



The Catholic Register

Official Publication Of
The Diocese of Altoona - Johnstown

Volume LXXXX, No. 11 Published Bi - Weekly (USPS 094 - 280)

www.dioceseaj.org October 5, 2015



CNS Photo/Paul Haring

POPE FRANCIS CELEBRATES CLOSING MASS: An image of the Holy Family is seen as Pope Francis celebrates the closing Mass of the World Meeting of Families on Benjamin Franklin Parkway in Philadelphia Sunday, September 27.

Memory And Motion: Pope Francis Shows Americans Who He Really Is

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

PHILADELPHIA (CNS) -- Pope Francis speaks often about memory and motion, the importance of remembering where you came from and setting off without fear to share the Gospel.

That's what he did in the United States. He circled the Statue of Liberty in a helicopter and flew over Ellis Island not preparing to condemn the world's great superpower, but to reflect on its history and promise as a land that welcomes people, makes them part of the family and allows them to thrive.

Over the course of six days in the United States, Pope Francis let the U.S. public see who he really is with touching blessings, strong speeches, prayerful liturgies and an unplugged proclamation of the beauty of family life, even when it includes flying saucers.

With constant television coverage and a saturated social media presence, Pope Francis was no longer just the subject of screaming headlines about the evils of unbridled capitalism and

a "who-am-I-to judge" attitude toward behaviors the Catholic Church describes as sinful.

Instead, he repeatedly admitted his own failures and reminded people they, too, have fallen short. He urged them to trust in God's mercy and get a move on proclaiming that to the world -- first with gestures and maybe with words.

Sin is sin even for Pope Francis. Human life is sacred at every stage of its development, and that includes the lives of convicted murders, he said during the visit. People are blessed and at their best when they are part of a family composed of a mother, a father, children and grandparents. The well-being of a nation is served by businesses and enterprises that make money, but that do not make money their god.

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Americans Get To Know The Real Pope Francis

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The pope's proclamation of the Gospel in Washington, New York and Philadelphia Sept. 22-27 focused on reinvigorating people's faith, hope, trust and commitment to loving God, serving others and living up to the founding ideals of the United States: equality, opportunity for all, religious liberty and the sacred dignity of every creature -- human especially, but also the earth.

Pope Francis had never been in the United States before landing in Washington Sept. 22. He was welcomed to the White House and became the first pope to address a joint meeting of Congress. He joined leaders of other religions in honoring the dead and comforting their surviving family members at ground zero in New York. He



CNS Photo/Matt Rourke, Pool

POPE WAVES TO CROWDS IN PHILADELPHIA: Pope Francis waves to the crowd as he makes his way to celebrate the closing Mass of the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia Sunday, September 27.

addressed the United Nations. And, in Philadelphia, using a lectern once used by Abraham Lincoln, he called for respect for religious freedom and for ethnic and cultural differences.

At home and abroad, Pope Francis scrutinizes people and identifies something good and beautiful in them. He affirms their core concerns, and he challenges them to grow.

For the Catholic Church -- in the United States as elsewhere -- the key challenge is "not about building walls, but about breaking them down," as he told the bishops, clergy and religious of Pennsylvania Sept. 26.

From the beginning of his trip -- Sept. 19 in Havana -- the pope made it clear that with all the important meetings he would have, his primary purpose was to join the celebration of the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia Sept. 26-27.

And he insisted it be a celebration, not a funeral or a simply a session for rallying the obedient, loyal troops before they set out to battle.

The big challenge, he told more than 100 bishops who came to the meeting from around the world, is to recognize just how many beautiful families God has blessed the church with.

"For the church, the family is not first and foremost a cause for concern, but rather the joyous confirmation of God's blessing upon the masterpiece of creation," he told the bishops Sept. 27. "Every day, all over the world, the church can rejoice in the Lord's gift of so many families who, even amid difficult trials, remain faithful to their promises and keep the faith!"

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CNS Photo

POPE FRANCIS GREETES STUDENT: Pope Francis greets a student during his visit to Our Lady Queen of Angels School in the East Harlem area of New York Friday, September 25.



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POPE VISITS PRISONERS IN PHILADELPHIA FACILITY: Pope Francis blesses a prisoner as he visits the Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility in Philadelphia Sunday, September 27.

