

Pilgrimage: My Search for the Real Pope Francis by Mark K. Shriver

Discussion Guide

1. The author presents six experiences from his boyhood in Flores that helped define Pope Francis. They were his grandmother, Rosa; his feeling of serenity in the household; the role of Peronismo; the area in which he lived, El Porteno; his education which included the scientific method; and that transforming event that led Jorje to the seminary. Do you see the result of these experiences in the present day Pope Francis?
2. An observation made by Shriver was the display of people praying at the Basilica of San Jose de Flores. He stated that he had never seen that in the United States. Why do you think there would be this difference in the two cultures?
3. When Jorje made a decision to be faithful to his commitment to the seminary, he displayed his rational approach to life. The author stated he demonstrated “a keen awareness that life is about choices and that choices entail both embracing one option and rejecting another.” Are we as clear about decision making in our own lives?
4. The Jesuit experience includes formation through studying and training, a sense of community, and discernment. Have you ever been able to use discernment in making a life decision?
5. We, as a Church, celebrated the Jubilee Year of Mercy with Pope Francis. We experience God’s love and mercy and should have the desire to share that love and mercy with others. How did the Jubilee year accomplish our awareness of mercy?
6. During the ‘60s and ‘70s there was a call for change in many areas, including in the Church. In Latin America, there was the emergence of liberation theology, which emphasized a commitment to the poor and called for social change. With that in mind, how has Pope Francis reacted to world events?
7. Many times Shriver heard that situations surrounding Bergoglio were complex. How did this complex nature play out in the life and formation of Jorje’s life? Was he a cause of division in his community?
8. Faith cannot be petrified; it requires constant moving and developing. Has that belief led to any changes in the Church under Pope Francis? If so, how?
9. While he was a Bishop, Bergoglio said “the Church is not here to control people’s life, but rather to respond to the needs of the people where they live.” Do you agree with this idea and how do you see that in your own parish?
10. Rabbi Avruj was asked the most simple question when he was able to see Pope Francis in Rome. “How’s the family?” Considering the Church as our family, how is our family?
11. Shriver tried many times to have a personal interview with Pope Francis. This never came to be, however, the author realized that he already knew the answer to many questions through the Pope. Have faith in God. Pope Francis said in one of his speeches, “Love is shown by little things, by attention to small daily signs which make us feel at home. Faith grows when it is lived and shaped by love.” What little thing can you do today to live a life of love and grow your faith in God?
12. Did this book help you to better understand our Pope and what he hopes to accomplish in the Church and in the World?