



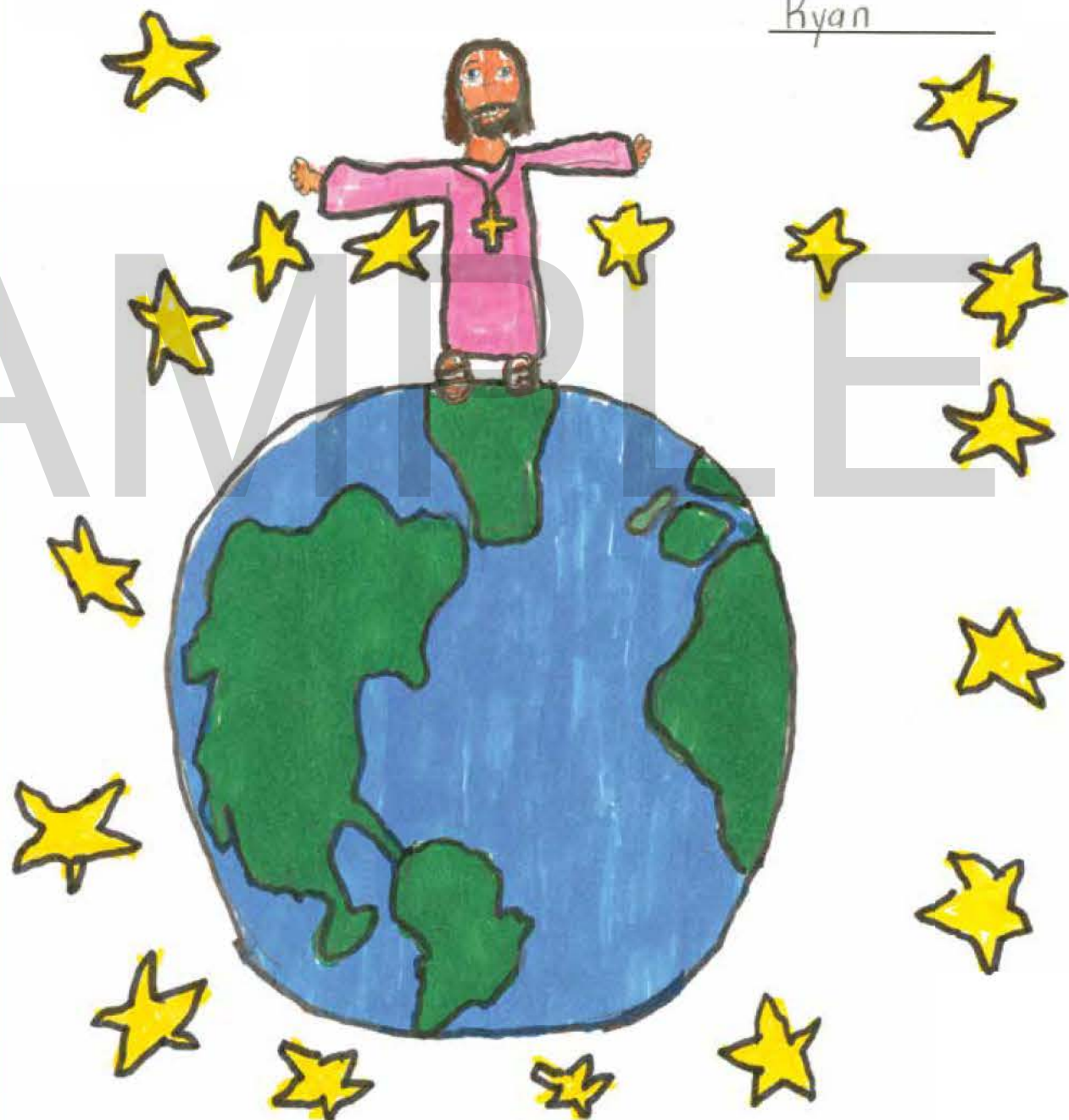
Dear Pope Francis,  
It's an honour to ask you my question. My question is, what did God do before the world was made?

Sincerely,  
Ryan

Age 8, Canada

Dear pope Francis  
It's an honour to ask you my question. My question  
is what did God do before the world was made?

Sincerely,  
Ryan



Dear Ryan,

There is beauty in creation. And there are the limitless and eternal tenderness and mercy of God. God began making something when he created the world. But if I told you that God was doing nothing before he created the world, I would be wrong. In fact, God also created time—that is, the “before” and the “after.” But I don’t want to confuse you with these words. Think of it this way: before creating anything, God loved. That’s what God was doing: God was loving. God always loves. God *is* love. So when God began making the world, he was simply expressing his love. Before doing anything else, God was love, and God was loving.

