

MAY 2025 | VOL. 19 | ISSUE 05 | ₹45

together



**“I don’t want to be an
ice cream seller”**

Together is a national family magazine. It is a monthly, published by the Franciscans (OFM) in India. It was started in 1935 in Karachi, now in Pakistan. It got its present name in 1966.

The magazine *Together* is a conversation platform. Nothing changes until our families change. It is an effort at making worlds meet by bringing

down fearful, pretentious and defensive walls. *Together* is a journey, an ever-expansive journey—from me to us, from us to all of us, and from all of us to all. Let us talk, let us cross borders. The more we converse and traverse, we discover even more paths to talk about and travel together.

Together is also an effort to uncover our shared humanity.

Your critical and relevant write-ups that promote goodness, inclusivity and shared humanity are welcome. Your articles must be mailed to editor@togethermagazine.in before the 15th of every month.

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SUBSCRIPTION

To subscribe to the magazine or to contribute to the running of *Together* please log on to www.togethermagazine.in

Pay online (NEFT) Transaction

Franciscan Publications – Together, South Indian Bank
Branch: Christ University, A/c. No. 039605300005736,
IFSC: SIBL0000396, MICR: 560059010

Pay by Cheque or Demand Draft

in favour of Franciscan Publications – Together

ADVERTISING IN TOGETHER (PER ISSUE)

Back cover	₹13,000
Inside back cover	₹8,000
Inner full page	₹5,000
Inner half page	₹2,000
Inner quarter page	₹1,000

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	1 year	3 years
India	₹500	₹1,400
Other Countries	US \$75	US\$200

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Francis, the Pope of the Poor

MARTÍN CARBAJO-NÚÑEZ OFM

“Hagan lío!” (Make a mess!), to shake things up—and in doing so, awaken the Church to a more vibrant, dynamic, and missionary presence in the world—Pope Francis during the 2013 World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro.



Over the twelve years of his pontificate, I have followed his Magisterium with profound interest and admiration. His teachings have deeply inspired my intellectual and academic work, a commitment which I have reflected in thirty books and over a hundred articles.

Key Milestones of His Pontificate

In exercising his Magisterium, Pope Francis has sought not to impose doctrines, but rather to initiate processes that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, continue to mature within the People of God.

He chose the name Francis because he wanted to emulate the saint of Assisi in his unconditional openness to all people and all creatures. “Go and repair my Church.” With that call in mind, he embraced Sister Mother Earth and opened wide the doors of the Church to the marginalised and excluded.

A synodal Church open to all: Through various synods — on the Family (2014–2015), the Amazon (2019), and Synodality (2021–2024) — he emphasised the importance of listening, collaboration, and shared

decision-making between the faithful, the college of bishops, and the Bishop of Rome: We must all sit down to listen to one another (FT 48); “all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit.” Remarkably, he refrained from silencing even the harshest criticisms directed at him from within the Church.

He also convened the Synod on Youth (2018), reinforcing a message first delivered during the 2013 World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro: “Hagan lío!” (Make a mess!), to shake things up—and in doing so, awaken the Church to a more vibrant, dynamic, and missionary presence in the world.

As a true pontifex (bridge-builder), he promoted dialogue at every levels. On February 4, 2019, commemorating the 800th anniversary of St. Francis’ encounter with the Sultan, he co-signed the Document on Human Fraternity with Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb in Abu Dhabi.

Shepherds with the “smell of the sheep”: A synodal Church requires “shepherds with the smell of the sheep,” who inspire, encourage, and walk with the faithful. To this end, Pope Francis promoted a reform of ecclesial leadership rooted in humility and service. The Pope, he said, does not stand alone above the church,” but he is “within it as a

baptised person among the baptised and in the episcopal college as a bishop among bishops.” He himself used to ask humbly for prayers and chose to live simply in the modest residence of Santa Marta.

