

Interim results: Pope Francis revitalizes Vatican II reforms

Analysis by Christian Weisner

This article appears in the [Francis at Five Years](#) feature series. [View the full series.](#)

"Only if the reforms of the Second Vatican Council are continued can the church be saved," Fr. Hans Küng said in the fall of 2012 at a symposium marking the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council. The Swiss theologian, who had been an adviser to the council (and will celebrate his 90th birthday March 19), had watched through the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI as the reforms of the council were implemented slowly, relativized by the magisterium, and, in many cases, massively obstructed and opposed.

Within a half of a year, Benedict would make history by being the first pope in nearly 600 years to resign. The resignation was necessary, not only because of his advanced age — he was 85 at the time — but above all because of a fundamental leadership crisis in the Vatican. Although for more than 30 years he held one of the highest positions in the Vatican, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger had failed to really lead the Vatican and, once he became pope, failed to solve problems in the church, some of which he had inherited from John Paul II.

On March 13, 2013, Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina, [was elected pope](#). Although he had not himself witnessed the proceedings of the council in Rome, this cardinal came from a continent where the vision of this reform council has been consistently accepted and implemented.

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