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Tossing aside the text he had prepared for the nighttime festival of families Sept. 26, Pope Francis had tens of thousands of people watching him with awe or with laughter or with tears as he described the blessing of real-life families.

“Some of you might say, ‘Of course, Father, you speak like that because you’re not married,’” he admitted. But he proved he knew what he was talking about. “Families have difficulties. Families -- we quarrel, sometimes plates can fly, and children bring headaches. I won’t speak about mothers-in-law,” he quipped.

But mothers-in-law deserve a break and understanding, if one applies the pope’s words to the

bishops the next morning and to hundreds of thousands of people gathered on Philadelphia’s Benjamin Franklin Parkway for the event’s closing Mass.

Trust the Holy Spirit, he told the crowds. Recognize that God is at work in the world. Treasure the little daily gestures that show love within a family. Affirm all those who do good, whether or not they are “part of our group.”

“Anyone who wants to bring into this world a family which teaches children to be excited by every gesture aimed at overcoming evil -- a family which shows that the Spirit is alive and at work -- will encounter our gratitude and our appreciation. Whatever the family, people, region, or religion to which they belong!” he said.

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	Periodical Class Postage Paid At Altoona PA and other mailing offices. Postmaster send change of address to: 925 South Logan Boulevard (USPS 094 - 280)	Editor: Rev. Msgr. Timothy P. Stein
Published Bi - weekly at 925 South Logan Boulevard Hollidaysburg PA 16648	Member Publication Of The Catholic Press Association	Secretary: Frances M. Logrando
Phone (814) 695 - 7563 FAX (814) 695 - 7517		

Point Of View

As I sit in my room in Philadelphia and write this column, I marvel at the fact that no matter how tired and achy my body feels right now, my heart seems to have boundless energy, a true skipping for joy!

As I write this article, I just completed attending the World Meeting of Families, a historic event for our nation and even more significant gathering for our church. A week-long gathering of over 20,000 people from all over the world, united together for one purpose, to celebrate, nurture and pray for family life all over the world.

As I attended workshops presented by top Catholic theologians and experts, celebrated Mass daily with over hundreds of Priests, Bishops and Cardinals, had the opportunity to meet wonderful families from all over the world, and even attended Papal celebrations in honor of Pope Francis himself, my heart had only one wish - "I wish you were here!" This true heartfelt sentiment, reminds me how blessed I am to be a part of our Diocesan efforts and how privileged I am to be the Family Life Director.

As any family member would want to share the exciting events of their recent trip, I now share with you a few things I learned from this most blessed experience.

- I learned that singing the "Our Father" with thousands of Catholics from all over the world can instantly bring me to tears. I was moved.

- As I watched hundreds of Priests, Bishops and Cardi-



Family Matters

By Amy Kanich

The World Meeting Of Families



nals celebrate Mass, all dressed in their own country's priestly garments, truly makes this big, scary world seem small, not so divided, and in fact assured me we really are one family under God the Creator and Father of us all. I was deeply comforted.

- I realized by listening to the experts on Family Life our beautiful faith does have the answers to our everyday struggles of life. Yes, families are not perfect but as reminded this week with a quote from one of my favorite saints, "God does write straight with crooked lines." I was hopeful!

- I learned that our Church, no matter how many human imperfections reside within, still holds true to the Gospel and will never, ever compromise these truths. I also learned our society who has been given all good things from God, still so willingly chooses to eat the forbidden fruit, too

ready to believe Satan's lies," we know better than God, therefore we can choose for ourselves what is good or evil." I was edified.

- I learned that all of the problems of the world would be much easier to solve if all Catholics would take the time to learn about our beautiful faith, participate fully in the sacraments and courageously go out and share the Joy the Gospel. I learned that we Catholics and fellow Christians have more power in the world, than any army, that is if we are willing to cease division and unite ourselves under our one God. I felt secure.

- And, I have learned there is something about our Pope that electrifies and causes people to stop and really wonder, what is so different about Him. There is truly a special essence about "Papa Francisco", as so many Catholics fondly refer to him, perhaps a true glimpse of Christ Himself. I felt blessed!

Yes, an unbelievable grace - filled week, one I hope I will never forget, one I pray can truly energize and transform Catholic families everywhere. Pope Francis - Thank you for everything! Your smile is one I will never forget!

Blessings!



