

**Francis and Francis:  
How a Pope and a Saint Changed the World, One Heart at a Time  
Zahm Lecture presented by Timothy Egan, 9/17/15**

Good evening. My name is Karen Eifler and together with Father Charlie Gordon, we co-direct the Garaventa Center for Catholic Intellectual Life and American Culture, here at the university and we could not be more thrilled to see so many of you here. I have a few general words of welcome before we get to the main event.

[00:00:23]

Probably the most important general announcement is that this is the first of a whole full year of amazing programming at the University of Portland, that is free and open to the public, courtesy of the Garraventa Center and Oregon's Catholic university. I know that you are going to love what you hear tonight and you're going to want to stay on top of all of the other offerings coming up, and so I'll invite you to take a calendar on your way out.

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And also, if you're not part of our electronic mailing list, I'd encourage you to sign up for that, so that you don't miss anything. We also publish some weekly podcasts. Father Charlie reflects on the Sunday readings in four to five minute bits. We typically produce podcasts too of our major lectures.

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And amazing things going on on campus. So on your way out, staffed by our amazing program assistant Sarah Nuxoll and our student workers Sarah and, Jesise, they will make sure that you don't miss anything. Another important announcement if you're a teacher in any school, really, anywhere. If you're a K-12 teacher anywhere, we are pleased to be able to offer you at no cost to you, professional development units for tonight's program, and all programs of the Garaventa Center, and all you have to do is sign a sheet on your way out and we will have those in the mail to you tomorrow.

[00:01:51]

If you're a teacher you know just how cool PDUs are. I'm very grateful, as I said, to our Staff at the Garaventa Center who made the magic happen. The food didn't just appear. Lots of work went into that. We're also very grateful to the members of the community who helped us get the word out about tonight's lecture.

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And we've sent about 1,500 emails in the last two weeks, and we really wanna know if those worked. So you got asked, how did you find out about us? Thank you for answering honestly. Well, you know that you are at an academic event when there is an introduction to the introduction.

[00:02:32]

So here goes. The Garaventa Center, your host for this evening, celebrates and deploys the fruits of faith, reason, and imagination that constitute the Catholic intellectual tradition. We are delighted to kick off a new academic year with this signature lecture. When this series namesake, Fr. John Zahm of the congregation of Holy Cross, wanted his secular peers to read something of his before they found out that he was a priest, as well as a scientist.

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He wrote it under the pen name H.J. Mosanz. Then as now about 100 years ago, faith and reason were often seen as competing rather than complementary paths to knowledge. Father Zahm found that writing under another name offered a great way to build his audience and to sneak in truth that he wanted those of his era to read, to know, and to remember.

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To remember, for instance, the great women in history who contributed to science, to remember that holy revelation adds to the robust fruits of reason in the ongoing work of thinking through the difficult problems of the day. Well, we continue that worthy work today at the University of Portland.

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And these are heady days on the bluff. We have new buildings, energetic and brilliant students, talented and dedicated faculty and staff and our president, Father Mark Poorman, of the Congregation of Holy Cross. Who we are very pleased to have in the audience tonight. Has just completed his first year in office and his own seemingly non-stop energy has been largely catalytic in making all that happen.

[00:04:25]

At his right hand overseeing the entire academic division of the university, is our Provost, Dr. Tom Greene. Dr. Greene is the quintessential Renaissance man, interested in hundreds of topics, possessing a remarkable intellect that combines with a sparkling imagination and an incredibly capacious heart. To produce a beloved teacher and a leader who brings out the best in the people around him.

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As he is the University of Portland's Chief Academic Officer, we have invited him to provide the formal introduction of tonight's Zahm lecturer. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Greene to the podium.

[APPLAUSE]

>> Thank you Karen and good evening to all of you. It's a challenging task I think to sift through the resume of an accomplished and equally modest person, and decide what an audience should know about the speaker as they settle in for a lecture.

[00:05:37]

You want everyone to know they are in for a real treat, but you don't want the introduction to be longer than the lecture. So as I introduce Tim Egan tonight, author of a shelf full of riveting, highly honored books and the northwest correspondent for the New York Times, be aware that I could go on and on introducing the 16th Zahm lecturer to be welcomed to this bluff for this signature academic event.

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In an era where writers tend to be more and more specialized, it's a treat to meet one who cannot be pinned down to a single era or subject. Tim's searching mind and storytelling genius have led him to explore the American dust bowl, corrupt cops, the great Northern Rockies, fire of 1910, the Irish brigade of the U.S. Civil War, and the world of fine wine making just to mention a few.

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Alongside his Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award, we can offer him this high praise from college students. When assigned his books in their courses, they rarely sell them back. [SOUND] Of course, that's the ultimate test or award. To the long and impressive list of places Tim has shared the fruits of

his capacious imagination and restless curiosity, we are pleased to add this encore visit to the University of Portland.

