

MICHAEL COLLINS

PAUL VI

*Pilgrim
Pope*

DISCUSSION GUIDE

About the Book

Pope Paul VI (1963–78) was one of the most important and influential pontiffs of the twentieth century. In this engaging biography, Michael Collins examines this deeply spiritual man who is remembered as a reformer, evangelizer, and pilgrim.

Pope Paul's pontificate was marked by an unprecedented series of international journeys, establishing a practice that his successors developed even further. These brought him face-to-face with modern life throughout the globe and the challenge of making the Christian message relevant in a secular world. Paul VI is regarded for his efforts to reduce poverty in the developing world, bolster the church's rejection of artificial birth control, and foster better relations between Catholics and Orthodox and Reformed Christians. He was beatified in 2014 by Pope Francis.

About the Author

Michael Collins is a priest of the Archdiocese of Dublin, where he has served several parishes. He has written or co-authored a number of books, including *Benedict XVI: Successor to Peter*, *John Paul II: The Path to Saint-hood*, and *The Story of Christianity*. He is the author of *Francis: Bishop of Rome*, published by Liturgical Press and now in its second edition.



Discussion Guide

Chapter One

1. Use Google Earth to find Brescia, Concesio, and Verolavecchia. Search the internet for late nineteenth and early twentieth-century images of this part of the world. What strikes you about the environment in which Giovanni Battista Montini grew up?
2. What do you know of the Oratorians? What formative impact may they have had on the young Montini?
3. How would Montini's father's career as a journalist have affected his early years?
4. Describe the political situation in Italy at the end of the nineteenth century. How does this set the stage for Montini's life?
5. What was the church-state relationship like in Italy during the First World War?

Chapter Two

1. Montini's career was clearly affected by his father's connections as a journalist. How do you understand this? Fortune? Privilege? Providence? The work of the Holy Spirit?
2. How was Montini affected by his first diplomatic post in Poland?
3. Why did the Italian People's Party (PPI) struggle to gain popularity during the early 1920s? What role did the church play?
4. What responsibilities did Montini have upon his return to Rome? What was his lifestyle like?
5. What role did the Fascist Party play in the establishment of the Vatican City State?
6. Who were Eugenio Pacelli and Domenico Tardini? Describe their relationships with Montini.

Chapter Three

1. Whom did Pius XII select to replace himself as Secretary of State? What affect did this have on Montini's work at the Secretariat?
2. Prior to reading this chapter, what did you know of the Vatican's response to the events of the Second World War? Has your perspective changed?
3. Describe the shift in the Vatican's stance toward democracy following the Second World War (pp. 40–41). Why did this take place?
4. Look up *Humani Generis* online. Against what “theological trends” did Pius warn in that document? Why might he have advocated for these “novel moves” (pp. 42–43)?
5. What was the priest worker movement? Why did Pius suppress it? How do you think such a movement would be received today?
6. Who was Angelo Roncalli? Describe his relationship to Montini.
7. Why did Pius appoint Montini, who had yet to serve in a parish, to be the archbishop of Milan? What would you have anticipated as Montini's strengths and growing edges as a young bishop without experience in parish life?

Chapter Four

1. What was at stake in Roncalli's preference for local governance in church matters?
2. What was at stake as Suenens warned Roncalli about preparations for the council?
3. What is the significance of the contrast between "the joy of the Gospel message" and the "prophets of doom" in Pope John XXIII's sermon at the opening of the Second Vatican Council (p. 59)?
4. Why was it important that there be a "swift result" in the 1963 conclave? What was at stake?
5. Why did Montini choose "Paul" as his papal name?
6. What were Paul VI's "four hopes" for the remainder of the Second Vatican Council? How do these goals compare with the agenda of John XXIII?

Chapter Five

1. What do you think of Paul's characterization of the church's historical relationship to artists?
2. Look up *Ecclesiam Suam* online. What do you think of Paul VI's decision to "refrain[] from making judgments on the global political situation" (p. 76)?
3. Was Paul VI's appointment of fifteen, and later twenty-three, female auditors sufficient to address Cardinal Suenens' challenge? Why or why not?
4. What is a synod of bishops? How is it different from a council? How did this new model of governance emerge during Paul VI's papacy?
5. Discuss the *Wall Street Journal's* description of *Populorum Progressio* as "souped-up Marxism" (p. 89). Is that a fair characterization? Why?
6. What was the Oath against Modernism (p. 91), and why did Paul VI repeal it?

Chapter Six

1. Discuss the quote of Cardinal Martini on pp. 96–97. How does the unavoidability of some lies relate to *Humanae Vitae*?
2. What do you know of the council of bishops that met at Medellín (p. 99)? What was the backdrop of their deliberations, and how are these contextual forces still at work today?
3. What stands out to you from Paul VI's visit to Africa (pp. 102–4)?
4. Describe Paul VI's involvement in the postconciliar reform of the liturgy (pp. 104–5). What could he have done differently?
5. Describe your experience with lay ecclesial movements such as those listed on p. 111.
6. How did Karol Wojtyła emerge as a figure in the church during the latter years of Paul VI's pontificate?
7. Of all the international visits that Paul VI made, which stood out for you during your reading?

Chapter Seven & Epilogue

1. What did you know of Marcel Lefebvre prior to reading this chapter? Has your perspective changed?
2. Do you agree with the actions that Paul VI took toward Lefebvre?
3. What do you think of Paul VI's considerations of abdication (pp. 127–28)? Under what circumstances should a pope abdicate?
4. Could Paul VI have done anything differently regarding the abduction of Aldo Moro?
5. Reflect upon the words of Paul VI quoted by Pope Francis (p. 135). How may these words serve as inspiration for other church leaders? And for those not in church leadership?