



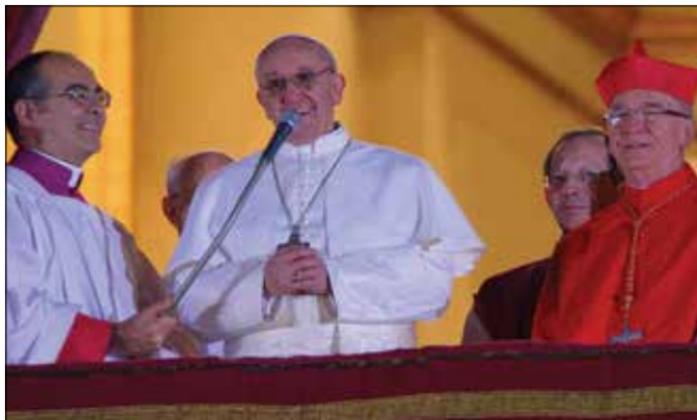
A SALT + LIGHT TELEVISION PRODUCTION

# THE FRANCIS IMPACT

STUDY GUIDE

**“And now let us begin this journey – bishop and  
people – this journey of the Church of Rome  
which leads all the churches in charity;  
a journey of fraternity, of trust between us.  
Let us always pray for one another.  
Let us pray for the whole world, that there may  
be a great spirit of fraternity.”**

POPE FRANCIS  
March 13, 2013



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# FILM SYNOPSIS

*The Francis Impact* tells four unique stories of individuals and communities who have been deeply impacted by Pope Francis. They are stories of empowerment, unexpected collaboration and deep transformation in the areas of environmentalism, migration, interfaith dialogue and pastoral reform, themes of paramount concern for Pope Francis.

The film begins in **El Salvador** where environmentalists struggle to preserve the nation's fresh water supply through a legislative ban on metallic mining. From there, the film moves to central **Minnesota** where a Catholic couple shares the story of their long and frustrating annulment process. Across the Atlantic, a local carpenter on the tiny Italian island of **Lampedusa** makes crosses from the wood of decrepit boats that carried migrants from North Africa. Finally, the film shifts to **Quebec** where a horrific attack at a local mosque brings two faith leaders together in an astonishing way.

The stories are creatively woven together and conclude with an exclusive message from Pope Francis himself, who urges viewers to go to "the peripheries" of life, where, he believes, God is found. Far from the Vatican, where the pope lives and filmed this message, the real Francis impact is experienced among ordinary people who have been inspired by his call for more mercy, inclusion, sustainability and dialogue in a world torn apart.

## HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

This study guide companion to *The Francis Impact* is designed to help facilitate small and large group discussion and reflection.

The guide is divided into four main sections, each section corresponding to one story in the film. The stories are very different, but each addresses an area of primary concern to Francis: **integral ecology** (El Salvador), **pastoral reform** (Minnesota, USA), **migration** (Lampedusa, Italy), and **interfaith dialogue** (Quebec City, Canada). Due to the variety and complexity of the issues, it is recommended that each story be discussed individually. The overall structure and number of discussion sessions is up to the facilitator.

To help contextualize the discussion, each story/section begins with a quote from a relevant document or address by Pope Francis. This is followed by a brief summary of the story and a list of the main figures.

There are ten discussion/reflection questions for each story/section. The first and last questions are intentionally open-ended to allow freedom for facilitators to direct the conversation and focus on specific issues of importance to their group. The remaining questions are designed to engage participants with the central themes of the story and Francis' pontificate more generally.

The final section of the study guide focuses on Pope Francis' personal message to viewers and draws the discussion to a conclusion.



## THE STORIES

### Water over Gold in El Salvador (integral ecology)

“Even as the quality of available water is constantly diminishing, in some places there is a growing tendency, despite its scarcity, to privatize this resource, turning it into a commodity subject to the laws of the market. Yet access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right.”