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Tonight Tim will engage us in reflecting on Francis and Francis, how a saint and Pope changed the world one heart at a time. Please join me in welcoming our 2015 Zahm lecturer, Mr. Tim Egan of Seattle, Washington,

>> [APPLAUSE]

>> Son of the Northwest. [APPLAUSE]

>> Actually, I will buy back some of your books if you show up later, I'll set up a little exchange here.

[00:08:03]

That was terrific, Doctor Tom Greene. Thank you so much for that introduction, Karen. And it's a huge privilege and honor to be doing this lecture. I didn't realize this is the one lecture of the year, so that put the extra pressure on me here. I couldn't be more happy to be back here on the Bluff at University of Portland, and back here in the city of Portland, where as you all know this is the city where young people go to retire.

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>> [LAUGH]

>> I love that line, I can't get enough of that. I also want to give shout out to my friend, Brian Doyle, a terrific writer, a great Irishman and a great presence here at UP. I know he's floating around here somewhere with his usual magical presence.

[00:08:44]

There he is, sitting, all right.

>> [APPLAUSE]

>> I was at a wedding this weekend. Actually, it was a wedding I threw for my daughter, I hosted for my daughter and 150 people up in the San Juan Islands, so we got to know each other pretty well, and I have a large Irish-Catholic family and a bunch of people said, boy, you're really different from your other siblings.

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You know, my mother produced one kid, one after the other, a year apart. And, people say, so what makes you so different? Why did you choose the writer's path? Why do you always do these other things? And, I said, if I thought about this, the thing that really changed my life was having a Jesuit education, was going to this one high school in Spokane, actually it was pretty blue collar high school.

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It was Gonzaga Prep. And it totally changed me. It got me to look at the world in different ways. It got me to be forever curious about myself and my God. And not long ago, a priest who had taught me at Gonzaga, Father Steve Sundberg, when I was there he gave me something called JUG, which means Justice Under God, which is justice side of chain gang prison labor.

[00:10:06]

I think I was out breaking stones but I wasn't manacled. And I reminded Steve of that. He asked me to do the commencement address at Seattle U and I brought up my chain gang manual labor. And so, just

before the speech he called me into his office at Seattle U and he said, I'm going to give you a blanket pardon.

[00:10:28]

[LAUGH] So, it's no longer on my record. I'm clean.

>> [LAUGH]

>> I don't have JUG there anymore. Now, our topic tonight, Francis and Francis, How a Pope and a Saint Changed the World One Heart at a Time, couldn't be more topical. As you know, Pope Francis arrives on our fair shores on Tuesday for a six day visit.

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This coming after we've had a summer and a political season dominated by a showy, narcissistic vulgarian, Mister Donald Trump. [LAUGH] [APPLAUSE] Now one thing Doctor Greene didn't note in this introduction, I'm now an opinion columnist at the time [LAUGH] at the New York Times so I'm no longer the Northwest correspondent.

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I'm free to just spout numerable opinions, and Donald Trump does that to me.

>> [LAUGH]

>> But now I thought about this, granting a global stage to someone named for a half-starved aesthetic could be transformative in the summer of Trump. Our Pope Francis plans a visit to the White House, a speech before a joint session of Congress on Thursday, the only Pope ever to have given, to give a speech before a joint session of Congress.

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An outdoor mass in Washington DC, a huge rally on the mall for climate change, then he'll go to Philadelphia. He'll spend half a day in a prison, talking to prisoners, and special prisoners who have been chosen to speak with him. He'll go up to New York to Madison Square Garden for a mass, then he'll give a speech before the UN.

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This, the only Pope who's ever graced the cover of Rolling Stone.

>> [LAUGH]

>> He is 78 years old, and all this vigor we have seen for him in a short amount of time comes from a man with only a single functioning lung. The only thing that really concerns me about Francis is that he's 78 and has that single functioning lung.

[00:12:37]

I wish he had 20 years ahead of him. So let's talk about this Francis's spiritual mentor, that half-starved aesthetic, that pauper who didn't own money, property, or even shoes. Francis of Assisi, Francesco, one of Italy's two patron saints. Now I'm a huge Francis fan. I always have been since I was a little kid.

[00:13:02]

He was always my favorite. And then, when I grew to be an adult and started developing a career as a writer, I wanted to do a book about him. I thought this would be great, just to re-imagine that amazing narrative of Francesco di Assisi. So I had a fellowship down at Stanford, where my daughter was in school, and that gave me access to their library.

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They're so secretive about their library. So I got in and I went to this vault in the back. It was about 2,000 square feet, and there were stacks, and stacks, and stacks of books on Francis. And I realized I would have to work pretty darn hard to say something fresh and original about him.

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But it tells you something about the lasting power of this person over the 800 years. Now, most of the world's 1.2 billion Roman Catholics know something of this man and of the Franciscan order. They are revered by many non-Catholics, so he is revered by many non-Catholics as well.

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You can go to secular Berkeley, or equally secular France and you will find evidence of Francis everywhere and I'm not just talking about the stone bird bath statue.

>> [LAUGH]

>> [COUGH] That's ubiquitous. He is the nature saint, he is the patron saint of the environment. But he was much, much more than that.

