

Pope Francis Answers Little Kids' Big Questions



Pope Francis reads letters from children in 2015. (Antonio Spadaro, SJ)

Pope Francis personally responds to 30 questions from kids in his first children’s book, *Dear Pope Francis: The Pope Answers Letters from Children Around the World*. In the new book published by Jesuit-run Loyola Press, the pope answers questions about why he wears that big hat, if relatives watch over us from heaven, whether bad people have guardian angels, and more.

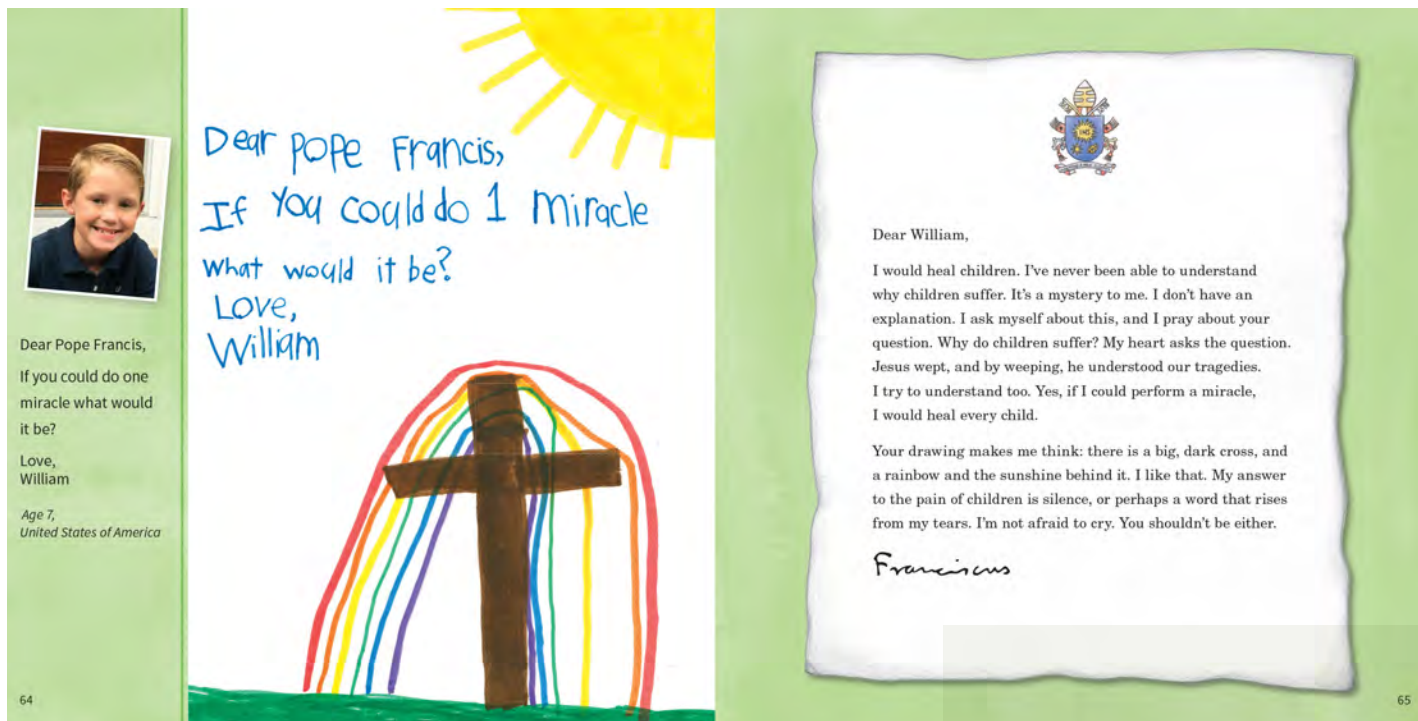
“One of the lines we use to describe this book is, ‘Little children have big questions,’” said Jesuit Fr. Paul Campbell, publisher of Loyola Press. “Yes, they are questions from little children, but they are very, very profound questions.”

The book came about when editors from Loyola Press traveled to Rome last May and asked the pope if he would consider writing the book. He agreed, and Loyola Press then reached out to dozens of Jesuits and collaborators around the globe, asking them to solicit questions and drawings from children. Sometimes, Loyola Press had to ship crayons, markers, and paper to children who had none. In the end, 259 children in 26 countries submitted questions.

Loyola Press selected 30 letters for the pope to answer, and Jesuit Fr. Antonio Spadaro, editor of the journal *La Civiltà Cattolica*, met privately with Pope Francis while he answered the letters.

The result: letters and drawings from 30 children, ages 6 to 13, posing some deep questions. “What did God do before the world was made?” one child asked. “Do you know why some parents argue with each other?” asked another.

Father Spadaro said half the time, he personally was stumped when thinking about how he would have responded. But the pope was not. To the question about what God was



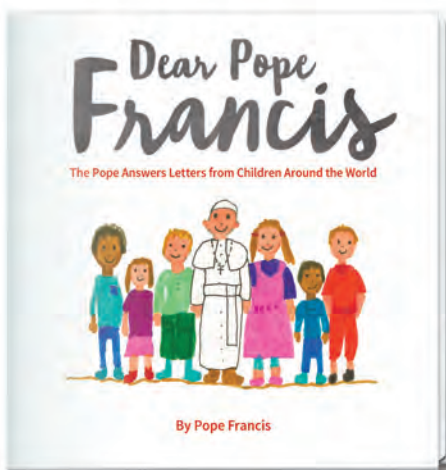
doing before creation, the heart of the pope's answer is, "Think of it this way: Before creating anything, God loved. That's what God was doing: God was loving."

William, a 7-year-old from Chicago, asked the pope: "Dear Pope Francis, if you could do one miracle what would it be?" Pope Francis answered: "I would heal every child."

When asked by Mohamed, 10, from Syria, if the world will ever be beautiful again, like it was before, the pope responded by pointing out how, after he died and ascended into heaven, Jesus promised that he would return, and when he does, "everything will be new: a new heaven, a new earth."

Because of this, Francis said, "The world now will not be like it was in the past." The pope lamented that there are "evil people" who produce and sell arms in order to make war, people who hate, and people who are so attached to money that they will "even sell other people" to get more.

Although "this is terrible," the pope stressed that "this suffering is destined to end, you know? It's not forever. Suffering is lived with hope, despite everything."



On a more lighthearted note, the pope answered questions about Sunday school, how Jesus walked on water, and what he would like to do to make the world a better place.

To celebrate the release of the

William, a 7-year-old from Chicago, received a response to his letter from Pope Francis. (Loyola Press)

book, which is also being published by Jesuit publishing houses in 11 other countries, several children whose letters appear in the book met with Pope Francis in a private audience at the Vatican on February 22. They presented him with the Italian translation of the book, as well as all of the letters collected for the project.

Meeting the pope was an incredible moment for the kids — and a little nerve-wracking. Ryan, 9, from St. Ignatius School in Canada, said, "One moment I felt excited, but then I felt like this is probably my only time I'm going to meet him, so I don't want to blow this."

Dear Pope Francis is available in English and Spanish. Please visit loyolapress.com/DearPopeFrancis to order a copy. ✝

[Sources: Vatican Radio, *Wall Street Journal*, Catholic News Service, *Good Morning America*, *National Catholic Register*]