Another Perspective

By Monsignor Timothy P. Stein
A Victory For Humility

For six days in September, the United States of America was in thrall to a leader from across the sea.

He conquered us without a shot being fired.

He rode in to town not in an armored tank, but in a four - passenger Fiat.

He spoke not in the harsh and strident tones of a histrionic demagogue, but with the quiet voice of a tender shepherd.

The first - ever visit by Pope Francis to the United States of America was quite simply a victory for humility.

Everyone who witnessed the Pope's pastoral visit to the United States, which included stops in Washington DC and New York City before concluding in Philadelphia with the closing events of the World Meeting of Families will have their own favorite memory of a special moment.

Here's mine:

On Saturday evening, September 26, Pope Francis drove in his Popemobile up and down Philadelphia's Benjamin Franklin Parkway, before arriving at a stage set up on the iconic steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art for the Festival of Families.

A grand and glorious fanfare greeted the Holy Father, a fanfare not unlike that associated with Rocky Balboa, the fictional Philadelphia boxer who once bounded up those steps and did a victory dance at the top. But Pope Francis, who stated most emphatically that he is not a rock star, is no Rocky, either. Just about anyone else would have come bounding out of the wings to take his place upon the seat at the center of the stage, inviting the cheers of the crowd, whipping the people into a frenzy with arm - waving and a mega - watt smile.

That's not Pope Francis' style.

As the music swelled, the elderly gentleman in white stood off to the side, listening to each note, a benign grin spreading across his face. When the music stopped, he remained where he was, smiling still, and lead the applause for the musicians. Only then did he step out from the sidelines to take his place at the center of the celebration. He did not let the efforts that others were making on his behalf be upstaged by his appearance. He was graciously humble in that moment, just as he was throughout his visit, and just as he has been since he first appeared on the balcony of Saint Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on a March evening in 2013, bowed to the people of God, and asked them for their blessing.

Our Catholic faith tells us that the Pope is not simply the successor of Saint Peter as the Bishop of Rome and visible head of the Church. He is the Vicar of Christ, the Lord's own representative among us. When we see him, we are seeing our Lord.

And it was our Lord Jesus Christ who told us "Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart" (Matthew 11:29b). Pope Francis has listened and learned.

He in now teaches us that those who are truly great, those who are truly powerful are those who take to heart the words of the Savior, and live by them. The Pope's peaceful victory, a victory for humility, is something we will not soon forget. He inspired us by his quiet strength and his trust in the Lord.

May we learn from and follow his good example.



CNS Photo/Paul Haring

POPE SPEAKS TO JOURNALISTS ON FLIGHT: Pope Francis speaks with journalists aboard his flight from Philadelphia to Rome Sunday, September 27.

Pope Says He Left United States Praying For, Impressed By Its People

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

ABOARD THE PAPAL FLIGHT FROM PHILADELPHIA (CNS) -- As the American Airlines plane taking him to Rome from Philadelphia took off, Pope Francis said he pictured the faces of all the people he met, and he prayed for them.

At the end of his first-ever visit to the United States, the pope told reporters he "was surprised by the warmth of the people" and how they were "so loving. It was beautiful."

Spending close to 50 minutes with members of the media flying back to Rome

with him Sept. 27, the pope said he also was struck by the sincere piety of people at his Masses and prayer services.

Shortly after takeoff, Pope Francis responded to a dozen questions, including why he spoke with such compassion to U.S. bishops in Washington about what they went through in the aftermath of the clerical sex abuse crisis.

"I felt a need to express compassion because what happened was horrible, and many of them suffered a lot," the pope said. For "men of prayer, good pastors" the crisis was truly a "tribulation."

Sexual abuse occurs in families, schools and other environments, he said, but

when the abuser is a priest it is "a kind of sacrilege," because a priest's job is to help a person grow in love of God and, instead, an abusive priest "squashes" his victims.

An abusive priest "has betrayed his vocation, the call of the Lord, and those who covered these things up is also guilty; even some bishops covered this up. It was a horrible thing. And my words of comfort were not to say, 'well, be tranquil, it was nothing,' -- no, no, not that. But it was such a bad time that I imagine they wept a lot."

Pope Francis said he understands survivors who feel they cannot forgive their abusers and those who have lost their faith in God because of it.

"I pray for them," he said.

