

Popular Pope Francis' Debut Album Downloaded Over 1 Billion Times

He's urged the world to care for the poor and the earth.

In his environmental encyclical, Pope Francis concluded the document with the remark: "Let us sing as we go."

Now, the pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church has released his debut album, *Wake Up!*—and the title track has reportedly been downloaded over 1 billion times.

The album, which brings together excerpts of his speeches in different languages with music ranging from Gregorian chant to rock 'n' roll, was released Nov. 27 and features contributors such as Giorgio Kriegsch, Tony Pagliuca, Mite Balduzzi, Giuseppe Dati, Lorenzo Piscopo and the orchestral director Dino Doni.

From a sermon he gave to the people of Rome upon election to the papacy in March 2013 to his address at a Filipino youth rally on the meaning of suffering in January 2015, the 11 tracks feature Pope Francis' sermons in Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and English.

"Some might wonder if is this just another example of the mass marketing of the papacy, which has run the merchandising gamut from hoodies and coffee mugs to Pope-Soap-on-a-Rope and papal bobbleheads," wrote Stephen Bede Scharper in an article in the *Toronto Star*. "*Rolling Stone's* positive reception of the album, however, might give skeptics pause. In fact, this venerable guardian of the hip is downright gobsmailed by the offering. Declaring the pope's music 'infallible!,' the magazine premiered the rocking title track (and the only one in English), 'Wake Up! Go! Go! Forward,' which reportedly has

been downloaded to the devices of over 1 billion papal music aficionados. Not bad for a new 'artist.'"

While the prog-rock album is garnering worldwide attention, Ben Buchnat wrote in his review in *The Daily Nebraskan* that those expecting the "next Pink Floyd or Rush out of the papacy will be disappointed."

"However, those wanting a worship album that is more musically risk-taking than the typical papacy release of speeches set to classical music will most likely be pleased with this effort; especially if frequent use of English is not important," Buchnat wrote.