

Pilgrims Hope Francis Can Revive Church With Simple Values

Pilgrims who flocked to Rome for the **inaugural Mass** of **Pope Francis** on Tuesday had high hopes he can reform and revive the **Catholic Church**, bring it closer to ordinary people and focus global attention on helping the poor.

“Ideas are changing under Francis. The powerful have to finally understand they can’t destroy the world for money,” said Francisca Fernandes, a psychologist who traveled to Rome from Patagonia in Argentina for the inauguration.

People watched and cheered as Francis toured St. Peter’s Square in an open white jeep, frequently stopping to greet the crowds and kiss babies. Many of them said they were struck by the new pope’s openness and accessibility.

“He has a very special presence, his smile and attitude. I feel close to him,” said Veronique Blaise, a 40-year-old purchasing manager from Paris. “We need someone sincere and simple like him to bring back traditional values.”

Up to 200,000 people waving flags and banners crammed into the square to hear a homily in which Francis appealed for the protection of the environment and the defense of the weakest in society.

“He touched me the most when he was talking about the poor, the sick and the aged—he has the world at heart,” said Rev. Emmanuel Korsah, a priest from Ghana studying Church law at a Catholic university in Rome.

“There will be a lot of challenges, but he means to face them, in the name of St. Francis and with the lifestyle of simplicity he wants to live,” he said.

Others noted that the Jesuit pope's humble style was a clear break with the past.

"The new pope seems different. He is closer to young people," said Michele Del Grosso, a 17-year-old student who traveled overnight from Olevano sul Tusciano in southern Italy to take part in the Mass.

"His approach is almost revolutionary," said 42-year-old sports writer Marco Da Milano. "His words are very interesting and also easy to understand."

The former Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio has tried his best so far to flout Vatican pomp, stressing his role as bishop of Rome and frequently reaching out to greet well-wishers, to the obvious discomfort of his security detail.

Some pilgrims attending the Mass said they believed Francis also has what it takes to shake up the Church's dysfunctional central administration, or Curia, which has been blighted by rivalry, scandal and infighting.

"I hope he can reform the establishment. Because he is an outsider, he can clean up a bit, said Franz Schoen, a 70-year-old pensioner from Lucerne, Switzerland. "There's a lot to do. I hope he has enough time to do it."

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