

The screenshot shows the top portion of the National Catholic Reporter website. The main headline reads "Pope Francis creates moments of connection on Assisi trip". Below the headline is a photograph of Pope Francis wearing a dark blue baseball cap with a gold emblem. To the right of the main content area, there is a search bar and a promotional banner for "THE FRANCIS CHRONICLES" with the text "Visit the new blog from NCR >>>". Below that is a quote: "Your will... not mine -John 6:38" and "What is God's will for you?" with a blue arrow icon.

This screenshot shows the full article page. The main image is a photograph of Pope Francis in white papal attire, smiling and gesturing towards a colorful flower carpet. Below the image is a caption: "Pope Francis greets people outside Assisi's Cathedral of San Rufino on Oct. 4 before heading inside to speak to members of the cathedral and diocese's pastoral staff. Behind him are flowers arranged by participants of the 'Le infiorate' festival. The pope refused to walk on the flower carpet. (NCR photo/Joshua J. McElwee)". To the right of the article is a sidebar with the same "SISTERS OF BON SECOURS" advertisement, including their phone number "877-742-0277" and a "GO" button for an email alert sign-up form.

[Joshua J. McElwee](#) | Oct. 7, 2013  
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The open-aired popemobile stopped Friday about a block northwest of the cathedral of this central Italian hamlet. Pope Francis climbed down and began to walk along a fenced area where people had gathered. He spent the next 10 minutes shaking hands and having short moments of conversation.

The pope lingered in conversation with one man, both of them smiling widely. Then, suddenly, the man reached over the fence and placed a black baseball cap over the pontiff's white zucchetto.

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Pope Francis with the hat of the 'Le infiorate' festival, put on him by Giulio Bocchini Oct. 4 (Photo courtesy of Marco Mariotti)

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Giulio Bocchini organizes the annual 'Le infiorate' festival in Spello, Italy. (NCR photo/Joshua J. McElwee)

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The cap, emblazoned with an orange logo, stayed on the pope's head for about a minute. Attendants took it away as the pontiff continued to walk down the line.

It was a quick moment, but, like many moments described by participants in the pope's first visit to the home of his 13th-century namesake, St. Francis, it was one of deep connection.

The man who gave the pope his hat was Giulio Bocchini, a native of Spello, Italy, a town about a 15-minute drive southeast of Assisi.

### Special Report: The Francis Interview

Subscribers to our print edition: The October 11 issue includes this special feature with reactions to Pope Francis' interview from Richard Rohr, Hans Küng, Michelle Gonzalez, Richard Gaillardetz and Chris Lowney. Additional copies are available to purchase. [Learn more](#)

Bocchini organizes an annual festival that celebrates the Catholic feast of Corpus Domini by decorating streets of Spello with intricate carpets made of flower petals and stems. He said he told the pope some of the festival's organizers spent several days preparing a flower carpet just for his visit.

The path from the square outside Assisi's Cathedral of San Rufino on Oct. 4 was decorated with flowers arranged in intricate designs of St. Francis. The flowers were prepared by organizers of the 'Le infiorate' festival, an annual event organized in nearby Spello, Italy, to celebrate the feast of Corpus Domini. (NCR photo/Joshua J. McElwee)

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The carpet, which showed images of Jesus and St. Francis in brilliant colors, lined the street in front of Assisi's Cathedral of St. Rufino. Bocchini said he encouraged the pope to walk on the carpet, as Spello's bishop normally does during the annual festival, called *Le infiorate*.

"I told him, 'We do it for the Corpus Domini [the Body of Christ], and you represent God on earth, so you have the right to walk on the carpet because of that,'" Bocchini said.

"No, no, no," Bocchini said the pope replied. "God and me, we're two different things. We're very far away."

After hearing that, Bocchini said he placed his own hat, adorned with the festival's logo and made by festival organizers, on the pope's head.

"Since then, he is now one of us," Bocchini said.

Fr. Gerardo Balbi also had a few minutes with the pope.