On another topic, a U.S. reporter referred to the Kentucky county clerk, Kim Davis, who refused to issue a marriage license to a gay couple because of her religious beliefs. The reporter asked Pope Francis to comment on the discussions in the United States regarding religious liberty and its possible limits

Pope Francis said he had no idea of the specific case, but he insisted that "conscientious objection is a right -- it is a human right." If some rights can be denied in certain circumstances, he said, then it would turn into a situation where people were determining some human rights

were more important than others.

When asked further about the county clerk, the pope said since the official was a human being then that official should enjoy the full range of human rights, including the right to follow her conscience.

Asked about the role of women in the church, Pope Francis said not ordaining women does not mean the church does not recognize how essential they are to its life and ministry, which is one of the reasons he highlighted the contributions of consecrated women.

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Pope Reflects On His First - Ever Trip To United States

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"The sisters in the United States have done marvelous things -- in the field of education, in the field of health care. And the people of the United States love the sisters."

"I felt like I needed to thank them for what they have done," he said.

Asked if the success of his visit to the United States made him feel powerful or like a star, he said power is not his ambition: "It is something that passes. You have it today, but tomorrow it's gone."

For those who follow Jesus, he said, the only power that counts is the power to serve others. "True power is service ... humble service, and I still need to make progress on this path of service because I feel like I am not doing all that I need to do."

After participating in the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia and looking ahead to the opening Oct. 4 of the Synod of Bishops on the family, Pope Francis was asked about his decision to streamline the process for declaring the nullity of marriages.

He insisted the change was strictly juridical and not doctrinal. It is not "Catholic divorce," he said. The annulment process does not dissolve a marriage, but rather investigates whether or not a valid sacramental marriage was present from the beginning, he said.

The decision to issue the new rules for the process responds to a request made by the majority of bishops at the extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the family last year, he said.

The question of find-



CNS Photo/Gregory A. Shemitz

POPE LOOKS OUT WINDOW OF PLANE: Pope Francis looks out a window after boarding an American Airlines jetliner at Philadelphia International Airport Sept. 27 for his return to Rome following a six-day apostolic visit to the U.S.

ing some sort of process or "penitential path" to readmit to the sacraments Catholics who have remarried without an annulment is something still on the synod's agenda, he said. "It seems a bit simplistic to me to say they can receive Communion," but it is an issue that needs further discussion.

Another issue touched upon during his U.S. visit was migration. Pope Francis had

told the U.S. Congress, "Our world is facing a refugee crisis of a magnitude not seen since the Second World War."

On the plane he told reporters that the world cannot pretend the crisis currently impacting Europe sprang up overnight. He said it was provoked by years of war and tensions in the Middle East and by decades of hunger and tensions in Africa, a continent that continues to be ex-

ploited by the world's rich nations when some investment would create jobs and help people live dignified lives in their homelands.

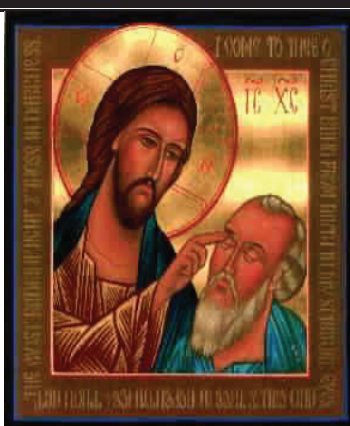
As for the idea of some European nations to start building walls or fences to keep migrants out, Pope Francis said the influx of newcomers needs to be handled intelligently, "but walls are not the solution."

Erecting walls, he said, "the problems remain and they remain with increased hatred."

Pushed to comment on his popularity, Pope Francis insisted he doesn't feel like a "star" because of all the crowds that flocked to meet him. Besides, he said, stars tend to come and go.

The pope is called to be "the servant of the servants of God -- that's a bit different than a star," he said. "Stars are beautiful to watch; I like to gaze at them when the sky is clear. But the pope must be the servant of the servants of God."

Asked about the primary task facing the church in the United States, the pope said, "The challenge of the church is to be what it always was -- close to the people, not detached," he said.



