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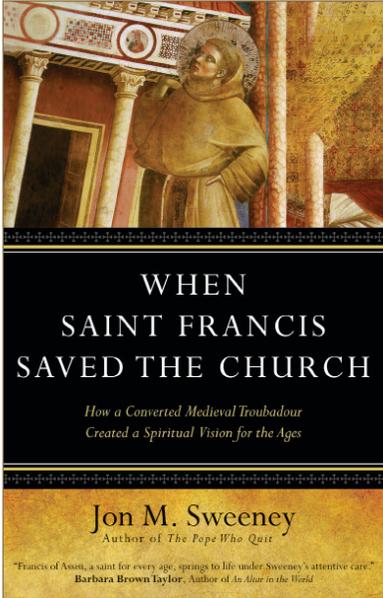
**Stephanie A. Sibal, Publicist**

**800.282.1865 x206 • sibal.1@nd.edu**

Ave Maria Press, Inc. • P.O. Box 428 • Notre Dame, IN • 46556

**A Ministry of the United States Province of Holy Cross**

## Sweeney Debunks Myths about Saint Francis, Compares Vision with Pope



**NOTRE DAME, IN**— Saint Francis is one of the most iconic religious figures in history, but there’s much more to the converted Medieval troubadour than his role as the patron saint of animals.

Jon M. Sweeney, bestselling author of *The Pope Who Quit*, offers a fresh, historical perspective on Saint Francis—and the pope who shares his name. Separating myths from facts, Sweeney’s surprising portrait of Saint Francis presents an unpredictable, puzzling visionary who created a revolution in the Catholic Church.

“With a style and a spirit that rocked the Church of his day, Francis changed the world,” Sweeney writes. “He effectively ‘rebranded’ the Church ... with what he said and didn’t say, with what he emphasized and didn’t emphasize, and in the playful, powerful, unusual ways that he communicated the Gospel message. It reminds me again of what’s happening in today’s Catholic Church.”

Sweeney focuses on Francis’s truly revolutionary vision and unconventional approach to friendship, people at the margins, poverty, spirituality, care for God’s creations and death. This perceptive study reveals how the profound wisdom of this Italian friar and preacher defied the traditional interpretation of “living the Gospel” and, at the same time, transformed Christianity forever.

In this new “Age of Francis,” Sweeney’s timely book removes the distortions of celebrity, exposing the peculiar man whose movement quite literally saved the Christian faith—and whose inspiring spiritual vision shines through Pope Francis today.

### **When Saint Francis Saved the Church**

*How a Converted Medieval Troubadour  
Created a Spiritual Vision for the Ages*

**By Jon M. Sweeney**

ISBN: 978-1-59471-486-3

192 pages • \$22.00

Religion/History

**Now Available**

**Also available in audio and  
eBook formats**

“We are living at a time when another Francis promises to spur renewal of the Church. Although history does not repeat itself, reflecting with Jon Sweeney on the work and wisdom of St. Francis of Assisi orients us on how to pray for Pope Francis’s efforts and to respond to his initiatives.”

**Bert Ghezzi**

*Author of Voices of the Saints*



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## About the Author



Jon M. Sweeney is an independent scholar and one of religion's most respected writers. He was the cofounder and editor-in-chief of SkyLight Paths Publishing. Sweeney has served as the editor-in-chief at Paraclete Press since 2004 and became publisher in 2013. His books have become History Book Club, Book-of-the-Month Club, Crossings Book Club, and Quality Paperback Book Club selections.

His 2012 popular history, *The Pope Who Quit*, sold more than 35,000 copies in the trade edition, was a selection of History Book Club, received a starred review in Booklist, and was excerpted by Reader's Digest for its iPad subscribers. It is also an audio book and has been optioned by HBO. Sweeney's eleven other books have sold more than 150,000 copies. He is also the coauthor of *The Age of the Spirit*. Sweeney has been interviewed on *CBS Saturday Morning*, Fox News, CBS-TV Chicago, *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly*, and on the popular nightly program *Chicago Tonight*. He is married, the father of three, and lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

//Spirituality and religion needn't be opposed to each other, but Francis lived at a time when the Church felt threatened by individual expressions of faith. Priests were taught that they were the primary mediators between God and their parishioners; without the sacraments there was little access to God that made religious sense in the Middle Ages. In many ways, Francis changed all of that."

**From  
*When Saint  
Francis Saved  
the Church***



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## Praise for *When Saint Francis Saved the Church*:

“After trying to follow Christ as a Franciscan for almost fifty years, I can honestly say this is an exciting, intelligent, and faithful understanding of Francis of Assisi—for our time and for all time! Read, and find hope!”

**Richard Rohr, O.F.M.**

Center for Action and Contemplation  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

“Jon Sweeney is good at many things, but he is a master at retrieving the treasure of the Christian past and restoring it to currency for the Christian present. In this book, he transcends even those categories. Francis of Assisi, a saint for every age, springs to life under Sweeney’s attentive care.”

**Barbara Brown Taylor**

Author of *An Altar in the World*

“Jon Sweeney applies popular history to a man who changed history, St. Francis of Assisi. Deeply familiar with the Franciscan sources and writing in a very accessible style, Sweeney points to Pope Francis’s inspiration. I like this book!”

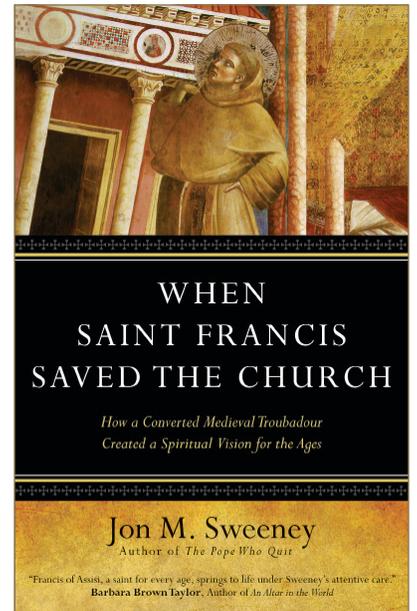
**John Feister**

Editor-in-Chief of *St. Anthony Messenger*

“This well-informed meditation on the life of St. Francis is a delight to read. Jon Sweeney’s careful and timely retelling of Francis’s story deepens our understanding of why a twenty-first-century pope took the saint’s name—and gives us hope for the future of the Church.”

**Paul Moses**

Author of *The Saint and the Sultan*



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## Suggested Interview Questions:

- 1 How does the popular view of Saint Francis differ from the real story of his life?
- 2 In what ways did Saint Francis revolutionize and transform the Church?
- 3 How are the teachings of Saint Francis still relevant today?
- 4 How do Pope Francis and his vision for the Catholic Church reflect his namesake?