POPE FRANCIS

*Laudato Si' 30*



## SYNOPSIS

For decades environmentalists in the tiny Central American country of El Salvador had been struggling to preserve its fresh water supply. The odds were against them. Multinational mining corporations employed brutal social, political and economic pressures to extract gold and silver from the northern strip of the country, without consulting the local people. The bishops of El Salvador issued a few statements encouraging protection of the environment but only fully embraced the anti-mining movement in 2015 when Pope Francis issued *Laudato Si'*, a landmark encyclical on ecology. The Church became a protagonist alongside the environmentalists, helping to draft anti-mining legislation and marching in the streets to demand action by the government. In March of 2017, they achieved victory as the proposed bill was passed unanimously.

## FIGURES



### **Andrés McKinley**

Environmental Activist at the Central American University José Simeón Cañas (UCA)



### **Vidalina Morales**

Environmental Activist at the Association of Socio-Economic Development (ADES)



### **José Luis Escobar Alas**

Archbishop of San Salvador



### **Cardinal Gregorio Rosa Chávez**

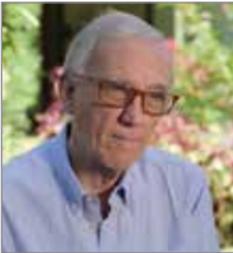
Auxiliary Bishop of San Salvador and friend of Archbishop Oscar Romero

## FIGURES



**Eva Menjívar**

Friend of Archbishop Oscar Romero



**Fr. José María Tojeira, SJ**

Director of the Human Rights Institute  
at the Central American University José  
Simeón Cañas (UCA)



**Austen Ivereigh**

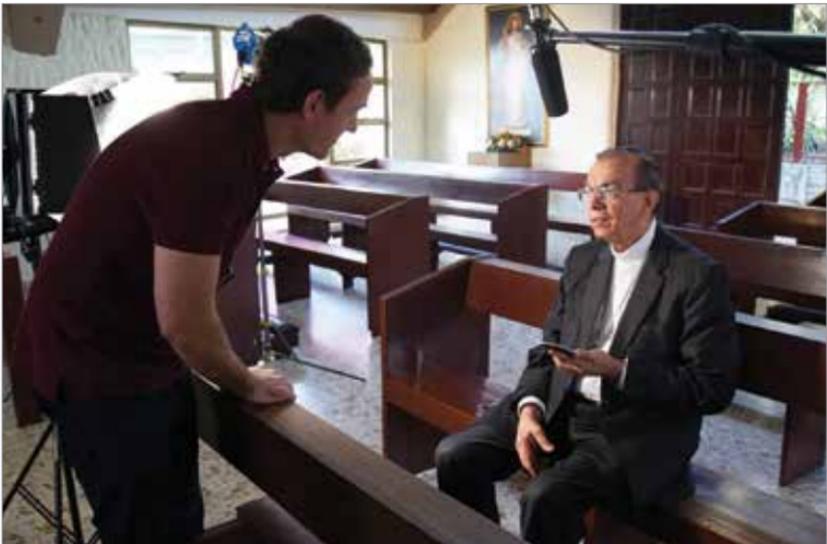
Papal biographer and Catholic  
commentator

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What element of El Salvador's anti-mining struggle impacted you most profoundly? Why?
2. Vidalina says local communities in Latin America have suffered threats, persecution, imprisonment and even murder for defending land and water from extraction by multinational mining corporations. How knowledgeable is the general public of this reality across the global south? What would you do if you lived in one of these communities?
3. The environmental activists in the film used verifiable data to counter the propaganda of the mining companies. Pope Francis also references climate science and data in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*. Why is it important to link scientific evidence with the Church's moral imperative to protect Creation?
4. Vidalina says *Laudato Si'* "revolutionized" environmental activism in Latin America, and Archbishop Escobar Alas says it gives the Church "a well-marked horizon" for the future. Why was *Laudato Si'* so important for the anti-mining struggle in El Salvador? What is so "revolutionary" about it? What impact could it have on your community?

