

# The PEOPLE'S

# P

COMING  
TO  
AMERICA

HE SPEAKS HIS MIND  
AND STOPS FOR FAN  
PHOTOS, RIDES THE  
BUS AND HANGS WITH  
THE POOR. ON THE  
EVE OF HIS FIRST U.S.  
VISIT, A LOOK AT  
THE PONTIFF WHOSE  
VISION IS INSPIRING  
THE WORLD

# PEOPLE



**HOLY SELFIE!**  
Francis (with fans in '13)  
eschews security concerns  
to get close to his  
flock. "Protocol is cold  
and detached," he says.



It's not every day a Pope turns up at the local optical shop. So on Sept. 3, when the unmistakable figure in the white cassock stopped in to check out Alessandro Spiezia's wares in Rome, a camera-wielding crowd soon gathered outside. After trying on some frames, Francis, 78—being neither a big spender nor seeker of special favors—concluded quietly, "Just new lenses. And, please, Alessandro, charge me whatever it costs." Then he and a bodyguard headed back to his waiting Ford Focus. "What's so strange?" he asked, stopping for a few photos. "Where else do you go for new glasses except the optician?"

But if the leader of the Catholic Church was surprised by the uproar his little shopping trip produced, wait until this regular-guy pontiff sees the fuss more than 2 million fans will make when he touches down Sept. 22 for his first-ever visit to the United States. Excitement over Francis's six-day swing through Washington, D.C., New York and Philadelphia stretches from the White House (President Obama has told aides he wants to be at the airport for Francis's arrival) to late-night TV ("Pope Hope," Stephen Colbert calls him; "More like Pope Fran-TASTICI" says Jimmy Kimmel), to Philly's Curran-Fromhold prison, where inmates and guards are working on a hand-carved chair for his Sept. 27 visit. Debby Fireman, one of dozens of Philadelphia entrepreneurs offering papal-visit souvenirs, says Francis, who was elected in 2013, is unlike any of the 265 men who wore the papal mitre before him: "People are starved for this Pope's

FROM LEFT: FRANCO ORLIGUAGETTY IMAGES, OSSERVATORE ROMANO/REUTERS



talk of love and acceptance."

The former Argentine "street priest" known as Jorge Mario Bergoglio developed his inclusive philosophy while ministering in the darkest corners of Buenos Aires. As Pope, he has prioritized the poor, refused the imperial trappings of the Vatican and radically softened the Church's tone on everything from homosexuality ("Who am I to judge?" he asks) to abortion (Women should be forgiven their "agonizing and painful decision," as

**'That smile of his, that twinkle in his eye—he's everybody's grandfather'**

—MSGR. SAL CRISCUOLO

echoes of Jesus. "Francis is living Christ's life and example," the Monsignor says. Or, as Fireman puts it, "he really is the people's Pope, and that's why people are coming in throngs to try to be near him."

People like Noël Zemborain, who set off with her family of six in their Volkswagen microbus in March—*from Argentina*—on a 13,000-mile road trip to Philadelphia. They won't get a selfie with His Holiness: They'll be among the some 1.5 million attendees at his World Meeting of Families Mass on Sept. 27. But it's enough. "We are very fond of Pope Francis," Zemborain, 39, told *People*. "He's someone you could imagine being with in a bar and talking to like a friend."



## A Common Touch

When Francis appointed Konrad Krajewski to run his personal office of charity, the Polish archbishop says he was told, "You can sell your desk... You have to go out there and look for the poor." As the desk goes, so goes the traditional stodginess of Church hierarchy. Whether he's clowning with charity workers (above), washing the feet of prison inmates, cradling the suffering or cold-calling those who write him despairing letters, Francis practices the human connection he preaches—and with a warm ease. He invites strangers to use "tu," the informal "you" in Italian, insisting, "You and I are friends now." After Diego Neria Lejárraga, a transgender Spanish man denounced as "daughter of the devil" by his parish priest, wrote of his shaken faith, Francis invited Neria and his fiancée over to Santa Marta for a long talk. "I thought God had forgotten me, but Francis fixed it," says Neria. "If there is an embodiment of Jesus, it is Francis."



**'PRAY FOR ME'**  
It's Francis's refrain with everyone he meets, from a young disabled man in St. Peter's Square (in 13) to the inmates at Rebibbia prison in April (far left), whom he urged to "pray that the Lord washes away my filth as well."