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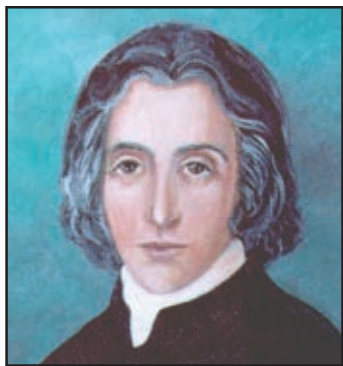
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Pope Canonizes Father Serra

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- Canonizing the 18th-century Spanish missionary, Blessed Junipero Serra, Pope Francis insisted a person's faith is alive only when it is shared.

Celebrating a late afternoon Mass outside the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception Sept. 23, the

pope declared the holiness of St. Junipero, founder of a string of missions in California.

Some people had objected to the canonization -- like the beatification of the Spaniard in 1988 -- because of questions about how Father Serra treated the native peoples of California and about the impact of Spanish colonization on native peoples throughout the Americas.

Pope Francis mentioned the controversy only briefly, saying: "Junipero sought to defend the



CNS Photo/Bob Roller

SERRA TAPESTRY: A tapestry depicting Saint Junipero Serra hung outside the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington DC, Wednesday, September 23, as Pope Francis canonized the Franciscan priest.

dignity of the native community, to protect it from those who had mistreated and abused it. Mistreatment and wrongs, which today still trouble us, especially because of the hurt which they cause in the lives of many people."

Vincent Medina, who has questioned the wisdom of the canonization, read the first Scripture reading in the Chochenyo language of the Ohlone people of Northern California.

Before the formal proclamation of the missionary's sainthood, a choir and the congregation chanted a litany invoking the intercession of Jesus, Mary,

the apostles and a long list of saints, including other saints who lived and worked in the United States, such as St. Frances Cabrini, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, St. John Neumann and St. Kateri Tekakwitha, the first American Indian to be canonized. The canonization of St. Junipero, however, was the first such ceremony to be celebrated in the United States rather than at the Vatican.

After the formal proclamation, Andrew Galvan, curator of Dolores Mission in San Francisco, brought a relic of St. Junipero up to a stand near the altar as a song was sung in Spanish accompanied by a drumbeat.

Catholics in the United States and throughout the world are indebted to St. Junipero and thousands of other witnesses who lived their faith and passed it on, the pope said in his homily.

St. Junipero "was excited about blazing trails, going forth to meet many people, learning and valuing their particular customs and ways of life," Pope Francis said.

A missionary's life is exciting and brings joy, he said, because it is not sedentary or turned in on itself. Sharing the Gospel is the way to keep experiencing the joy it brings and keeps the heart "from growing numb from being anesthetized."

More than speaking about St. Junipero, Pope Francis spoke about keeping faith alive and joyful, calling on all Catholics to be missionaries.

"Mission is never the fruit of a perfectly planned program or a well-organized manual," he told the crowd of about 25,000 people. "Mission is always the fruit of a life which knows what it is to be found and healed, encountered and forgiven."

Pope Francis insisted that Jesus does not give Christians "a short list of who is, or is not, worthy of receiving his message, his presence."

Instead, Jesus embraced people as they were, even those who were "dirty, unkept, broken," he said. Jesus says to believers today, like yesterday, "Go out and embrace life as it is, and not as you think it should be."

"The joy of the Gospel,"

the pope said, "is something to be experienced, something to be known and live only through giving it away, through giving ourselves away."

Before the Mass, Pope Francis made a short visit inside the basilica, where he briefly greeted families and men and women studying to be priests and sisters. They had waited inside for more than two hours.

Parents like Margarita and Carlos Ramos, who brought their 7-year-old son Samuel to Mass, were in the pews, sharing a prayer before all started, while Secret Service snipers stayed alert in several balconies.

"I like Pope Francis because he was born in Argentina; he is one of us. I would love to have the chance to be blessed by him. I'm telling everybody in my second grade class that I was sitting here the day he made Junipero Serra a saint."

"It is a historic moment," said Sister Maria Virgen Oyente of the Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matara. She was in the line to get inside the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception with a group of about 20 nuns. "We are very happy to be here. The line is long and is getting hot, but we are reading about Fray Junipero Serra, and that makes us feel better."

"My expectations for today are very high," said St. John Vianney College seminarian Gustavo Santos. "Imagine what it is to be in the same place with your pastor, the vicar of Christ on earth, I can't even describe it with my own words."