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And in choosing the name of Francis, this pope, the first pope named for Francis, it says a lot about the lasting power and impact of the original Francis. So just how did this scrawny figure dressed in a filthy tunic with sores and boils over his skin. Living in an earthen hovel.

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How did this impoverished person become so powerful? How could he have a residence that would last us through 800 years? Well let's give you a few quick biographical notes. Francis was born in 1181 or 82, we don't know precisely. And he was a nobleman's son. His family was a merchant family, a clothing merchant family.

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They were quite wealthy living in a beautiful town of Assisi. The path was set for young Francis to take over his father's business and live comfortable merchant's life. Now, Francis, early on, I'm sorry if I offend any Franciscans here, he was a bit of a party animal. He hung out, he drank, he quote, committed every kind of debauchery, an early biographer wrote of him.

[00:15:46]

A college student, I would just say. Sorry. [LAUGH]

Sorry. Not at UP, of course. Right. A role model for all of you, there you go. But remember, this is almost 400 years before the Renaissance. This was the early years of the Holy Roman Empire, which as you know, was neither Holy nor Roman.

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Italy's hilltop towns were always at war with each other. If you've been to Umbria and you know the stunning town on the spine of a hill where Francis was raised and near by in the valley is the equally stunning town of Perugia. You may have heard of that, because that's where Amanda Knox, the University of Washington student was accused of murdering her roommate and unjustly imprisoned for four years.

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And later, found by the Italian Supreme Court to be innocent, totally exonerated. That's Perugia down in the valley, Assisi up in the hill. They were at war with each other. Most of the Italian hill towns with any sort of power and influence commonly went to war with each other.

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Francis this party animal, this guy who loved a good time joins up to kick Perugia's butt. He's gonna go to war against a rival town. He's 21 years old, he's ready for adventure. He's ready for pillaging, plundering, blood-shedding, all the things that drive a young man to go to war.

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Well, this rah rah didn't last for long. Perugia defeated Assisi, Francis was captured. He was thrown in a dungeon, a cold dark cell with rats and dark. And there, he spent a year before his father came up with the ransom money to finally spring him from his cell in Perugia, but something happened to him in that dark, dank place.

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After his release after his father had sprung him, he didn't go back to his sea seat. He hold up in an abandoned church and he prayed. When he emerged from that time of prayer, he was a different man. He had refused his father's pleadings. He wasn't interested, he said in wealth.

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He wasn't interested in taking over the merchant business. He wasn't interested in any of the buying and selling of the merchant business. He wasn't interested in the merchant business weekly luncheon. He was interested in the untouchable lepers in the valley. He was interested in the lost souls. He was interested in the poor and the passed-over.

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This young man coming out of a year in a cell, that's what he told his father. Well, you can imagine how the old man reacted. He promptly hauled Francis into court and he told the court that his son was guilty of refusing to accept his family responsibility. And there, the myth of Francis says and I think it's mostly true.

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He is said to have torn off his nobleman's clothes and in front of the court and his family renounced his wealth. He stood there nearly naked. And of course, you can see this stunning narrative in the frescoes the Giotto, mostly attributed to Giotto in the earthquake damaged basilica that's in Assisi.

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Thereafter, Francis devoted his life to the poor and the forgotten that he told his father he was going to pay attention to. He said, the Catholic church had grown too wealthy, too complacent, too removed from Christ. The poor then lived shunned lives in the [UNKNOWN] shadows below the Sun washed hill towns while the bishops and cardinals resided in opulent splendor.

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Francis was a radical. Francis was a mystic, but he was a radical by example. His mythic status expanded, it spread from town to town. He attracted numerous followers. He asked them only that they sell all their material goods and give to the poor. They dressed like him in tunics, they were without shoes.

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They felt in order to get closer to God and yourself and others, you had to rid yourself of all material distraction. And I imagine today, there's an app for that on our iPhone.

>> [LAUGH]

>> He was, in one view, the original hippie, very Oregonian.

>> [LAUGH]

>> I could see him in Eugene.

[00:20:31]

[COUGH]

>> [LAUGH]

>> [LAUGH] They called him Il Poverello. The little poor man, the Poverello. He was not a priest or even by today's measures an evangelical preacher, he was a life force. A life force by example. Similar, I think to someone like Mahatma Gandhi and this is what's so interesting about a saint who we often think of as a one dimensional image on a side of a church or in a statue.

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Francis was not humorless. He was not a scourge, he was not a scold, he was playful. He was fun and he was funny. He was gregarious, he liked a joke, he would dance while preaching. Originally, this freaked people out, then they came from far and wide to see this dancing preacher.

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>> [LAUGH]

>> During his dances, he would often strip to his undergarments as well and I like to think that's just because it was so hot in Italy.

>> [LAUGH]

>> [COUGH] He felt and he told his brothers and sisters that they were superior to no one, inferior to everyone.

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Humility, humility by example, gave him his power. Humility gave him his aura, that's why the legend spread from town to town. Now he loved nature, there's no doubt about that. You can see it in his writings and his wonderful canticles. He felt like some eastern religions, certainly like Native Americans and I traveled all over the United States doing my book on Edward Curtis, all parts of Indian country.

