

The Papal Visit

Going into the past weekend was something I would have never thought I would get to experience. Getting the last ticket was like receiving the last golden ticket in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. I found myself very fortunate that I was not only going to get to see Pope Francis once but twice in two years. And what made this experience of getting to see Pope Francis this past weekend much more special was the fact that he was visiting our country. It was an experience so spectacular that I cannot express in words.

The whole weekend was an amazing experience. I got to meet new amazing people throughout this whole trip including some of the people I travelled with. It was great hearing their stories and getting to know them on somewhat of a personal level. It was also quite an experience seeing people on the streets that I didn't get to meet expressing their faith by marching in the middle of the streets singing their praise in their native languages.

Getting to go to the Festival of Families and the mass on Sunday was such a crazy and fun experience. It was amazing to see how many people of all types of nationalities came to see Pope Francis and to see how strong their faith was. I got to witness this while waiting in line to get through security when I met this one family from Upstate New York and their eldest daughter I had met, suffers from an illness, though not a major illness, she had been progressively feeling worse throughout the day due to lack of sleep which eventually led to her fainting and the amount of strangers including myself came to her aid and helped her the best that we could until the EMTS came to her aid. Fortunately, I came to find out that the girl who had fainted while we were waiting in line to get through security was fine.

Though I did see some people with a lack of spirituality and respect for human kind, my overall experience of this trip was a positive one. Seeing all these people come to Philadelphia to see Pope Francis strengthened my faith even further. It gave me hope that in a world where you hear of so many horrible things happening such as the Syrians having no other choice than to flee their country and their way of life, the only life that they know, there is still so much goodness in this world and that there are numerous people that hold on to their faith through the good and the bad times. Seeing Pope Francis in Philadelphia and hearing about all the things he has accomplished during his trip to the United States of America has also given me hope in a way. It is great to see someone who is a global wide celebrity figure live in such a way that is so humble and so relatable to everyone's day to day life's experience. In a world full of bad role models, it is nice to see one positive role model that the world can look up to.

Christi Kappel

Young Professionals in Philadelphia.

We feel truly blessed to be able to go to Philadelphia when our Holy Father visited for the World Meeting of Families. It was a blessing to go with Fr. Przemyslaw on a pilgrimage to Philadelphia. My sister came from California just to see Pope Francis. My sister was happy to meet members of the Young Professionals of Assumption. After the weekend, she kept repeating how much fun the weekend was and how blessed she was being able to see the Pope. Additionally, my husband, my sister and I all spoke of how we met good and holy people who came with Fr Przemyslaw and now we are honored to call them our new friends.

The whole experience of seeing the Pope and attending the Festival of Families and the Papal Mass with our new friends made it even more special, fun and very memorable. The experience we had during our pilgrimage in Philly was truly an outpouring grace from God. We were blessed to be offered to stay in a house where our hosts were away on their honeymoon but they had graciously and selflessly allowed all eight of us to stay in their lovely home. Their home was strategically located only a short walking distance to the events which made the weekend stay so enjoyable. We found no issues with traffic nor with parking which was quite contrary to the reports by various local Philly media outlets. Truly a blessing from God.

Philadelphia was a wonderful host city and there were a multitude of restaurants to choose from and all were willing to accommodate the hundreds of thousands of Catholics and fellow Christians who were there to see our Holy Father, Pope Francis. Our group, strangers on a Friday, bonded easily and we laughed a lot, shared delicious meals together, and got to know each other on spiritual and personal levels, with Father Przemyslaw as our figurative shepherd. Our patience was tested in the long security lines but we passed the time getting to know the people around us who were more than willing to share their own special experiences of the weekend. And more importantly, we prayed together during the times we had to wait for Pope Francis to arrive. Once he did arrive, traveling thru the streets in his Popemobile was truly a sight to behold. Hearing the thousands of people scream, watching them jump and run and climb poles and trees, others aching their necks to get a glimpse of the leader of the Catholic faith was truly a spectacle. These people - old, young, teenagers, children, men, women, many different races - all moved by this one man is truly awe inspiring. The great joy that we feel exuberates from the moment we had a glimpse of our Holy Father and continues to now, as I'm sharing my experience.

It is hard to describe with just one word the amazing emotions we had experienced during our pilgrimage in Philadelphia. We felt deep joy, happiness, peace and excitement seeing our Holy Father in person. To be surrounded by our immediate personal friends was a treat, indeed. But to be surrounded by spiritual friends who share the same love for the Catholic faith and for our Holy Father was more than a treat, it was a gift and a blessing. We felt so proud to be Catholic and are so grateful to God for the gift of our Catholic faith and for the gift of Pope Francis. Thanks and praise be to Jesus, now and forever!

Hazel Luayon