5. *Laudato Si'* promotes an “integral ecology”. What does this mean?
6. Andrés McKinley acknowledges that *Laudato Si'* helped the anti-mining struggle. But, he says, the most dramatic impact of Pope Francis was his consistent messaging about the kind of church he wants: a church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets accompanying the poor (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 49). Why do you think this message resonated so strongly with the Catholic hierarchy and the anti-mining activists in El Salvador? How could this message apply in your particular social, political context?
7. What is the responsibility of the Catholic Church in social, economic and political struggles? Has Pope Francis expanded your perspective on this question?
8. Cardinal Rosa Chávez, who knew Oscar Romero personally, says, “There is a total harmony between the pope and the martyred archbishop: to build a poor church for the poor.” In the context of the struggle against metallic mining, what did being a “poor church for the poor” mean? What other similarities do you see between Oscar Romero and Pope Francis?

9. Austen Ivereigh asserts that Oscar Romero “is an icon of a certain kind of Latin American Church: committed to the poor, with the people, unafraid to challenge power when that power exploits people.” And that with the election of Francis, “the Latin American Church has now arrived at the centre of the universal church.” What are the implications for upholding Oscar Romero as an icon for the Catholic Church today? How can the principles Romero stood for be embodied in your community?
10. Reflect on one thing you will take away from El Salvador’s anti-mining struggle that speaks to the impact of Pope Francis. What does it mean for the Catholic Church more broadly?





# Annulment Reform in Minnesota (pastoral reform)

**“Charity and mercy demand that the Church, like a good mother, be near her children who feel themselves estranged from her.”**

POPE FRANCIS

*Mitis Iudex Dominus Iesus*

(Apostolic Letter reforming the annulment process)



## SYNOPSIS

When tragedy and heartbreak left Lynn Imholte and Mark Schwinghammer single parents, they found solace with each other and in prayer. Eventually desiring to be married in the Catholic Church, Mark applied for a declaration of nullity of his first marriage in 2012. It was approved by the marriage tribunal in his home diocese (St. Cloud) and sent to the nearest Metropolitan Archdiocese (St. Paul) for a second judgement, as required under canon law. Two years later Mark's annulment was denied. They reapplied, and it was approved in St. Cloud, but one year later they received the same letter from the tribunal in St. Paul saying the annulment would not be granted. They were devastated. Meanwhile, Pope Francis had set up a commission to study possible reforms to the annulment process that would make it simpler and less intrusive. In December 2015, Francis formally removed the required second judgement. Mark reapplied, and a declaration of nullity was approved by the tribunal in his home diocese within two months.

## FIGURES



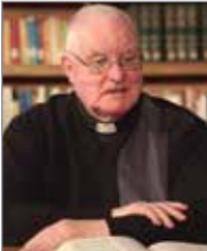
**Mark Schwinghammer**

**Lynn Imholte**



**Fr. LeRoy Scheierl**

Lynn and Mark's pastor who accompanied them through the annulment process



**Fr. Frank Morrisey, OMI**

Canon lawyer and member of the pontifical commission that studied and proposed reforms to the annulment process



**Cardinal Kevin Farrell**

Prefect of the Vatican's Dicastery for the Laity, Family, and Life

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What element of Lynn and Mark's story impacted you most profoundly? Why?
2. Have you or someone you know gone through the annulment process? What was it like? Was it completed in a pastoral and timely manner? Or was it lengthy, excessively bureaucratic and intrusive?
3. Prior to Francis' reforms, why did the annulment process take so long? In the film, Cardinal Farrell suggests that the Church was "more concerned with rules and regulations than with the love and mercy of Jesus Christ." Do you agree with Cardinal Farrell?
4. While Lynn and Mark were struggling through the annulment process, Lynn says that members of their families and friends felt the Catholic Church was judging them. Do you agree with this assessment? What impact does the image of a "judging church" have on members of your family? On others outside the Church?
5. What motivated Lynn and Mark to stay committed to the annulment process and the Church, despite major roadblocks? If you were in their situation, what would you have done?