[00:22:21]

And I always heard about Francis, because they share a similar feeling about seeing the oneness of spirituality in all living things, even in stones and Francis definitely loved nature. Fire was a brother, so was the Moon, so were the stars. So, in the end was death. Famously though, perhaps apocryphally, he charmed a wolf who was menacing the town of Assisi.

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He preached to birds. As his fame spread throughout Europe, he could have been like Martin Luther and led a breakaway religion before the reformation. Instead, he never directly challenged church authority's except, of course, by example. He was living in poverty. Now one of the most daring things he did and I didn't realize this, cuz you never get it in the typical telling of the Francis story was he

traveled to North Africa much of it by foot, trying to reach and talk to the leading Muslim leaders, the imams, the leaders of the Islamic movement.

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The church, his church at the time that he was trying to talk to them was waging one of its crusades. So by all rights should have been killed on this journey he took to North Africa, but instead he took this courageous, perilous journey across the Mediterranean trekking across North Africa to try to bridge, to try to see if there was commonality in these two religions, but it cost him.

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While he was in North Africa, he contracted malaria. He also had trachoma, a horrible eye infection. And while in his late 30s, Francis became very ill, he was ill for a long time, then he'd be a little bit better, then he would get worse. His condition got worse, he retreated as he got sicker, to ever more austere conditions.

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He lived in that dirt floored hovel, that was not unlike his prison cell in Perugia. He shivered with malaria. He passed his days in pain, and he died in 1226 at the age of 45. Well, that should have been the end of it. Who was this guy? Some pauper who walks around without shoes in a little known hill town in Italy.

[00:24:47]

But 800 years later, Francis is arguably the most popular of Catholic ancient figures. He appeals to liberals and conservatives. He appeals to believers and non-believers. He appeals to people all over the world. His aura, his power, his resonance penetrates all cultures, whether it's Native American or non-Catholic. This pauper, how did that continue?

[00:25:16]

He had no army, he had no force. He didn't conquer anything, he didn't start a new religion. He stayed, and he really wasn't even a priest, as I said, but continues to have power. Now, let's cut to the modern age to the year 2013, and a conclave of cardinals are trying to pick a Pope in Rome.

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From the Sistine Chapel on a spring day, white smoke appears. That wonderful white smoke. I wish we did our elections that way. Oh, we have a winner.

>> [LAUGH]

>> [LAUGH] And people who were in St. Peter's Square noticed that birds. Not the usual birds, but birds lifted off from where the smoke was, and they thought it was a sign.

[00:25:59]

So, an Italian immigrant from Argentina, Jorge Mario Bergoglio, who had ridden on the back of the bus to the slums of his towns in the native Argentina. Who had washed the feet of prisoners and AIDS victims, is named the pope. The vicar of Christ. He is, I'm sorry to your order, the first Jesuit-

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>> [LAUGH]



>> to be named a pope. And the first non-European in a thousand years. And also, I found this fascinating, it was in the Rolling Stone profile. The only Pope who once worked as a bouncer at a club.

>> [LAUGH]

>> Diverse background. [LAUGH]

>> What pope will you be they asked him?

[00:26:53]

He takes the name of a pauper for Assisi. This new Francis riding through St. Peters Square bypasses the limousine that is waiting for him and he climbs aboard a bus with all the other clerics. That same day, he pays his own hotel bill before checking out. He decides, he tells the world, he will not live in the Apostolic Palace but reside, instead, in a two bedroom guest house.

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He will get around in a Ford Focus, not the Papal Mercedes. His first words are Fratelli e sorelli, buona sera. Brothers and sisters, good evening. Instantly, people feel a whoosh of fresh air in St. Peter's Square and then later on, to the cardinals who selected him, he says may God forbid you, excuse me, may God forgive you for what you have done.

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>> [LAUGH]

>> [LAUGH]

Another whoosh of fresh air. Humor. Humor. As before, this new Francis washes the feet of the poor and the outcast. He washes the feet of women and he washes the feet of Muslims. He dials up complete strangers by phone at night, now can you imagine how much fun that is if you're pope?

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>> [LAUGH]

>> [LAUGH]

>> This is one of the reasons I like this guy, cuz you could just tell he's getting a kick out of that.

>> [LAUGH]

>> Wouldn't it be cool if I just called someone up? [LAUGH]

>> [LAUGH]

>> So he does this quite frequently.

[00:28:38]

Recently is when I was Italy a few month ago he called a gentleman who had some accident, and was in the hospital. And the guy hung up on him three times. He said, no, that's not the Pope. No, that can't be the Pope. They had to finally tell him, it's the Pope.

[00:28:56]

He eats in the Vatican cafeteria with the others, and he wears a plastic watch. All of this is symbolic yes but like that other Francis he is radical by example. Francis of Assisi had said preach the gospel and if necessary use words. That's what this new pope is, that's his power.