**1** Francis (in 14) lunches in the Vatican workers' mess. **2**, At Spiezia Optics Sept. 3

**3**, Taking the bus to a retreat. **4**, Santa Marta's spartan quarters.

**5**, A pair of red loafers like his predecessors' were made for him, but Francis opted for plain old black.



**1** **Catching a ride**

## À Modest Life

Francis took a vow of poverty when he became a Jesuit at age 32 and he sets a frugal tone at the Vatican. Rejecting the limo and palatial apartments of Benedict XVI and a long line of other predecessors, Francis bunks with dozens of housemates at the Santa Marta guesthouse, where, having gained 15 lbs. in office, he's under doc's orders to cut back on the buffet's pasta *del giorno*.



**4** A room at Santa Marta



**5**

**Francis's sensible shoes vs. Benedict's handmade loafers**

## FRANCIS'S FAVORITE THINGS



**'FOOTBALL'**  
He's a lifelong fan of Argentina's Saints of San Lorenzo soccer team.



**COOKING**  
Modest about his prowess, he once joked, "I've never killed anyone!" A specialty: baked suckling pig.

**THE TANGO**  
"It's something I have inside of me," Francis has said. He can do the traditional version but prefers the happier, quicker tango called *milonga*.



## BEETHOVEN

In particular, the *Leonore Overture No. 3* conducted by Wilhelm Furtwängler, whom he calls "the best director."



## THE DIVINE COMEDY

Francis likes Dostoyevsky and Hölderlin, but says of Dante's poem envisioning the afterlife, "I must have read it four times."



## WHERE HE STANDS



### WOMEN

The priesthood is still out of the question, but Francis encourages female leadership in the Church: “The feminine genius is needed.”

### GAYS

“If a homosexual person is of goodwill and is in search of God, I am no one to judge.” With that, he transformed the Church’s tone from condemnation to compassion—but did not overturn its stand that homosexual acts are a sin.

### GREED

His personal frugality dovetails with his vision of “a Church which is poor and for the poor.” Denouncing trickle-down economics and the “idolization” of money over people, Francis suspended a German bishop who spent \$43 million on a mansion. And with Syrian refugees flooding Europe, he directed churches to take them in, starting with the Vatican.

### GLOBAL WARMING

With experience in chemistry, Francis issued a data-driven encyclical this year saying humanity’s unfettered pursuit of profit risks turning Earth into an “immense pile of filth.”

### SEX ABUSE

After initially defending the Church’s handling of the scandal, he asked forgiveness for the “evil” of some priests and appointed a woman who was molested as a child to his commission tackling “the shame of the Church.”



## A Reluctant Celebrity

The Harlem Globetrotters made him an honorary member. Hillary Clinton has said she envies people who’ll meet him. And he’ll get a 21-gun salute at the White House. But the VIP fawning has hardly swept Francis off his feet. “To depict the Pope as a kind of superman or a star seems to me offensive,” he has said. Any swag he receives—whether an iPad (from a Uruguayan priest) or a Harley-Davidson motorcycle (from the company)—is auctioned for charity. Which might explain why President Obama, selecting a gift last year, stuck with seeds from his wife’s garden. Francis himself is not a fussy gift giver. As pal Mercedes Ninci and other friends from Argentina said their goodbyes after an August visit, Ninci recalls, “he disappeared for 10 minutes” to find them a bottle of grappa to take home.



**1.** The Harlem Globetrotters tried teaching Francis a trick or two when they visited St. Peter’s Square May 6. **2.** Angelina Jolie Pitt called it an honor to screen her film *Unbroken* at the Vatican in January. She came home with a keepsake rosary. **3.** President Obama received Francis’s book *The Joy of the Gospel* at the Vatican in March 2014. The Pope’s written word, the President said, “will give me strength and will calm me down.”

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: OSSE/VAUGHN ROMANO/AP; CTV/REUTERS; EPA/GABRIEL BOUY/SIPA/PHAN; OSSE/VAUGHN ROMANO/REUTERS

