



# Jorge *from* Argentina

The Story of Pope Francis for Children



Introduction by Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley, OFM Cap.

Illustrations by Diana Kizlauskas

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# Introduction

I'd like to tell you a story about my friend, Pope Francis. A couple years ago, before he was pope, I stopped in Argentina on a trip to South America. Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio invited me to spend some time with him. We had a wonderful visit with lots of laughs. I still have great memories of my time with him. Cardinal Jorge is a good friend—he even gave me a gift! It was a recording of traditional Argentine music that is sung at Holy Mass.

Now Pope Francis is a gift for all of us. He loves Jesus and the Church. He is teaching all of us how to live out the Gospel in our lives. Pope Francis is simple and kind, and he *loves* children. So I'd like to invite you to get to know our Holy Father Francis better.

This book you are about to read is full of interesting stories about Pope Francis's life. You will learn about what happened to him when he was a child and a young adult. You will see how he followed God's plan for him as a Jesuit, a priest, and a bishop. You will get to know Cardinal Jorge from Argentina, and learn how he became our Holy Father.

God always listens to the prayers of children. I hope you will remember to pray for Pope Francis, and ask God to bless him and to help him serve us as pope!

— *Cardinal Seán Patrick O'Malley, OFM Cap.*  
*Archbishop of Boston*





# A New Beginning

Mario Bergoglio (bear-GO-lee-o) was a young man. He was standing in a little church dressed in his best clothing. He was waiting for his beautiful bride. Mario thought about all that had happened in the past seven years.

Mario was twenty-four years old when he left northern Italy. He and his parents, Giovanni and Rosa, had sailed to Buenos Aires. They hoped for a better life. Giovanni had been a railroad worker in Italy. It was not easy to earn enough money to support his family there. So they decided to sell their house and join Giovanni's brothers in Argentina.

Argentina is a country in South America where people speak Spanish.

Rosa had sewn their money into the collar of her beautiful fox fur coat. With this money the family would be able to start over in a new land. She wore the coat as they left the ship in spite of the heat. They arrived on a hot, summer morning in January, 1929.

The Bergoglio family was happy to find other Italian immigrants already living in Argentina. Still, they needed to make many changes. At home they spoke Italian. Outside their home, however, they learned to speak in Spanish. There were different customs and traditions, music, and dance. Even the seasons were opposite! Learning so many new things all at once was a challenge. It took patience and a lot of hard work. They were able to do it by God's grace.

As Mario continued to remember, a smile spread over his face. Just a year ago, something happened that changed his life forever. Mario went to Mass at Saint Anthony's church. There he met a lovely young woman, Regina María Sivori. Her family was also from Italy.



Mario and Regina fell in love. Now Mario waited for her at the altar.

Mario's face beamed as he watched Regina walk down the aisle in her beautiful white dress and veil. The happy couple was married in the little church on December 12, 1935. They settled in the Flores neighborhood of Buenos Aires. They lived in a simple house with a lemon tree and a grapefruit tree in the yard. There, they thanked God for the gift of life and the blessing they had found in each other.



# Grandma's House

Regina and Mario soon learned that they were going to have a baby. The baby boy was born on December 17, 1936. The proud parents named their son Jorge (HOR-hay) Mario. They often called him by his nickname, Jorgito (hor-HEE-to), or “Little Jorge.”

The whole family loved Jorgito. But he was not the youngest Bergoglio for very long. When he was just over a year old, his mother gave birth to another baby boy, Oscar. Jorgito was now a big brother!

“I know that taking care of little ones is a lot of work, Regina,” said Jorge’s Grandma Rosa. “I’d be



happy to come by in the mornings and take Jorgito home with me until the afternoon.”

Jorgito enjoyed spending time with his grandparents. Grandma Rosa and Grandpa Giovanni spoke Italian to each other at home. They also spoke Italian to Jorgito. So Jorge grew up speaking both Spanish and Italian.

Each day, Grandma Rosa came to pick up Jorge. All morning Jorge, Grandma Rosa, and Grandpa Giovanni read and played together. They also ate the

feast Grandma Rosa prepared for lunch every day. Jorgito's grandparents taught him how to pray. They told him stories from the lives of the saints too. Then in the afternoon, he returned home.

On the outside, Jorge's house was nothing special. It was just a small place with two fruit trees. But inside, the love and faith of the growing Bergoglio family made it a wonderful place to be a child.



# Happy Days

Jorge soon started school at *Colegio Misericordia* (Mercy School) in his neighborhood. There he was taught by sisters who belonged to the Daughters of Our Lady of Mercy.

Jorge enjoyed collecting stamps. He also had fun playing with Oscar and the other children at school. And Jorge had lots of energy! Sister Dolores, one of his teachers, laughed when she saw him “study” math. Bouncing and laughing, Jorgito jumped up and down the stairs as he recited his multiplication tables aloud.

Jump, “Two times two is four!” Jump, “Two times three is six!” Jump, “Two times four is eight!” Jorge did

this over and over again, smiling and laughing the whole time. He never grew tired of jumping!

When Jorgito was old enough, Sister Dolores helped to prepare him for first Holy Communion. Jorge, Oscar, and the other children learned about Mass together. Sister Dolores taught them that when the priest said the words of consecration, God changed the bread and wine into the real Body and Blood of Jesus. They also learned the Ten Commandments and many other things that would help them choose between right and wrong.

“Children, the best thing you can do is to pray,” said Sister Dolores. “Pray to God when you have decisions to make. And don’t forget to ask Mother Mary to help you always stay close to her Son.”

Jorge was so excited he could hardly wait. He prayed every day that God would open his heart to receive Jesus. He loved the Blessed Mother and prayed a Hail Mary often asking her to help him be a good boy.

Before he knew it, the day Jorge had eagerly awaited arrived. Jorgito knelt at the altar rail next to his brother Oscar. The priest approached and held the consecrated



Host up and said, “The Body of Christ.” Jorge responded quickly and solemnly, “Amen,” and opened his mouth. He couldn’t stop smiling. He had received Jesus, and his heart jumped just as his feet did when he bounced on the stairs.