[00:29:24]

The power of example, the power of persona. Just as the original Francis of Assisi. And, also like the dancing, rope stripping, joke playing Francis of Assisi, this Francis is playful. He exudes a kind of joy. He like books. He likes soccer. He likes tango music and he likes gnocchi.

[00:29:51]

He appears not to take himself seriously, as if he's in on the joke himself. He knows how to seize a moment. And that's what we're gonna see next week, in which I think are gonna be six days that shake America. I just, maybe my expectations are too high.

[00:30:09]

But I think it's gonna be a media event like we haven't seen in 50 years. When I was in Italy a few months ago, Frances went to Napoli, to Naples, totally corrupt town run by the Camorra mafia. Really a broken town, because of the mafia. And he has this, they say he was going to be assassinated, they had extra security details.

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He draws an enormous crowd, basically the whole town turns out to him. And in the midst of all this crowd, he talks about the mafia, and this former boxer says corrupt society stinks. And I think only a guy who worked as the bouncer at a club could say that by the way and get away with it.

[00:30:52]

Also, the most astonishing thing happens early on in his time as Pope. On a plane ride home from South America, he's asked by the reporters on board the jet about gays in the church, long been a troubled spot for the Catholic hierarchy. The church just a few years earlier had called homosexuality, quote, an objective disorder.

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Francis looks at these reporters when he's asked about this, and he smiles. That wonderful goofy half-smiles of his, and he shrugs and he says, who am I to judge? And I think no more famous words have ever been uttered by a Pope. Also more iconic words by him.

[00:31:43]

Of course people are saying, what do you mean, who are you to judge? You're the Pope. You're the guy who's gonna judge, and it just has so much power in the way he said it. Again, another whoosh of fresh air comes out after that. Now he's attracting attention beyond all the usual media outlets.

[00:32:00]

I got a call from Parade magazine. They wanted to put him on the cover. They just like, people want to know who this person is. He hasn't done anything transformative yet, he hasn't changed church doctrine. He has a sense of humor. He's said this about gays. But all of the sudden, he's attracting a ton of attention.

[00:32:19]

But there it is. In that line, who am I to judge? You see the simplicity, the humility, and this is what I see in him, the lightness of being.

>> [LAUGH]

>> And that's not him in that phone I think.

>> [LAUGH]

>> [LAUGH] He wasn't allowed to have an iPhone.

[00:32:40]

[LAUGH] So I talked about the title of this lecture about changing hearts. He doesn't proselytize. He doesn't preach city to city. He changes hearts by example. That lightness of being. Like Francis, the nature saint, he emphasizes our duty to creation. He issues an encyclical on the environment which you'll hear about in Congress no doubt when he challenges the climate change skeptics in his speech next week.

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Now, think about this. I was trying to put this into historical perspective. The church that put Galileo under house arrest for promoting sound science is now challenging the science deniers in power. That's a switch. John Boehner's a Catholic. Speaker of the House. Nancy Pelosi's a Catholic. Minority Leader.

[00:33:42]

Marco Rubio running for office is Catholic. I can go on and on down the list, it'll be very interesting to see what they hear in the Pope's speech before a joint session of congress. It won't be political but it will be powerful. It won't be political but it will be powerful.

[00:34:02]

I found this totally fascinating, last year he was asked, I think it was by one of the Italian sort of in their version of People magazines, what his secret to happiness was and he said this. Slow down, take time off. Live and let live, work for peace, work at a job that offers you basic human dignity, don't hold onto negative feelings, move calmly through life, enjoy books, art, and playfulness.

[00:34:45]

These are almost the words I had read at my daughter's wedding four days ago, because I thought they were so incredible. Life advice? There it is. He was asked about money, and he said, I ask you to ensure that humanity is served by wealth. Served by wealth, and not ruled by wealth.

[00:35:08]

He said when money becomes an idol it controls our choices. It makes us a slave. Now, as to my title, has he changed doctrine? Not really, not substantively. Many in the church hierarchy have been quoted in a new book on the Pope as saying that they're upset by these changes.

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They don't like the fact that he seems to be so approachable, though he hasn't substantively changed doctrine. And there's a quote in this book where he says, one of these cardinals is quoted as saying, he'll be gone in a few years and we'll still be here and I don't think that's true, he will be gone in a few years he thinks unfortunately that his papacy will only be five years or more.

[00:36:01]

It's what he himself said. But he will still be there. He will definitely still be there. Now, I said he hasn't really changed doctrine. He hasn't really changed church feelings but, excuse me, church teachings but he has embraced unwed mothers who felt forever or for a long time unwelcomed.

[00:36:22]

Suddenly they're welcomed back in the church. You see these pictures of people weeping because this church they love turned a blind eye to them. He's embraced gays with his who am I to judge. I have a sister among my seven siblings who's been in a loving relationship with a woman for 30 years.

[00:36:42]

And she's a very devout Catholic. And she struggled and struggled and struggled to stay in the church because it shunned her. And with this pro Pope the doors opened to her again. She's going back to church. I said that's a long confession.

>> [LAUGH]

>> Now he said those who've had abortions are welcome back and this was very controversial.

