

New day: new Pope

The Roman Catholic Church has a new leader: Argentine Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio was elected Pope Francis on March 13th

The huge crowds that filled Saint Peter's Square for the announcement had disappeared by the next morning. While the news teams that had filled the historic square packed up to move onto the next big story, Francis' papacy began.

The 76-year-old from Buenos Aires started his first day with a visit to a Rome's Santa Maria Maggiore Basilica, for a private prayer. His first few days will include audiences with his staff, the media — and of course, his flock. He is also expected to visit his predecessor Benedict — who resigned last month. The new Pope takes the helm of a Roman Catho-

lic Church plagued by scandals over sex abuse — as well as allegations of corruption and infighting.

Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina was born in 1936. He became Bishop of Buenos Aires in 1992 and Archbishop six years later. He has often shunned the spotlight during his career, but that luxury disappeared the moment he stepped onto the balcony in St. Peter's Square. The new Pope is known as an intellectual and a theological conservative. He was a fierce opponent of his own country's decision to legalise gay marriage in 2010. When he appeared before the huge crowd in Rome,



Argentine Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio poses with a jersey from the San Lorenzo soccer club

Jorge Mario Bergoglio looked as surprised as anyone to have been chosen as the new Pope. Far away in the cathedral in Buenos Aires, the announcement drew what was described as thunderous applause.

The Pope was given a

warm and enthusiastic welcome by a crowd of more than 100,000 pilgrims in St. Peter's Square, gathered to witness his first Angelus devotion as pontiff. In his address before the prayers he concentrated on the themes of mercy and for-

giveness.

"Never forget this," he said. "The Lord never tires of forgiving. It is we who tire of asking to be forgiven." He concluded: "Have a good Sunday and have a good lunch."

The tone of the Pope's

address reflected a style that has been characterised by many as unpretentious and good-natured — a Pope of the people. As with his first public papal appearance after being elected by the conclave of cardinals, he asked the crowd to pray for him.

Spanish unemployment level beats all records



People march during a protest against government austerity measures

There is no respite in sight for Spain's unemployed

The jobless rate there has now soared to its highest level since government statisticians first started keeping such records back in the 1970s. It rose to 26 percent of the workforce in the final three months of last year, that was up from 25 percent in the previous quarter.

The prolonged recession and deep spending cuts pushed the total number of Spaniards who are out of work close to six million at the end of last year. That is up from 5.27 million, a year earlier, and 4.69 million the year before that.

The Madrid government

continues to try to put the best spin on the figures, Economy Minister Fernando Jiménez Latorre said, "We expect that this year, the economic activity will develop and the labour market decline will be less, so we'll end the year with positive numbers." That cut no ice with union leader Candido Méndez with the UGT who called labour market reform 'a deadly machine destroying Spanish jobs'. Behind the packed job centres are government efforts to lower one of the Eurozone's largest deficits with billions of Euros of spending cuts and tax hikes. Economists are gloomy, expecting the recession to last at least until

the end of this year.

And, digging deeper, things look even worse — 50 percent of young people are out of work. Union representative Ignacio Fernandez Toro told the crowd the EU's insistence on austerity shows how inept it is; 'it is nothing more than suicide'. The event — dubbed the 'Social Summit' was organised by a 150 civil society organisations including trade unions.

60 cities across Spain were involved. Protestors are also angry about allegations that Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy and others benefitted from years of slush fund handouts. Rajoy has denied any wrongdoing,

France urges softer approach to austerity

Germany is facing stiff resistance from France to ease back on austerity as Europe's leaders gather in Brussels for another EU summit

French President François Hollande has called for the emphasis to shift to boosting growth in indebted Eurozone economies. All this, while his government

looks set to miss its EU-mandated deficit target of three percent of GDP this year. Voters have ousted a number of EU leaders over tough spending cuts, including Italy's Mario Monti.

Europe's austerity policies received renewed criticism from Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Krugman, who traded barbs with EU

officials over spending cuts which he says has left the European economy in 'disastrous shape'. But ministers warn countries must honour their obligations.

Unions have held an anti-austerity demonstration as EU leaders met in Brussels. They say it is time to change course on spending cuts and labour reforms.

Boeing battery test ahead

US planemaker Boeing is one step closer to getting its troubled 787 Dreamliner back into regular service and ending losses of over 38 million Euros a week

US transport regulators have given the go-ahead for limited flights to start testing a redesigned battery following overheating problems. Regulators grounded the 50 Dreamliners in use by airlines on January 16th after a battery fire on Japan Airlines 787 at Boston airport and a second battery incident on an All Nippon Airways flight in Japan. Boeing halted deliveries of the lightweight aircraft, although its factories continue to make it.

Boeing's new battery — which it presented to



the FAA in late February — is designed to minimise the chances of a short circuit, better insulates the cells within the battery, and adds a new containment and venting system to prevent damage even if the battery catches fire. The FAA said the new design must pass a series of tests before it is ap-

proved and that the agency will be 'closely involved' in the certification process. It was reported that Boeing is close to selling 170 of its 737 planes to Irish low-cost carrier Ryanair. Sources familiar with the deal have said that the order was exclusively for the current generation 737NG jet.