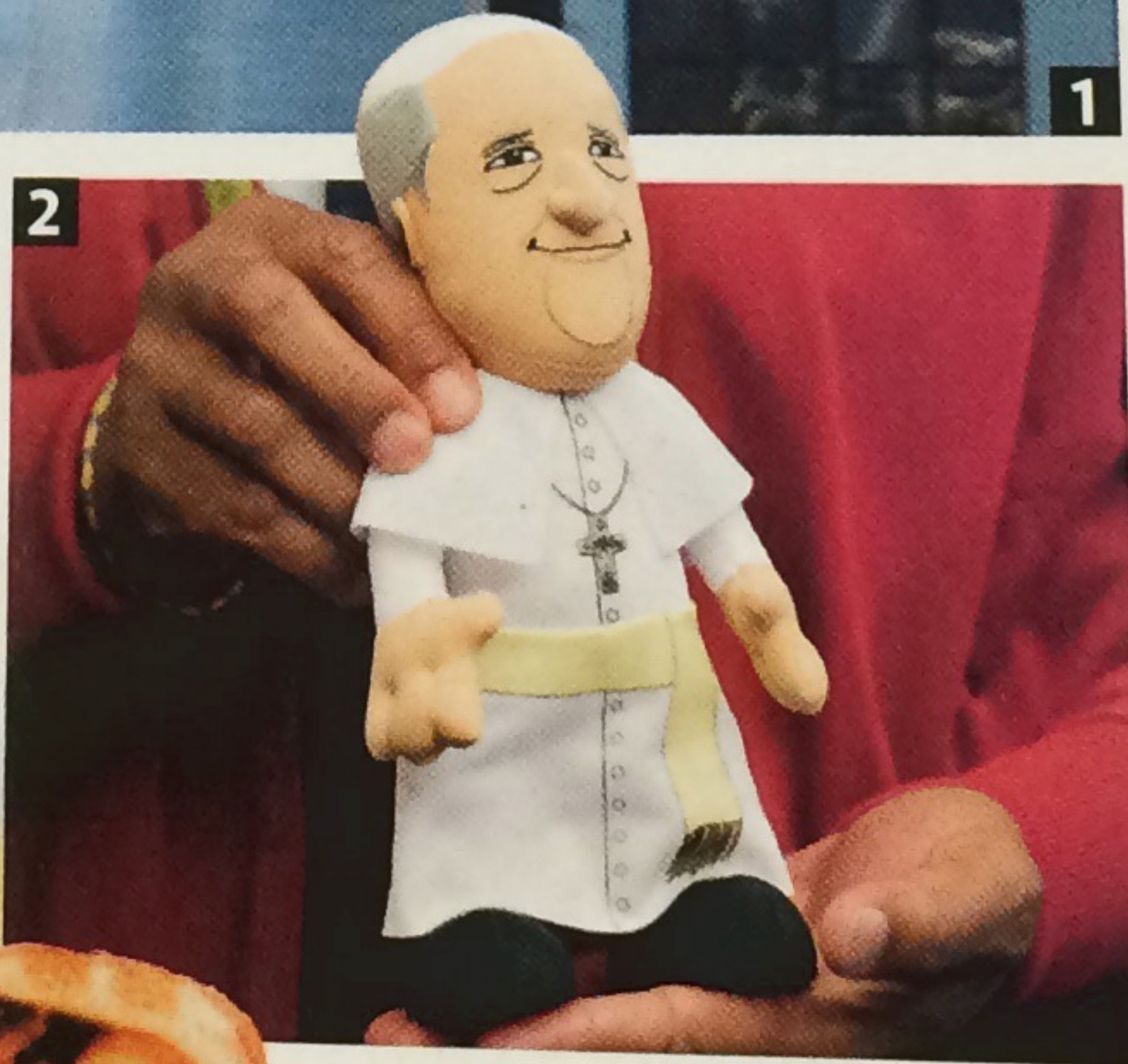
WELCOME  
POPE  
FRANCIS

FOLLOW  
THE POPE:  
NET  
#PopelnUSA  
#PapaEnUSA

# Pope Mania!

For the faithful seeking souvenirs of Francis's visit, there's a commemorative crucifix plus prayer cards galore. More irreverent offerings include bobbleheads, papal beer and Debby Fireman's Pope Toaster, which brands his visage onto your breakfast. "We're all just trying to create something that spreads his joy," says Fireman.

I ❤️  
Pope  
Francis



1. A hand-painted mural outside New York City's Madison Square Garden.
2. Bleacher Creatures plush likeness.
3. A button from store .popefrancisvisit.com.
4. Breakfast by toastthepope.com.

PREACHING TO  
7 MILLION  
(TWITTER)  
FOLLOWERS  
@Pontifex

**Aug. 25, 2015**  
A Christian who is too attached to riches has lost his way.

**June 18, 2015**  
It is contrary to human dignity to cause animals to suffer or die needlessly.  
#LaudatoSi.

**March 12, 2015**  
Beware of getting too comfortable!  
When we are comfortable, it's easy to forget other people.

**Feb. 14, 2014**  
Dear young people, don't be afraid to marry.  
A faithful and fruitful marriage will bring you happiness.

**July 25, 2013**  
May sports always be a means of exchange and growth, never of violence and hate.  
#Rio2013 #JMJ

**June 7, 2013**  
Consumerism has accustomed us to waste.  
But throwing food away is like stealing it from the poor and hungry.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: JONATHAN SCIORTINO/POLARIS; MATT ROUREL/AP; CLARK MILLS; CATHOLIC TO THE MAX