Franciscus



Dear Pope Francis,  
 Why do you think children have to go to Catechesis [religious education]? I liked when you appeared on the flyer for the Fraternity Campaign. Come again to Brazil. I would like to see you.

A hug and a kiss,  
 Ana Maria

Age 10, Brazil



Querido Papa Francisco



Porque você acha que as Crianças devem fazer Catequese?

Eu gosto quando você aparece no cartaz da Campanha da fraternidade.

Venha mais uma vez ao Brasil, gostaria de te ver.

Um abraço e um beijo,  
 Ana



Dear Ana,

You go to catechism to get to know Jesus better! If you have a friend, you enjoy being with him and getting to know him better. You enjoy being with your friend, playing together and getting to know his family, his life, where he was born, and where he lives. This is a good thing. Religious education classes help you get to know your friend Jesus better and his great family, the Church.

There are many ways to get acquainted with Jesus. Actually, you don't so much learn about Jesus as go in search of him so you can meet him as a person. When you look for Jesus, he will come to you and help you get to know him.

I have to tell you something: You can know many things about Jesus, but that's not enough. You may also know his story, all that he has done, but you don't get to know Jesus just by studying him. You come to know Jesus by reading the Gospel, praying, seeking him in all you do, doing good to those who are in need, and helping the sick. If you do this, Jesus will surely come close so that you can meet him and know him.

Franciscus



Dear Pope Francis,

- 1. Why do you need that tall hat?
- 2. Why do some saints have the wounds?

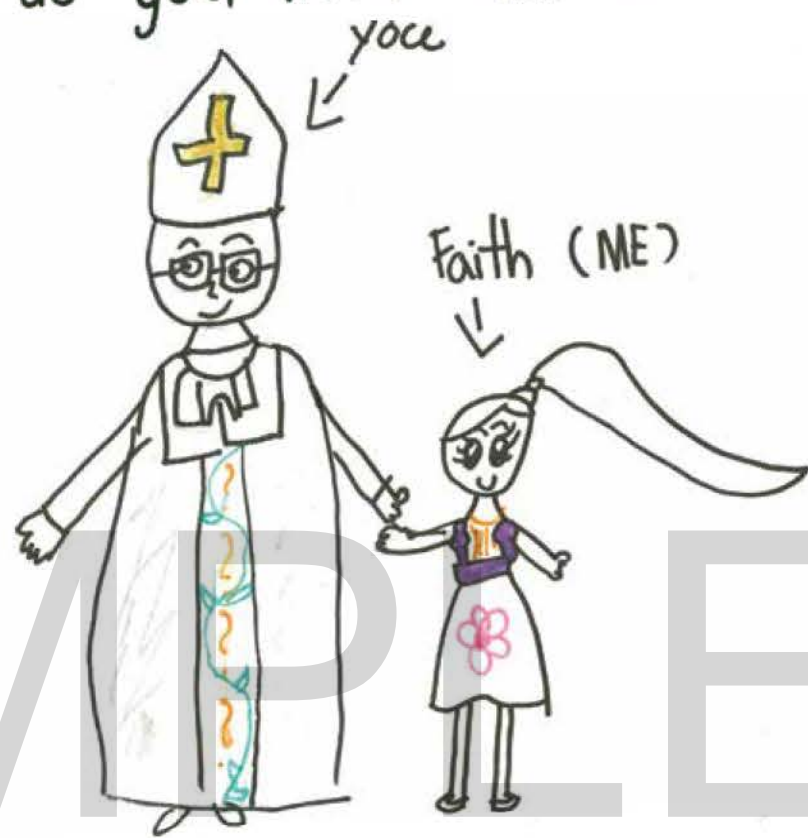
Faith from Singapore

Age 8, Singapore



Dear Pope Francis,

1. Why do you need that tall hat?



2. Why do some saints have the wounds?



Faith from: Singapore:))



Dear Faith,

In your drawing, I have my tall hat, and your hair is blowing in the wind. We are hand in hand. Thank you for this wonderful picture! My tall hat is the symbol or sign that I am a bishop. I put it on for some special occasions and during Mass. Once in a while, I change it, but I like the one I had in Argentina, in Buenos Aires. When I would come to Rome before becoming pope, I would bring two hats: one all white for celebrations with the Pope and my other normal one for some celebrations I had here in Rome. And I still have that hat with me.

You also ask me about the wounds of the saints. Yes, some saints—like Saint Francis of Assisi—had the “stigmata,” what we call the wounds of Jesus. These saints loved Jesus so much that they wanted to become like him. They wanted to imitate him. So Jesus gave them their gift: to have the same wounds as he had. In other words, they became like Jesus in their bodies. But be careful—not everyone who has wounds is a saint!