He frequently reminded bishops that they are both teachers and disciples. At times, they “will have to walk after” the people “allowing the flock to strike out on new paths” (EG 31). During the Amazon Synod, he invited indigenous peoples — and all of us — to take co-responsibility for the life of local churches.

A Church that is poor and for the poor: “How I would like a Church that is poor and for the poor,” he exclaimed at the outset of his papacy. With this goal in mind, he initiated significant reforms, including the restructuring of the Roman Curia, the creation of a Migrants Section within the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, and prioritised financial transparency at the Vatican Bank (IOR).

While denouncing the “globalisation of indifference,” he proclaimed the Jubilee of Mercy (2015–2016) urging the Church to become a “field hospital” for the wounded, rather than a museum for saints, constantly going forth to the existential peripheries. He personally visited prisons, refugee camps, and impoverished regions.

On socio-economic issues, he criticised the technocratic paradigm and proposed an inclusive, ethical, and compassionate economy, inspired by St Francis of Assisi. In 2020, he convened an international gathering of young economists in Assisi, giving rise to the movement known as The Economy of Francesco.

Integral ecology: Hearing the cry of the earth: The human fraternity proposed in Fratelli tutti is intertwined with the cosmic fraternity developed in Laudato si’. Indeed, «everything is connected» (LS 91). His vision of integral ecology unites environmental protection with social justice and human dignity — for “there can be no ecology without an adequate anthropology” (LS 118).

One powerful moment of his pontificate came on March 27, 2020, in the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Alone in a rain-soaked and empty St. Peter’s Square, he prayed: “We did not listen to the cry of the poor or of our ailing planet... Now that we are in a stormy sea, we implore you: ‘Wake up, Lord!’”

My Personal Experience with Pope Francis

On March 13, 2006, I had the privilege of meeting him in Buenos Aires, while he served as Archbishop of the city. I was there conducting an official visit to renew the affiliation of a theological institute (ITF). After meeting with the bishop of the Diocese of Merlo-Moreno (under his metropolitan jurisdiction), I greeted him personally.

I had already heard much about his deep pastoral commitment to the poor: how he had established new parishes and promoted educational programmes in the most vulnerable neighbourhoods, while speaking out against the harmful effects of neoliberal policies. I still treasure the homily he gave that day.

I cherish three particular meetings with him as Pope: On September 20, 2013, I presented him with one of my books on economics. With his characteristic warmth, he flipped through its pages attentively as I explained its contents. We also reminisced about our earlier encounter in Buenos Aires.

On February 9, 2019, during a gathering organised by the Alphonsian Academy, I presented him with nine more of my books. While he was delivering his address to the whole assembly, he paused, looked up, and encouraged us to raise awareness about the seriousness of ecological sin. That spontaneous remark moved me deeply, as I had emphasised that very issue in several of my own publications.

Then, on March 23, 2023, I brought him 12 more books of mine. His health had visibly declined, yet his spirit remained full of humour and warmth. After examining the first six volumes, he smiled and teased me: “Do you write also during the night?”

Each time I greeted him, he radiated that same disarming humanity—simple, welcoming, and deeply pastoral—the very kind of presence he longed to see in the leaders of the Church.

On October 3, 1226, Saint Francis of Assisi chose to die lying naked on the bare ground, blessing his brothers as they sang the Cantic of the Creatures. Eight centuries later, the Pope who took his name also requested to be buried in a simple coffin, laid directly on the earth, without any elaborate adornments. He passed away shortly after offering his final Urbi et Orbi blessing to the world.

Now that he has returned to the Father’s house, I feel a deep sense of loss— yet also a joyful certainty that his spirit continues to lead us. He opened new paths and directed our gaze toward luminous horizons. Along these paths, we now journey together as a Church and as a cosmic family.

Let us keep dreaming with him of a more fraternal world, one that listens to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. Let us keep building a synodal Church that is always “going forth” toward the peripheries, guided by pastors who, like him, carry the “smell of the sheep.” Let us not lose hope. The Pope who so often asked for our prayers now intercedes for us.

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