[00:37:12]

He didn't say abortions were good, he didn't say you could have abortions, he said those who have had abortions should not be shunned. There's a place for them, I welcome them. So this is my theme, this is how he's changed hearts. He hasn't gone in and change the laws, he hasn't re-engineered thousands of years of tiered, church teachings.

[00:37:34]

It's the lightness of being is the example by person. Now I consider myself pretty much a mainstream American Catholic, if you look at the Pew surveys on religious surveys. That is, as an Irish Catholic I'm culturally bound to this church that the Brits tried to outlaw for 400 years.

[00:37:54]

It's one of the reasons the Irish stuck to Catholicism, is because the Brits tried to take it away from them.

>> [LAUGH]

>> And have them worship the king's religion, The Anglican Church. So I'm culturally bound to Catholicism, not necessarily to follow the dogma, particularly on sexual teachings.

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And that's reflected in most of the polls, the pew surveys, on how most American Catholics feel. Right now in Europe, you've never had fewer practicing Christians as a percentage of the whole population. Their great and wonderful cathedrals are empty except for tourists and the obnoxious and ubiquitous Rick Steves going through.

[00:38:41]

>> [LAUGH]

>> Telling you how those tiny people have been crafting stones for hundreds of years.

>> [LAUGH]

>> The United States, according to a Pew survey, is trending, not there yet, but trending the same way as Europe. This is led by Millennials, the generation that's going to college now, the generation that's below the Baby Boomers, and the generation that is the largest generation in America right now.

[00:39:12]

Our society will be shaped by the Millennials. I'm sorry, Boomers, it's almost over.

>> [LAUGH]

>> And, the Millennials, the young are the ones who say they are wary of pontifical certainty. They say they are spiritual but not religious. And, that's who's connecting with this pope, and that's who this pope is connecting with.

[00:39:35]

I think. That's my opinion. So you have this incredible paradox as much of the world has become less identified with organized religion. The leader of the most organized of religions is the most popular man on Earth. Defying all those trends. After I watched Francis for about six months of his time.

[00:40:04]

I wrote column for the New York Times called Lapsed But Listening. And, about six months after I wrote that piece I ran into Father Steve Sundberg, a person who a Seattle U president who my friend from high school pardoned me from jug. He had just been back to see the Pope.

[00:40:24]

And he thought he would get five minutes with him and he spent an hour with a group from Seattle. And their feet have still yet to touch the ground. And so Father Steve and I were talking, and he said to me, which is it now? And I said, less lapsed, more listening.

[00:40:47]

Thank you.

>> [APPLAUSE]

>> So I have about 15 minutes to take some questions. Please don't ask me anything too specific about church doctrine. I'll have to defer to other people here in the, and we've got a great crowd here. I really appreciate everyone coming out. This was Thursday night football so you had to give that up.

[00:41:26]

>> [LAUGH]

>> So, a couple questions in advance of the Pope's visit next week. Yes sir.

>> Will you tell us about Frances Clare?

>> Frances what?

>> Clare, Saint Clare.

>> Oh yeah, Clare. I'm sorry. Clare is, the Order of Frances and the Order of Clare, they share the same belief.

[00:41:48]

And he actually was, I think, I don't know that much about Clare but I think Clare was, how he treated Frances was an early proponent of equality that the Clares, the order. I mean, they set their own rules, they do their own things, but they follow Francis very similarly.

[00:42:08]

And they had a spiritual relationship there's no doubt about that, a quite close spiritual relationship. When I was looking to write a book I was trying to find something more than a spiritual relationship, because that's what book writers do. I didn't find it, so I don't know what the evidence is on that.

[00:42:25]

The problem is researching Pre-Renaissance history in Pre-Dante Italian is pretty damn difficult. And there's a lot of nuance in the Pre-Dante Italian, so what looks like a poem that's a song to the moon could be a love song. So I found it very difficult to try to get into a longer relationship with him.

[00:42:49]

In any event, they influenced each other and they were shared souls. Yes?

>> So you actually thought [INAUDIBLE] become even more powerful [INAUDIBLE]

>> Yeah. The problem with politics in our country right now is we are so deeply divided that everybody goes to their silos. We get our own news channels, we get, our own news channels reinforce our point of view so we rarely reach across the aisle.

[00:43:15]

We can't pass anything, we couldn't pass a bipartisan resolution that mothers are good right now in the United States Congress. People say, well blue state mothers, red state mothers. What kind of mothers you talking about? Illegal mothers? It would just be broken down. Our politics at the national level are broken, so we really can't do anything.

[00:43:36]

And unfortunately, I mean I don't wanna go off on a political tangent here, but you may see the government shut down in a few weeks over a couple fairly small things in the budget right now, shut down again. So, it won't be political in the sense that I don't think it's going to make people say, see, he said something to back our side, therefore we're right.

[00:43:54]

I think it's going to be powerful in the sense that he's going to find a way to craft the message that look, this little orb we live on is ours. It's our shared space. And as he said in the encyclical, we are trashing it. Do we dare leave our children and grandchildren this mess of an earth, where it's on fire, where most of Florida will be under water in 30 years?

