

United Bible Societies welcomes Pope Francis

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The election of Pope Francis, ‘a long-time friend of the Bible Societies’, is an encouragement to United Bible Societies (UBS) to work even harder to make the Bible available to everyone.

These are the sentiments expressed by UBS General Secretary Michael Perreau.



Michael Perreau

“The values Pope Francis embodies and which are so palpably expressed in the name he has chosen for his papacy are an encouragement to us to double our efforts to make the Word of God accessible through translating and distributing the Bible, and through biblical-pastoral projects,” says Mr Perreau.

Close relationship

An Argentinian, the new pope has enjoyed a close relationship with the Argentine Bible Society for many years, supporting and encouraging its work to make the Bible available and accessible to Argentinians from all walks of life. He participated in the dedication of the first Wichí Bible, published by the Bible Society in 2002 and, along with leaders of the Orthodox and Evangelical Churches, supported the Bible Society’s initiative to establish an annual National Bible Day on the fourth Sunday of September.

“I remember when we asked him if he would support the Bible Day initiative,” recalls former President of the Argentine Bible Society Pastor Salvador Dellutri. “He told me, ‘Only the Word of God can bring positive change to this country. Everything you do to spread the message of the Bible will have my strong support.’”



Martha Dergarabedian, former President of the Argentine Bible Society, with Cardinal Bergoglio, who is now Pope Francis.

“As well as participating in many of our official events, Cardinal Bergoglio also visited our offices and shared devotions with our staff,” says Argentine Bible Society General Secretary Ruben del Ré. “When he wanted to buy Bibles he would telephone us and pay for them himself. He also made significant personal financial contributions to our work.

Getting young people into the Bible

“Last year I had the opportunity to give him a copy of the newest Spanish Bible translation – the Reina Valera Contemporánea – along with other Bible materials for children. He is particularly passionate about getting children and young people into the Bible.”



Beneficiaries of the Bible Society of Argentina’s ‘Kids at risk’ project. The new pope has always been supportive of the Bible Society’s work.

Alexander Schweitzer, UBS Global Bible Translation Director, says that the election of Pope Francis will be a ‘vitalising experience for a 2,000-year-old institution.’

Fervent engagement for the poor

“Pope Francis embodies several ‘first ever’ aspects: he’s the first Jesuit pope, the first Latin American pope, and the first to choose St Francis of Assisi as the patron of his papacy. He combines modesty, not least in his lifestyle, with fervent engagement for the poor, and traditional Catholic theology with courageous advocacy for human rights.

“He is a man of the universal church with an ecumenical spirit and he is a pastor, who knows the reality of ‘simple’ people. The new Pope is a truly biblical person whose faith and actions are deeply rooted in the Bible and inspired by the Word of God.”

“As a long-time friend of the Bible Societies Pope Francis knows that our *raison d’être* is the call to collaborate in the incarnation of our Christian faith,” says Mr Perreau. “We assure Pope Francis of our renewed availability to serve the Catholic Church in her endeavours to make the Word of God the centre of new evangelisation.”

United Bible Societies, is made up of 146 Bible Societies operating in more than 200 countries and territories. As the world’s largest Bible translator, publisher and distributor, it is committed to working with all Christian Churches in its mission to make the Bible available to all people everywhere.