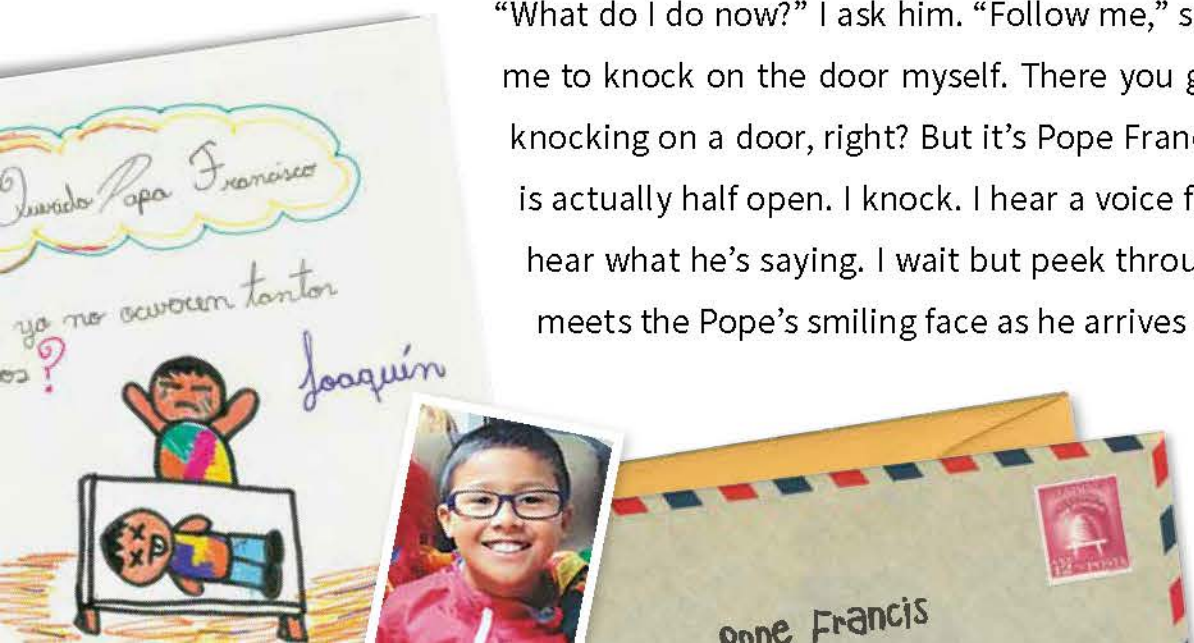
Franciscus

# Even small children have BIG questions

## Delivering some very special letters to Pope Francis . . .

It's a hot August afternoon in Rome. I park my blue car in the shade of a building near Santa Marta. I enter the building and greet the Swiss Guard. I tell him that I have an appointment with the Holy Father. He says, "I know." With a wave of the hand, he invites me in. I enter and immediately am told that the Pope is waiting for me; I can go up. I regret having not come earlier. I take the elevator and press the button for the second floor. The doors open, and I seem to have made a mistake, so I press the button to the third floor. The doors open, and finally another Swiss Guard appears, smiling at me and not saying a thing.

"What do I do now?" I ask him. "Follow me," says the guard. And he invites me to knock on the door myself. There you go: what's more normal than knocking on a door, right? But it's Pope Francis's door. I see that the door is actually half open. I knock. I hear a voice from within but can't seem to hear what he's saying. I wait but peek through the crack. My curious eye meets the Pope's smiling face as he arrives and opens the door.



I enter, we greet each other and talk. He remains standing and asks if I want something to drink, some water or some fruit juice. I tell him, "Water is fine." And he, smiling, asks, "Are you sure?" And I say, "No! Apricot juice, please." He had served me apricot juice two years before, after I had interviewed him for the magazine *La Civiltà Cattolica* and for other Jesuit magazines worldwide. "Great!" he says. "Gelato, yes or no?" "Gelato!" I say. The Pope opens a mini fridge and serves me. He has some water at room temperature for himself.

We sit down and begin to discuss many things. But I am here to speak on behalf of the children who, from various parts of the world, have posed questions and sent drawings to him. Yes, children from diverse Jesuit institutions in the world have written questions to Pope Francis, hoping to get an answer. They also sent him greetings and kisses. The Pope has agreed to answer thirty of the many questions that were sent. It would have been wonderful to answer them all; Pope Francis likes to answer children's questions.

I hand over the questions and drawings. The Pope is intrigued; he leafs through them, reads them, and then says, "But these are tough questions!"

"Indeed!" I had read them, and I also found them to be really difficult. The children's questions are unfiltered, no frills, with no way out. They are sharp, clear, even brusque. One can't escape into the shadow of highly abstract concepts or specious reasoning. These questions are also very practical.

