Mary as Mother of God and Mother of the Church. It was her example – her “yes” to the angel Gabriel to be the mother of Jesus – which showed her great faith.

Mary understands what it is to be human; to know pain and hurt, to know love and tenderness. Every day, Pope Francis prays 15 decades of a special prayer to Mary called the Rosary, in honour of Mary. When we pray to Our Lady she can calm us down and smooth things out again.

Mary of the Cross MacKillop (1842–1909) is Australia’s first saint. Mary was born in Melbourne and worked all her life for the poor and needy. She founded the order of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart (known as the Brown Joeys) in Penola in South Australia. She built schools and refuges and worked with all kinds of people. Like Pope Francis, she did not judge, but showed compassion to all who came to her.

“One thing that makes me strong every day is praying the Rosary to Our Lady.”

Special saints

Pope Francis has a special devotion to St Joseph, the husband of Mary and the man Jesus loved as his father on Earth, and St Ignatius of Loyola. He has also been influenced by Saints Paul the Apostle, Augustine, Benedict, Thomas Aquinas and Therese of Lisieux. These saints provide a good example for him as he undertakes his many papal roles and duties. They have been faithful witnesses to the gospel through their holy works, prayer and ministry to others.

In our lives we have people who inspire us. We call them heroes. For Pope Francis, saints are the heroes of the Catholic Church. They provide continual inspiration and guidance as he leads the global Catholic community.

In Australia, we have our own saint. Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop (1842–1909) is Australia’s first saint. Mary was born in Melbourne and worked all her life for the poor and needy. She founded the order of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart (known as the Brown Joeys) in Penola in South Australia. She built schools and refuges and worked with all kinds of people. Like Pope Francis, she did not judge, but showed compassion to all who came to her.

How does your mother show her love for you? How does she make you feel? Do you have a favourite saint? Do you celebrate a particular feast day in your school or parish? What qualities do you think a saint should have? Do you know a person who acts in a saintly way?

Read Luke 1:26–36

This is the Annunciation story when angel Gabriel announces that Mary will bear the Christ Child. The first part of the Hail Mary reminds us of this amazing miracle. How did Mary respond to the angel? How do you think she may have felt?

Research a saint or find out about Pope Francis’ special saints. What did they do and where? How does one become a saint in the Catholic Church? We have our own saint in Mary of the Cross MacKillop. Are there any other Australians who you think should be proposed for sainthood?
Ten Commandments for a Happy Life

The Ten Commandments were given by God to Moses on top of Mt Sinai. Moses was the leader of the Israelites who had escaped from slavery in Egypt. With these Ten Commandments they were given the rules to live a life worthy of God and of themselves.

Living a happy life

Pope Francis knows that it is sometimes easy for us to forget the right thing to do. The Ten Rules for a Happy Life remind us that life is a gift to be shared and valued. If we can do this, our communities will flourish and the world can become a place of happiness and harmony.

“Dear young people, please don’t be observers of life, but get involved.”

Pope Francis’ Ten Rules

1. Live and let live. Allow people the dignity of their choices and ways of life.
2. Share who you are and what you have with others. Be generous with your time and talent.
3. Be calm and do not rush about. Slow down and appreciate the small things.
4. Take time to relax – read, play sport, listen to music, go to the movies. This will help you to become a balanced and happy person for yourself and for others.
5. Sunday is a day for families and for rest. Spend time with those you love. Talk to them. Play with them.
6. Find a job that gives you a sense of purpose. Make a worthwhile contribution to society. Work gives a person dignity and identity.
7. Love and care for the natural world around you. This planet Earth is our home. We must care for it and check that we are looking after it for those who come after us.
8. Do not be negative. Be joyful! Be glad. Adopt an attitude of gratitude for all you have and are.
9. Talk respectfully to others about their faith and ours. Listen, learn and share our different ways to God.
10. Be a person of peace. Be gentle with others. Look to see the best in people. Smile and welcome others.
The World Around Us

For Pope Francis the Earth is a gift for all. He reminds us that a Christian who does not protect the environment does not care about the work of God.

The Book of Genesis

The first book of the Old Testament is called Genesis. It means ‘beginning’ and tells the story of creation. God meant for us to look after and become stewards of the Earth. As our population on Earth grows, we need to think of new, creative and sustainable ways of living that care for people and for the planet.

DID YOU KNOW?

Scientists call the moment of creation the Big Bang. The Big Bang happened over thirteen billion years ago and the web of life has been evolving since that time. This was the awesome moment God made the cosmos and everything in it. God was pleased and saw that it was good.

POPE FRANCIS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

“Creation is not property, which we can rule over at will; or even less is the property of only a few: creation is a gift; it is a wonderful gift that God has given us so that we can care for it and use it for the benefit of all, always with great respect and gratitude.”

We share this planet with 7.1 billion people and millions of species of life. We are co-inhabitants of a special environment which we need to preserve for future generations.

QUESTIONS

What are the issues in the environment that concern you or your family? Are you doing anything at home or school or in the local neighbourhood in response to worries about the state of the planet? Do you reduce, reuse, and recycle?

USING THE BIBLE

Read Jeremiah 12:4

This statement comes from the prophet Jeremiah in the Old Testament. When the Earth mourns, it is sad. When the grass withers, it dies. What things might make the Earth sad? Think of the natural environment and how human beings have used or abused it. What species have died out or become extinct?

INQUIRY ACTIVITY

Research ways to make your school more environmentally friendly. Make a list of five of these that you could put into practice easily. Monitor the progress of this change and the difference it makes to the school environment.

“Take good care of creation. St Francis wanted that. People occasionally forgive, but nature never does.”

Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Earth, our Mother, who nourishes us and sustains us, bringing forth fruits and vegetables of many kinds and flowers of many colours.

From The Canticle of Creation by Saint Francis of Assisi
A Modern Church

Pope Francis is making many people excited about belonging to the Church. He wants the Church to be more open and welcoming. Pope Francis has the big challenge of balancing change and continuity, and the old and the new in our Catholic faith story.

Pope Francis’ Church

Pope Francis wants a Church that can heal the wounds of the world and warm the hearts of the faithful. He wants a Church that keeps its doors open for everyone – a Church of mercy open all hours for all who need it. Pope Francis is working towards a Church that is much more loving and more concerned with people’s lives.

Pope Francis is keen to make the Church more welcoming and less concerned with its wealth. He has shown the way by wearing simple vestments, rather than the more formal and ornate vestments of his office.

Pope Francis reminds us that the gospel has not changed. He believes that the Church is not just a building or an institution that is two thousand years old, but it is a vibrant global community of faith. It is based on loving God and loving our neighbour.

Pope Francis wants young people to be part of building the Church of the future.

“Young people, build a better world; a world of brothers and sisters, a world of justice, of love, of peace, of fraternity, of solidarity.”

Questions

How do individuals and groups cope with change? Why is it sometimes good to do things in a new and improved way? Can a good balance between the old and new be found?

Using the Bible

Read 1 Corinthians 12

St Paul reminds the early Christians at Corinth in Greece that they each have gifts to contribute to the growing Church. He uses the example of the body – each part of the body is important to create one whole. In what way is the Church made up of many but it is one whole?

Inquiry Activity

Make a list of ten new things Pope Francis has done. Why have these had a positive effect on the Church? Do a survey at school and at home on what people think of Pope Francis and how he is making important changes.