6. Pope Francis often says that “realities are greater than ideas”. How is this principle manifested in Francis’ reform of the annulment process? What does it mean to be a person or faith community that prioritizes reality over ideas?
  
7. Fr. Frank Morrissey, OMI, (canon lawyer) was on the commission tasked with studying the tradition of the Church and proposing reforms to the annulment process. How did the Church’s tradition inform their findings? Why is it significant that Francis reinstated pastoral and juridical practices that had been in place for seven centuries (from 1307 to 1917)? Could Francis be described as a “traditionalist” or “conservative” in this regard? What do those labels really mean?
  
8. At the end of the story, Mark says the nearly four-year experience was worth it because it drew him closer to God. How do you see God working in the complex and difficult situations around you?
  
9. How has Lynn and Mark’s story shaped your understanding of complex marital situations in the Catholic Church? Pope Francis has called for a “pastoral conversion” among Catholics in response to such complex marital situations. What does a “pastoral” response look like?

10. Reflect on one thing you will take away from Lynn and Mark's story that speaks to the impact of Pope Francis. How does it shape your outlook personally? What does it mean for the Catholic Church more broadly?







## A Refugee Crisis in Lampedusa (migration)

**“I felt that I had to come here today, to pray and to offer a sign of my closeness, but also to challenge our consciences lest this tragedy be repeated. Please, let it not be repeated!”**

POPE FRANCIS

*Homily during Mass in Lampedusa  
(July 8, 2013)*



## SYNOPSIS

The tiny Italian island of Lampedusa sits in the Mediterranean Sea, closer to Tunisia than to Sicily. It has become the point of arrival for tens of thousands of migrants fleeing poverty, conflict and environmental degradation in Africa. Migrants are trafficked illegally on over-crowded and dilapidated boats which often sink along the journey. Some migrants are saved by the Italian Coast Guard, but thousands have perished. Local islanders Francesco Tuccio and Paola La Rosa have tried to respond to the tragedy in their own ways. A carpenter by trade, Francesco raises awareness of the crisis by gathering wood from the broken boats that wash up on shore and making crosses out of it. Paola works with the local Catholic parish and others to find the names of the migrants who don't survive and give them a proper burial in the local cemetery. When Francis was elected and heard about what was happening, he insisted on going to Lampedusa where he challenged "the globalization of indifference" to the suffering of migrants. It was an impassioned and prophetic plea for solidarity that came to define his pontificate and put the Catholic Church squarely in the corner of migrants and refugees.

## FIGURES



**Francesco Tuccio**

Local carpenter from Lampedusa



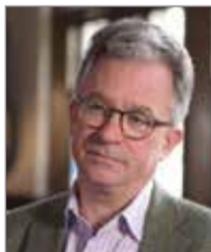
**Paola La Rosa**

Founder of Forum Lampedusa Solidale  
("Lampedusa in Solidarity")



**Cardinal Francesco Montenegro**

Archbishop of Agrigento (which includes  
Lampedusa)



**Austen Ivereigh**

Papal biographer and Catholic  
commentator

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What element of the story in Lampedusa impacted you most profoundly? Why?
2. Francis decided that his first official trip as pope would be to Lampedusa in July 2013. What does this decision suggest about the priorities of his papacy?
3. The Lampedusa story contains numerous excerpts from Pope Francis' homily during his visit on July 8, 2013. He did not lay out a strategic plan for responding to the migrant crisis. Instead, he challenged our consciences:
  - “Where is your brother? His blood cries out to me,” says the Lord (Genesis 4: The story of Cain and Abel). This is not a question directed to others; it is a question directed to me, to you, to each of us. These [migrant] brothers and sisters of ours were trying to escape difficult situations to find some serenity and peace; they were looking for a better place for themselves and their families, but instead they found death.
  - We have become used to the suffering of others: it doesn't affect me; it doesn't concern me; it's none of my business. In this globalized world, we have fallen into a globalized indifference!

