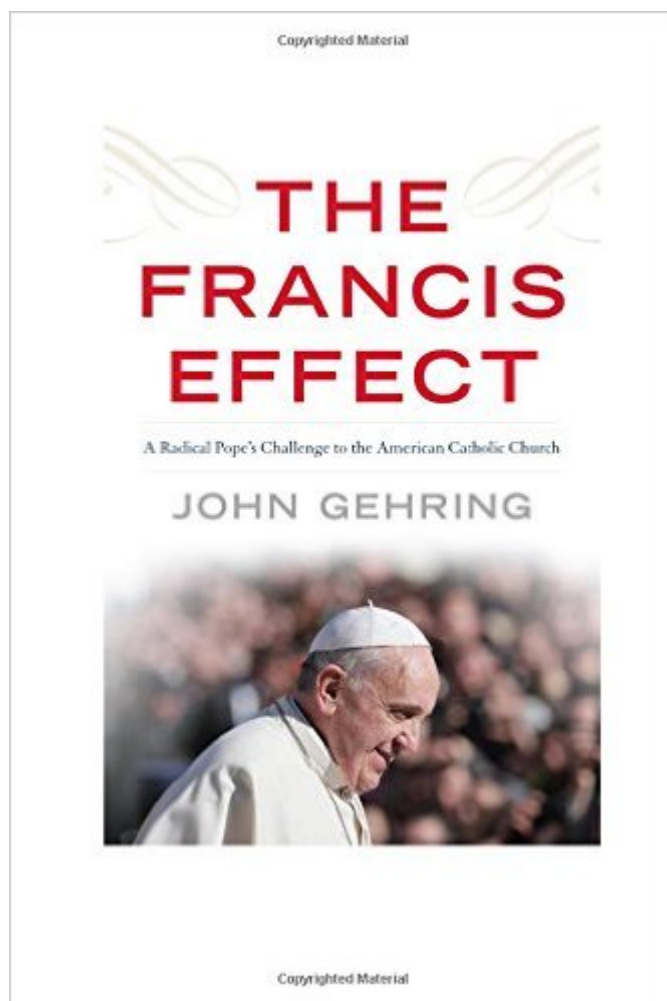


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# The Francis Effect: A Radical Pope's Challenge To The American Catholic Church



## Synopsis

The Francis Effect explores how a church once known as a towering force for social justice became known for a narrow agenda most closely aligned with one political party, and then looks at the opportunities for change in the wake of Francis. • Pope Francis has become an unlikely global star whose image has graced the covers of Rolling Stone, The New Yorker, Time, and even the nation's oldest magazine for gays and lesbians. The first Latin American pope, the first Jesuit, and the first to take the name of a beloved saint of the poor, Francis is shaking up a church that has been mired in scandal and demoralized by devastating headlines. His bracing critique of an out-of-touch hierarchy, pastoral style when it comes to divisive issues, and humble gestures rejecting the trappings of papal power have changed the conversation about the world's most powerful religious institution. But in the United States, Pope Francis finds a church that has been transformed over the past three decades by a vocal minority of culture warrior bishops, conservative intellectuals, and Christian evangelicals. The first half of the book analyzes the key trends that shaped the Catholic Church over the past century, while the second half looks at the words and actions of Pope Francis, and what they mean for real change.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I found John Gehring's well-researched, well-written book to be enlightening. I learned much about the religious right's influence within the U.S. Catholic church, how the pope is pushing back on that influence to some extent--and that no side has exclusive claim to all the moral and spiritual issues facing the church. It's a middle-progressive view of the church and the pope's influence, and

certainly is critical of some conservatives, but respectful to all perspectives. It also provides context for the pope's limitations. Fascinating anecdotes and scenes from priests, college students, nuns, scholars and many others, woven within thoughtful analyses. A great primer as we consider Pope Francis' U.S. tour and how American society, Catholics especially, can look to future debates on a host of theological and social issues.

A very insightful and nuanced reflection on the pope and the church today. Well researched and factual yet written in a very engaging style. Reliable judgments and observations by a (comparatively young) church observer and committed Catholic. As the pope and the Catholic church garner almost daily headlines this is a must read for insight and analysis.

The author explained very clearly how the catholic church began to align itself in the 1970ies with the very conservative evangelicals and how Pope John Paul II appointed only right wing bishops to archbishops and cardinals during his 27 years of being pope. The author also points out which groups and individuals spoke out against the continuously narrowing focus in the American catholic church and how Pope Francis is trying to broaden this focus by again including the traditional social justice issues.

Gehring describes persuasively and cogently the obstacles facing the church and Francis's call to move it out into the streets to be a "wounded healer." A keen observer from within the faith, he chronicles and profiles the movements and their leaders who have emphasized adherence to moral doctrine, on the one hand, and social justice, on the other, and the effect those emphases have had on both the clergy and laity. Enter Pope Francis, a bishop with long experience in the slums, who calls all Christians to serve Christ by serving the poor and honoring the earth above all else. Gehring captures the spirit and bold message of this pope and the opportunities and challenges he creates for the church and the world. Whether conservative or progressive, you will learn from this valuable and important book.

As a young Catholic trying to learn more about historical and sociopolitical aspects of my church, I am glad to have stumbled upon this book. The author's rich detail and accessible writing style provide nuanced and helpful context to the current debates within the faith, and Pope Francis's influence on them. Very informative. Definitely recommend.

An engaging and balanced exploration of how Pope Francis is reforming the church and challenging complacency on the most urgent issues of our day. The book is well-researched, balanced, weaving together a wide range of trends and historical developments that help the reader see how and why Pope Francis' leadership has been and will continue to be so transformational for the church and the world.

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