Balbi, a priest of Italy's Gubbio diocese, about an hour north of Assisi, was present Friday morning when the pope visited the Serafico Institute of Assisi, an organization that helps with the rehabilitation of severely disabled children across Italy. Balbi, who is blind and attended the institute in the 1960s, said he had been playing the piano as the pope spoke to the children, some of whom were moaning and crying because of their conditions.

"It was amazing to see that the pope was really, really moved," said Balbi, who now serves as a pastor of a parish in Umbertide, Italy.

"They are very noisy," he said about the children at the institute. "And [the pope] was speaking very softly, so it was hard to hear him. But he was really so moved, he was whispering almost."

As the pope left, he shook hands and hugged several of the people with the institute, including Balbi.

"It was just a few words," Balbi said. "I just told [the pope] who I was and what I did. And then he said he admired me."

For Franciscan Fr. Sergio Prena, the point of connection with the pontiff came after the pope celebrated Mass on Friday outside the Basilica of Saint Francis, where the remains of the saint are kept in an unadorned crypt.

Prena, who now lives in the nearby town of Orvieto, said he previously spent 10 years living in Assisi while serving on a team of friars who attend to the Porziuncola, a very small church repaired by St. Francis to serve as the headquarters of his order.

Partly because of that connection, Prena was invited to be one of many concelebrating the Mass with the pope, he said.

"And at the end of the Mass, he greeted those who had celebrated with him within the basilica," Prena said.

"In greeting him very usually, with a kiss and a hug, very jokingly I told him, 'Thank you for this beautiful gift of the visit to Assisi,'" he said.

"Just pray for me," Prena said the pope replied.

"And that was very nice," Prena said. "Maybe the greatest emotion was not to have seen the pope, but to have heard him tell me, 'Pray for me.'"

Two families sitting together outside the Basilica of St. Francis said they, like Prena, also had a moment of personal connection with the pope.

Gloria, the mother of one of the families, said she was particularly moved by the way the pope used his homily that morning to meditate on the life of St. Francis before entering into a continued prayer to his namesake.

Cliente: **Infiorate Spello**

Gloria, whose family came from a town outside Gubbio, said she paid special attention to the pope's request that the saint "teach us to be instruments of peace, of that peace which has its source in God, the peace which Jesus has brought us." "At the moment, I see so much aggression among people," she said. "People just burst out. And I would like people to be more loving and open to one another."

"Maybe within the church it is not so easy to see these things," she continued. "But also the church could be a very good mediator in helping people to find their serenity."

Gloria's young daughter, Giulia, said she "felt so many different things today."

"In all my life, I never saw the pope," she said.

As the pope left the piazza following the Mass to eat lunch with poor people at Assisi's Caritas Center, Giulia said she watched with her younger brother as the popemobile drove through the crowd.

"I was shouting, 'Viva il papa!'" she said. "And then he turned around and he said 'Hello' by waving his hand. I was shaking."

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The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <http://ncronline.org/news/vatican/pope-francis-...>. The main content area features a photograph of Pope Francis in white vestments blessing a young boy in a wheelchair. Below the photo is the caption: "Pope Francis blesses a disabled person during his visit at the Serafico Institute on Oct. 4 in Assisi, Italy. (CNS/Reuters/Gian Matteo Crocchioni)". To the right of the main image is a sidebar containing an advertisement for "SISTERS OF BON SECOURS" with the phone number "877-742-0277" and a quote: "Your will... not mine -John 6:38 What is God's will for you?". Below the ad is a sign-up form for "NCR EMAIL ALERTS" with a "GO" button.

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the same URL as above. The main content area features a photograph of Pope Francis in white vestments smiling and shaking hands with a young woman in a red shirt. Below the photo is the caption: "Pope Francis greets a young woman during an encounter with youth in the piazza Oct. 4 outside the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels in Assisi, Italy. (CNS/Paul Haring)". The sidebar on the right is identical to the one in the previous screenshot, featuring the "SISTERS OF BON SECOURS" advertisement and the "NCR EMAIL ALERTS" sign-up form.