- Has any one of us grieved for the death of these brothers and sisters? Has any one of us wept for these persons who were on the boat? For the young mothers carrying their babies? For these men who were looking for a means of supporting their families? The globalization of indifference has taken from us the ability to weep!

What does Francis mean by “the globalization of indifference”? Why is “indifference” so destructive? Does “the globalization of indifference” apply beyond the migrant crisis to other issues as well? What is the antidote to “indifference”?

4. Paola recounts the tragic story of Welela, a young woman who died trying to reach Europe through the Mediterranean and is now buried in Lampedusa’s cemetery. Imagine yourself in Welela’s position. How does this impact your perspective on refugees?
5. Paola, who is not a person of faith, believes Francis is offering an important alternative message to politicians who vilify migrants and refugees. What is different about Francis’ message? What motivates Francis and the Catholic Church to be in solidarity with migrants and refugees?

6. In the film, Austen Ivereigh comments that, “A lot of people, including many Catholics, are deeply unhappy with Francis’ emphasis on the importance of welcoming migrants and refugees because they feel that the people coming from outside threaten what they consider to be ‘Christian culture’. And what Francis is saying is, ‘No, no, no. Precisely because you are a Christian country you have to receive the outsider, whoever they are.’” Why do you think many people living in traditionally Christian countries, including Catholics, feel threatened by migration?
7. Cardinal Montenegro says that Francis’ visit and homily shifted the public discourse on immigration. But Francesco, the carpenter, says Francis’ visit didn’t provoke Europe to respond to the crisis. What then, in your opinion, was the “Francis impact” in Lampedusa?
8. In the context of the Lampedusa story, how do you interpret Jesus’ famous words of the final judgement in Matthew’s Gospel: “Inherit the kingdom prepared for you... for I was a stranger and you welcomed me”? (Mt 25:34-35)
9. In the final segment of the Lampedusa story, Francesco says the crosses he makes represent hope in the resurrection. Then, Austen comments that migrants are by definition people of hope in a future, and that’s why Francis sees them as an integral part

of a reinvigorated global Christianity. Where do you see hope embodied in the Lampedusa story and the global migrant crisis?

10. Reflect on one thing you will take away from the Lampedusa story that speaks to the impact of Pope Francis. How does it shape your outlook personally? What does it mean for the Catholic Church more broadly?





# From Tragedy to Friendship in Quebec (interfaith dialogue)

**“Those who are different, either culturally or religiously, should not be seen or treated as enemies, but rather welcomed as fellow-travellers, in the genuine conviction that the good of each resides in the good of all.”**

POPE FRANCIS

*Address to the International Peace Conference  
in Cairo, Egypt (April 28, 2017)*



## SYNOPSIS

On the evening of January 29, 2017, a young xenophobic man armed with a handgun and semi-automatic rifle, walked into a mosque in Quebec City and opened fire. He killed six of the fifty-three worshippers inside and injured twenty more. The Cardinal-Archbishop of Quebec, Gérald Lacroix, was at the Vatican when he heard about the tragedy, and he immediately told Pope Francis. The pope gave him a hug and a clear message: “Go home and tell these people we are with them. Bring them hope.” When the cardinal returned to Quebec, he met one of the founders of the mosque, Boufeldjah Benabdallah, who was representing the Muslim community in the media. When the cardinal shared the pope’s gesture and words with Boufeldjah, and reached out in dialogue and solidarity to the Muslim community on behalf of the Catholic Church, a personal friendship began between the two leaders. Muslims everywhere have been touched by the gestures of mutual respect and dialogue offered them by Pope Francis throughout his papacy—gestures Cardinal Lacroix and Mr. Benabdallah have internalized and are living out together in Quebec.