[00:44:15]

Not necessarily a bad thing, but.

>> [LAUGH]

>> Sorry. I know this is being recorded, I didn't mean that. I just meant it would expand the Everglades and help out, yeah? Do we want to leave a planet that looks like this? That's what he's asking, those questions. So it won't be that the scientists sound like, you climate deniers are full of crap, it won't be that kind of stuff.

[00:44:39]

It's more gonna be a we're all in this together. We are a family, though there's 7 billion of us. [LAUGH] And we don't have much time to keep this Earth from being unlivable. You look at the way he crafts his messages. I haven't seen a draft of the speech, I don't even think he's written it yet.

[00:44:56]

But based on the early comments and the interviews they've given him with different people, I think that's what it's going to be. It's going to be something transformative. Now, he doesn't speak very good English. He speaks very good Italian and he speaks very good Spanish, so I think may be a lessened a little bit by the translation.

[00:45:14]

He'll have some English phrases, but then the translation is going to look, the power. But I think as people read it and look at it my hope is that we will pause and get out of our boundaries a little bit. We'll get out of our talking points and out of our things that separate us and realize there's no thing that joins us that's more common than our common home.

[00:45:36]

And that's, what was his phrasing? The encyclical. This is our common home. It's quite historic, again. I'm writing a book on an Irishman right now, the Irish American experience in the 19th century. And I went back and I really got fascinated by the Know Nothings, which was at one point the second largest political party in the United States in the 1850s.

[00:46:00]

They were called the Know Nothings, proudly, for another reason, but they were the only political party ever in this country founded entirely against one ethnic group, the Irish. And they were violently anti-Catholic. They had these pogroms where they would just set the churches of Philadelphia on fire. And I found this quote from Father Pierre De Smet, the great traveling French priest who said, these American's scare me.

[00:46:25]

They're vile. I'm afraid of them. He's really upset and he goes, what is this great American experience I've heard so much about? These people are horrible. So I look at our, the sort of transition from where we were there and where we are now and to think of a political party that nearly held the White House, the second biggest political party in the United States dedicated against the Irish, and more specifically against Catholics.

[00:46:48]

You had to take a vow that you would never marry a Catholic to join the Know Nothings. A lot like Britain and Ireland again, but don't get me started. To think, to go from there to not only a Papist, the Papist. The Pope himself is now going to speak before a joint session of Congress.

[00:47:07]

That's a good thing, that's spiritual evolution. Yes.

>> Two questions. Does he do his own writing? [INAUDIBLE] like this. And secondly, what have you observed? He seems very wealthy, but there are constraints with church doctrine that [INAUDIBLE]. He's said that he has [INAUDIBLE].

>> It's a great question and a couple of books have explored that recently.

[00:47:37]

To answer your first question, he does do most of his writing. He writes the drafts. He likes to consider himself a pretty good writer, and I think he is. But then of course it's polished and fixed and shortened and all these things you need to do when you're giving a big speech before the UN.

[00:47:51]

The speech after Congress is the UN. There couldn't be two bigger venues on this planet to give speeches and try to win hearts and influence people. So he does write his own stuff. The UN speech is going to be equally fascinating. I have no idea what he's going to say there, but I really look forward to it.

[00:48:11]

The doctrine question, it is equally fascinating because this is a very tiered ancient organization and change comes slowly, as we all know. And I gave you this quote where someone said, when he's gone we'll still be here. And to answer your question, I do not think he will spend his time.

[00:48:32]

He knows it's limited, and I hope he's wrong. He did say himself, I probably only have three to five years. I can't see him wanting to spend that time in fights, battles, digressions when mere going to a slum in some town, or going, as he did last week, reaching out to these refugees pouring into Europe and saying we, the wealthy countries, have a responsibility to these poor people whose homes have been bombed, and little children dying, adrift at sea, trying to get into Europe.

[00:49:06]

Making statements like that, going to that place, is so much more powerful from his perspective, and from a general perspective, than going back and engaging the old fights. I think he's just gonna let them. And this is what's so amazing, he just put them on the side. He just doesn't talk about it.

[00:49:21]

Suddenly, I asked this of a Father Steve Sunburg, again, Seattle next to Portland, these are considered the two most secular cities in the United States, the least church-going cities in the US. Now there's lots of reasons for that. People say our church is nature, is the outdoors, etc.

[00:49:42]

We're far Western and we tend to reject traditions, all those things. But Father Sunberg told me that six months into Pope Francis that people would stop him on the street and say, I just wanna tell you how much I love your pope. And go up to him in the restaurants and just say, I don't who you are or what your order is, but I love your pope.

[00:50:06]

And in a secular city like Seattle. And he hasn't changed anything. Again, they're becoming known through Pope Francis by what they are for rather than what they are against. So for so long, it was all these rules, that gays would have to be admonished, that divorced catholics can't come into the church, the unwed mothers are bad.

