



Pope Francis: Untying the Knots

By Paul Vallely

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From his first appearance on a Vatican balcony Pope Francis proved himself a Pope of Surprises. With a series of potent gestures, history's first Jesuit pope declared a mission to restore authenticity and integrity to a Catholic Church bedevilled by sex abuse and secrecy, intrigue and in-fighting, ambition and arrogance. He declared it should be 'a poor Church, for the poor'.

But there is a hidden past to this modest man with the winning smile. Jorge Mario Bergoglio was previously a bitterly divisive figure. His decade as leader of Argentina's Jesuits left the religious order deeply split. And his behaviour during Argentina's Dirty War, when military death squads snatched innocent people from the streets, raised serious questions – on which this book casts new light. Yet something dramatic then happened to Jorge Mario Bergoglio. He underwent an extraordinary transformation. After a time of exile he re-emerged having turned from a conservative authoritarian into a humble friend of the poor – and became Bishop of the Slums, making enemies among Argentina's political classes in the process.

For *Pope Francis – Untying the Knots*, Paul Vallely travelled to Argentina and Rome to meet Bergoglio's intimates over the last four decades. His book charts a remarkable journey. It reveals what changed the man who was to become Pope Francis – from a reactionary into the revolutionary who is unnerving Rome's clerical careerists with the extent of his behind-the-scenes changes. In this perceptive portrait Paul Vallely offers both new evidence and penetrating insights into the kind of pope Francis could become.

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Editorial Review

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His family name is Italian—Bergoglio—but as everyone surely knows by now, Francis is the first New World pope. As Valley, a British journalist specializing in international development and religion, presents him, he will be—is already—a truly new pope. Rejecting eight centuries of his predecessors' monarchical trappings, Francis is intent on being more of a people's pope than even John XXIII. His early career didn't exactly augur his present concern for the poor and the laity in general rather than the institutional church. As provincial of Argentina's Jesuits, he opposed Latin American liberation theology so strongly that to this day accusations of betraying two colleagues to the country's brutal military junta still carry water, though much less so than when he became archbishop of Buenos Aires or when he was runner-up to Joseph Ratzinger in the 2005 papal conclave. Valley says Bergoglio's experience under the junta changed him; certainly, he came to accept and prosecute a liberation theology shorn of Marxism. An unusually substantial and hope-reviving "instant book." --Ray Olson

Review

"Paul Valley's biography of Francis...stands, in terms of seriousness of purpose and depth of understanding, head and shoulders above other recent rushed cuttings jobs." ?Peter Stanford, *The Sunday Times*, UK

"By the end of this stint of reviewing I have read through 10 biographies of one sort or another of the new Bishop of Rome. This emboldens me to say, without hesitation, that Valley's is undoubtedly the most satisfactory of an otherwise lacklustre bunch...Valley, as befits a long-time journalist, has done the legwork...Read this book, forget the rest." ?Michael Walsh, *The Tablet*

"With more research and a wider canvas than most high-speed biographies, this portrait of Jorge Bergoglio gives us depth. Valley teases out the contradictions of a radical conservative and clarifies his task of renewal." ?*Independent*, UK

"No biography, however diligent, can capture someone's interior life. But what this book does demonstrate is that Pope Francis is a tougher, more complex figure than meets the eye...Anybody who reads this book will eagerly await his next move." ?*The Economist*, UK

About the Author

Paul Valley is a top-flight journalist with a international reputation as a commentator on religion, society and political issues. He was correspondent for *The Times* in Ethiopia during the famine of 1984-5 for which he was commended as International Reporter of the Year. He was the co-author of Bob Geldof's massive-selling autobiography, *Is That It?* and was later involved in the organisation of Live 8. In 2004 he was seconded to the Commission for Africa set up by the British prime minister, Tony Blair where he worked on the Commission's report *Our Common Interest* (later published by Penguin). He is the editor of *The New Politics: Catholic Social Teaching for the 21st century* and has advised the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales. He was created a CMG 'for services to journalism and to the developing world' in 2006 and is currently associate editor of the *Independent* newspaper.

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