

Pope Francis' Pandemic Outreach, Financial Questions and the McCarrick Report

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

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With Pope Francis grounded at home in Rome, the year 2020 revealed the best of the papacy and the worst of the Vatican, with a glimmer of hope for the future.

Holding aloft the monstrance to an empty square, with millions watching at home, Pope Francis' blessing on the city of Rome and the world amid the COVID-19 pandemic showed the power of the Petrine ministry in its truest form.

"Let us invite Jesus into the boats of our lives," St. Peter's successor said.

"Let us hand over our fears to him so that he can conquer them. Like the disciples, we will experience that, with him on board, there will be no shipwreck."

Throughout the year, Pope Francis attempted to conduct teaching and evangelization that felt nearly shipwrecked on shoals of scandal.

On Feb. 12, Pope Francis released *Querida Amazonia*, which outlines his "four great dreams" for the ecological, social, cultural and ecclesial future in the Amazon region.

While Pope Francis did not move on drastic proposals in the Amazon synod, he has moved ahead with his vision of a liturgical Amazonian Rite based on the Zaire Rite developed for Congolese Catholics.

The year also saw key turning points in Vatican-related financial and sexual-abuse scandals. After an onsite inspection from Moneyval, the Council of Europe's anti-money-laundering watchdog, Pope Francis finally undertook substantial financial reforms to bring the Vatican in line with international financial standards.

Pope Francis also dismissed longtime aide

and confidant Cardinal Giovanni Angelo Becciu — one of the key players identified as internally resisting reform efforts — over allegations of financial malfeasance.

The Vatican also continued to feel the tension between the demands of the prophetic nature of the papacy and the *realpolitik* of foreign relations.

The Vatican forged ahead with renewing a secret deal with the People's Republic of China on the appointment of bishops, which Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin said has so far been a success.

Cardinal Joseph Zen, the outspoken emeritus bishop of Hong Kong, however, publicly and repeatedly accused Cardinal Parolin of deceiving Pope Francis over the China deal.

As a teaching high point, Pope Francis published the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, which served as an extended meditation of 43,000 words on the need for human solidarity.

"Jesus' parable [of the Good Shepherd] summons us to rediscover our vocation as citizens of our respective nations and of the entire world, builders of a new social bond," wrote the Pope.

As 2020 came to a close, the Vatican published the McCarrick Report, a watershed document that gave some insights into Cardinal Theodore McCarrick's rise to power, despite accusations of sexual misconduct against him.

The McCarrick Report has prompted Catholics in other countries, such as Chile, to demand the Vatican produce their own "McCarrick Reports" on their own country's clergy sexual-abuse scandals and cover-ups.

Finally, at the conclusion of a chaotic 2020, Pope Francis entrusted 2021 to the care of St. Joseph, the patron of the universal Church.

"St. Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows," he said, "can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation."



CARDINAL PREACHER. Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa, the Capuchin preacher to the Papal Household since 1980, receives his red biretta from Pope Francis during a consistory to create 13 new cardinals on Nov. 28. Frustaci/Pool/AFP via Getty Images



SACKED AND LIVESTREAMED. From top, Cardinal Giovanni Angelo Becciu, deputy at the Secretariat of State and prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, was asked to resign Sept. 24 over financial corruption charges. 2018 photo by Andreas Solaro/AFP via Getty Images Pope Francis delivers his Angelus blessing April 26. Francis' activity continued via livestreamed events during Italy's COVID lockdown. Vatican Media/Vatican Pool via Getty Images



QUESTIONS ANSWERED AND UNANSWERED. A statue of Jesus Christ tops the facade of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Nov. 10. On that day, the Holy See published its two-year investigation into ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick. AP photo/Andrew Medichini



PAPAL ENCYCLICAL. A special edition of the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* containing the Pope's new encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, is distributed in St. Peter's Square at the end of Pope Francis' Sunday Angelus blessing on Oct. 4. Franco Origlia/Getty Images



BLUEPRINT FOR THE AMAZON. Copies of Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation *Querida Amazonia* are displayed at a news conference for the presentation of the post-synodal document at the Vatican Press Office Feb. 12. Daniel Ibañez/CNA



POPE AND THE WORLD. Pope Francis offers an extraordinary moment of prayer in time of pandemic, with the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and delivers an extraordinary address and blessing *urbi et orbi* (to the city of Rome and to the world) in front of an empty St. Peter's Square March 27. Vatican Media and EWTN broadcast the ceremony live to the world, and it could also be followed in several languages on Facebook and YouTube. Vatican Pool/Getty Images



AGE OF COVID. Pilgrims practice social distancing in St. Peter's Square as they acknowledge Pope Francis' blessing from the window of the Apostolic Palace after his livestreamed Sunday Angelus prayer June 7. Andreas Solaro/AFP via Getty Images