Prayer For Father Gallitzin's Intercession

O God, light of the faithful and shepherd of souls, who sent Servant of God Demetrius Gallitzin to serve God's people in the Allegheny Mountains, feeding your sheep by his words and forming them by his example, pour out your Spirit to sow seeds of truth in people's hearts and to awaken in them obedience to the faith.

May the Gospel continue to be preached and the Sacraments bring power and grace to the faithful. By the example of this man of faith, Demetrius Gallitzin, may your people advance in the path of salvation and love.

Confident of your faithfulness to us, we humbly ask you, our God, to grant us the favor of (name your intention).

May Christ's saving work continue to the end of the ages, and may we feel a more urgent call to work for the salvation of every creature. We pray this, as did your priest Demetrius Gallitzin, through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

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The Pope Teaches

By Pope Francis
Jesus' Love Changes Us

HOLGUIN, Cuba (CNS) -- Celebrating the feast of St. Matthew, a day he considers a turning point in his own journey of faith, Pope Francis told thousands of Cubans that Jesus knows who they really are and calls them to walk with him.

Arriving in the eastern city of Holguin from Havana Sept. 21, the pope went directly to the city's Revolution Square for the feast day Mass. People had the day off work and off school so they could attend.

The pope explained to the people in the square that Matthew was a tax collector for the Roman occupiers, which meant that he was seen as a traitor to be shunned. But Jesus "looked at him with the eyes of mercy; he looked at him as no one had ever looked at him before."

"And this look unlocked Matthew's heart," the pope said. "It set him free, it healed him, it gave him hope, a new life," just as Jesus' merciful gaze gives new life to men and women today.

The story of St. Matthew's call and conversion is one the pope talks about often. The feast day is the first day of spring in Argentina, a day students have free from school. It was the day in 1953 that a 17-year-old Jorge Mario Bergoglio felt a strange urge to enter a church and go to confession. He often recounts the story and his feeling that the priest in the confessional was waiting just for him; it was the beginning of his vocation to be a Jesuit and a priest.

When Jesuit Father Antonio Spadaro, editor of *La Civiltà Cattolica*, conducted the first long interview with Pope Francis in 2013, the pope told him Caravaggio's painting of "The Calling of St. Matthew" reminds him of himself.

"That finger of Jesus, pointing at Matthew. That's me. I feel like him. Like Matthew," he told Father Spadaro. "It is the gesture of Matthew that strikes me: he holds on to his money as if to say, 'No, not me! No, this money is mine.' Here, this is me, a sinner on whom the Lord has turned his gaze. And this is what I said when they asked me if I would accept my election as pontiff."

Father Spadaro wrote that the pope then whispered in Latin the words he said to the cardinals: "I am a sinner, but I trust in the infinite mercy and patience of our Lord Jesus Christ, and I accept in a spirit of penance."

Preaching under bright, sunny skies in Holguin, Pope Francis told the people, "Jesus' love goes before us, his look anticipates our needs. He can see beyond appearances, beyond sin, beyond failures and unworthiness."

Jesus, he said, sees "our dignity as sons and daughters, a dignity all of us have, a dignity sometimes sullied by sin, but one which endures in the depth of our soul."

Pope Francis asked people in the crowd to find a quiet time at home or in a church to remember in silence and with gratitude an occasion when they felt that merciful gaze of Christ.

Jesus' love, his mercy and his call to follow are also calls to love others, respect their dignity and show them mercy, the pope said. "Jesus' love heals our short-sightedness and pushes us to look beyond, not to be satisfied with appearances or with what is politically correct."

Pope Francis asked the crowd to practice gazing upon Jesus in the Eucharist, in confession and "in our brothers and sisters, especially those who feel excluded or abandoned. May we learn to see them as Jesus sees us."



ONE MORE TIME: Students at Immaculate Conception School, Lock Haven, are seen in a 1900 photograph. The young lady pictured third from left in the second row of scholars was Josephine Hamilton, who in 1906 entered the Oblate Sisters of Providence in Baltimore. As Sister Mary Agatha she was a music teacher in schools throughout the southern United States.

Looking back more than three years, I would call them angels of mercy. At the time, as they sat at our dining room table, I probably thought of them more as messengers of death. The two women weren't any sort of messengers, in fact. They had simply answered my wife's request.

Earlier in the week, my wife had told her oncologist she wouldn't be having a second round of chemotherapy to attack the cancer that had now metastasized to her lungs. The very likely complications -- the horrid and debilitating side effects -- weren't worth the very slim chance of extending her life only a few months.