## FIGURES



### **Boufeldjah Benabdallah**

Co-founder of the Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City (Mosque)



### **Cardinal Gérald Lacroix**

Archbishop of Quebec and Primate of Canada



### **Jordan Denari Duffner**

Author and Islamic Scholar

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What element of Boufeldjah and Cardinal Lacroix's story impacted you most profoundly? Why?
2. For Pope Francis, what is interfaith dialogue and how should it be done? How do Boufeldjah and Cardinal Lacroix embody this kind of dialogue in their friendship?
3. Jordan comments that many Catholics are unfamiliar with Islam and don't know Muslims personally. Why is unfamiliarity a roadblock to true dialogue?
4. In the film, Cardinal Lacroix visits Boufeldjah's home to break the Ramadan fast with his family and friends. Why is sharing a meal important for building relationships?
5. Jordan suggests that Catholics shouldn't be perplexed by the headscarf (hijab) worn by Muslim women, because Mary—the most prominent woman in Christianity—is commonly depicted in a headscarf. What do you think of this argument?
6. After sharing the pope's gesture of peace and solidarity with Boufeldjah and the Muslim community, Cardinal Lacroix admits that he would not have reached out if it weren't for Francis' example. What makes Francis' example so compelling?

7. How is the virtue of mercy a point of convergence between Muslims and Christians? How can dialogue and solidarity be fostered through mercy?
8. One of the first and most powerful gestures of Pope Francis occurred two weeks after his election: on Holy Thursday he washed the feet of twelve young people in a juvenile detention centre in Rome, including two Muslims. What is the significance of this gesture? What does it mean for Catholic-Muslim dialogue?
9. Cardinal Lacroix says that “interfaith dialogue will not happen in high places, it will happen between people first in the relationships we build.” How can you build relationships with Muslims, people of other faiths, and people of no faith?
10. Reflect on one thing you will take away from Boufeldjah and Cardinal Lacroix’s story that speaks to the impact of Pope Francis. How does it shape your outlook personally? What does it mean for the Catholic Church more broadly?



# MESSAGE TO VIEWERS FROM POPE FRANCIS

Filmed at Casa Santa Marta at the Vatican  
on December 18, 2018

*When Jesus gathered the apostles before going up to heaven - the Ascension - He gave them a mandate.*

*He did not say to them, "Now go to Jerusalem and stay quietly there and open a church and open a hall for catechesis and multiply the churches in Jerusalem ..." No.*

*He told them, "You stay a little while in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit comes and then, go to the whole world and preach the gospel."*

*"Evangelize all nations." And He sent them out. And the Holy Spirit gave them the strength to go out. The Holy Spirit always has that double movement: it sends out and unites.*

*That is why the Church is always a church that goes forth. It goes to the peripheries. It goes to the peripheries, which is where the Kingdom of God must be sown.*

*And it also goes to the human peripheries; to the limits; to the peripheries of people; of health and disease, a periphery of the disease; the intellectual, ideological peripheries.*

*She always goes out; she goes out to meet what is not near. The peripheries see the realities, rather, even better ... From the peripheries you can better see the centre.*

*When I realized, for example, about the problem of migrants, I had the inspiration to go to Lampedusa, a periphery, and there I saw what I did not find in any book, in any article. There I saw reality.*

*Going to the peripheries is going to touch reality.*

*When Jesus, in what I call the protocol with which we are going to be judged – Matthew 25 – When Jesus proclaims that protocol, notice that they are always things in the peripheries: Feed the hungry: a periphery. Give drink to the thirsty; dress the naked; visit those in prison. Visit the sick. They are all peripheries.*

*Jesus sends us to the peripheries.*

*If we take out of the Gospel this mandate from Jesus to go to the peripheries, the Gospel would be only a book of Platonic philosophy and nothing else. Brothers and sisters, let's go to the periphery.*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What part of Pope Francis' concluding message impacted you most profoundly? Why?
2. Why do you think the filmmaker included a direct message from Pope Francis only at the end of the film?
3. Pope Francis encourages viewers to go to the existential peripheries. What are the existential peripheries? Why are they so important to the Christian faith?
4. How is each story an example of a "periphery"? If God is found at the peripheries, as Francis believes, where is God in each story?
5. As a viewer of the film, what was Pope Francis saying to you, personally?
6. After watching the film and the pope's message, how would you describe the "Francis impact"?

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