[00:50:30]

All these people who are on the side. And just by not emphasizing that and saying you're welcome again, that's the power. So I would be shocked if he chose to spend his remaining years fighting that fight. Now one more thing on that. A president gets to appoint Supreme Court justices so his legacy outlives him.

[00:50:50]

What does a Pope get to appoint? Cardinals, exactly. So he's planting a few here and there. Yes. >> You mentioned that Saint Francis was active in reaching out to the Islam community. And my sense of our current pope is that he's not only stepped out in favor of Palestinian justice, and more recently advocating for Syrian refugees and so on.

[00:51:22]



Could you tell us a little bit about whether, if you know, there's any kind of reaching out as a Catholic leader to leaders of the Islamic tradition happening now?

>> Yeah, there's been a little bit. One of the things he did that was so powerful, and I read a story about this a couple weeks ago, it was quoting all these Islamic leaders from around the world.

[00:51:46]

He actually read, so many people would say this is sacrilege, so I'm just reporting it. He read parts of the Qur'an in St. Peter's square, just to show that there were common tenets in all the religions. And most Muslims were really upset with the last pope, Benedict. They felt offended by some of his statements.

[00:52:10]

Now you've got a really awful thing, and I don't want to digress on this. You've got a really awful thing going on with Islam right now with the toxic element, ISIS, which is absolute evil. I'm sorry, there's no other way to describe it, what they're doing. And so I would like to see if this pope could influence other Islamic elements.

[00:52:30]

Now the Shias and the Sunnis are always at each other's throats, and they're worse now than they've ever been. But to answer your question, he's had some high-level meetings across the board, but nothing really like a summit or something like that. But knowing that he wants to follow Francis's model, I would expect him to do something like that.

[00:52:52]

Yes?

>> [INAUDIBLE]

I really appreciate [INAUDIBLE]

>> Mm-hm.

>> [INAUDIBLE]

>> Yes.

>> She might like to know that they do have gay lesbian group [INAUDIBLE] I was fortunate enough to work with Father Steve [INAUDIBLE]. The question [INAUDIBLE]

>> Wow, that's a really tough question. You put me on the spot.

[00:53:39]

[LAUGH]

>> [LAUGH]

>> He asked me how I live my life with Francis. This Francis or the Assisi?

>> Both.

>> Yeah, well, sort of the thing that started me on this, that made me wanna write a book about Francis, is I was writing a book and I was living in Italy with my kids, very young, my wife, and they were going to this Italian school and we lived in Greve, in Chianti.

[00:54:01]

Now you wanna talk about a secular area, Chianti, it's the oldest designated wine region in the world, and their symbol is the black rooster. There are more black roosters in Chianti than there are crucifixes. And that's their religion, is good, deep, dark Chianti vino. And I spent a couple days in Assisi just tourist thing, go up there, and my wife is Jewish.

[00:54:26]

We were both incredibly moved by this, and the people making the pilgrimages. There's a lot of tourist tchotchke stuff, but you can see through that, and I just found it really powerful. And I've always been a pretty active, I like to think, defender of the natural world. I've written a lot of books about nature and how we need to take care of it, and the power of nature.

[00:54:51]

And nature is a character in my book *The Worst Hard Time*. It's almost like nature's vengeance against people who've ruined a part of the United States. It's a character in the big burn, the biggest fire in American history, 3 million acres in a weekend. So starting in Italy, I started to read more and more on Francis and try to integrate it into my philosophy of public policy.

[00:55:15]

And I'm in a lucky position now at *The New York Times*, where I write an opinion column once a week. I can write about anything I want. They don't even ask me what I'm writing about. I just press a button and it shows up, as long as I don't say anything libelous or any swear words.

[00:55:31]

And so I've tried to incorporate that going back to his philosophy of nature, his philosophy of oneness. I've also covered Native Americans for 30 years and in my *Curtis* book got to know a lot of the tribal homelands. And so I try to incorporate a little bit of those tenets into my writing.

[00:55:48]

Also, any time someone really trashes the Catholic Church and sort of gets my cultural Catholicism defense up, I bring up Francis. I really do think he's the Gandhi of the Catholic Church. I am a great admirer of Gandhi too. I think there are six figures in world history who come along like that.

[00:56:07]

Again, they don't have an army. They don't have a palace. They don't write a great book. They don't break the DNA code. They're powerful by that example. So yeah, I've tried to integrate him into my life and into my philosophy. Now today I was writing about the Republican debate last night.

[00:56:24]

And there's very little Francis-

>> [LAUGH]

>> [LAUGH] In reading over the transcript of you're a liar, your hair sucks, you're ugly and I could go on if I wanted to. It's [LAUGH] junior high. Anyway, so I hope that answers your question.

>> I think [INAUDIBLE] light is a great place to end the lecture and you've been invited, you have been challenged to be radicals by example, following in the footsteps of Saint Francis.

[00:56:58]

Please join me in thanking Tim Egan.

>> [APPLAUSE]

>> So we're gonna sign books, yeah?

>> Yeah, and he has generously offered to spend a few minutes signing books for those of you who have them on you. His own books.

>> [LAUGH]

>> [APPLAUSE]