Instead, still feeling good and able to get around well, she would spend the rest of her life



living as fully as possible, she and I had decided.

Her decision of no more measures to fight the cancer's return (after surgery, chemotherapy and radiation treatments two years earlier) meant she was eligible for hospice care. I had completely agreed with her decision. It was her quick "yes" to hospice that stopped me in my tracks.

Hospice social workers and

Your Family

By Bill Dodds
Hospice Care Is
A Blessing For A Family

nurses helped fill out forms, brochures to consider, arranged visiting schedules. I served our visitors coffee and chocolate chip cookies and wanted to be anywhere but there, except I wanted to be with her as much as possible over the coming, the fleeting, the precious, months ahead.

We also were offered a hospice spiritual counselor, but a priest from our church helped with that. I'm sure he, too, would have come to the house, but my wife was able to get to our parish.

Over the months that followed, both hospice professionals answered our questions, addressed our concerns, anticipated our needs and provided for them. My wife and the rest of the family received all of that help because she had so quickly, and so bravely, called in hospice, not just for herself, but also for those she loved so dearly.

I hated that she needed hospice care. But what a blessing it was for us and can be for families who need this service.



Photo By Monsignor Timothy P. Stein



Question Corner

By Father Kenneth Doyle
Announcements
During Mass

Q. I am uncomfortable when Mass is interrupted by announcements relating to parish activities and events prior to the actual end of Mass. After holy Communion at our parish, when the vessels have been cleaned and the priest is seated behind the altar, general announcements are made. Then, after the reader has concluded, the priest gives the final blessing and says, "Go forth. The Mass is ended." Are these interruptions to be considered part of the Mass? (Charlottesville, Virginia)

A. As to whether announcements are technically "part of the Mass," I suppose that reasonable minds could argue either way. (The current edition of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (the "rule book" on the Mass) provides for "brief announcements, should they be necessary" (as it says in No. 90a) and situates them at the end of Mass, between the prayer after Communion and the blessing/dismissal prayers.

The key words here are "should they be necessary." I share your view that announcements can interrupt the flow of the liturgy and the prayerfulness that should envelop it. And so, in our parish we have a narrow guideline: Anything that can be, or has been, in our printed weekly bulletin does not get announced from the pulpit. (This also encourages people to take the bulletin home and read it.)

I make exceptions for the following: a) a schedule change from what had been printed; b) a coffee hour or a welcome reception for new parishioners following that particular Mass; and c) a holy day of obligation during the coming week.

Q. My daughter and her fiancé, who both went to Catholic schools from preschool through college, would like to get married in an outdoor ceremony in a garden. My understanding is that the church requires that sacraments be performed inside a blessed building, but I just can't

understand why. The first baptism was performed outside, and the pope distributes Communion at Masses held outdoors. I would love for my daughter to have her marriage blessed by the Catholic Church, but this seems to be an unreasonable rule. Isn't it true that wherever two or more are gathered in his name, God is there? (Mantua, New Jersey)

A. It is not unusual for people to say (young people in particular) that they experience the wonder of God most directly when they are outdoors -- gazing at a glorious sunset over a lake, for example, or hiking in the mountains. So it is not surprising that they would opt to profess and celebrate their love in such a setting.

But you are correct that the Code of Canon Law (in No. 1118) says that "a marriage between Catholics ... is to be celebrated in a parish church." While the rule is not absolute (No. 1118, Section 2, does say that the "local ordinary can permit a marriage to be celebrated in another suitable place"), the vast majority of dioceses would not normally allow it in the situation you describe.

The church desires to highlight the fundamental spiritual nature of the occasion: It is a sacred and sacramental event -- an act of worship -- so it is celebrated where Catholics traditionally worship: in the presence of Christ in the tabernacle.

In my experience, the situations in which a bishop would see fit to dispense from that tradition are rare, although I have seen them (a case, for example, in which the bride's grandfather was seriously ill and unable to leave home and travel to a church.)

It would be best if you could convince your daughter and her fiancé to respect your family's Catholic allegiance by having their vow ceremony in a church -- followed by a reception in the garden setting. If your plea fails and they insist on being married outdoors, the next best thing would be to encourage them to have their marriage blessed later by exchanging vows before a Catholic priest.



For The Journey

By Effie Caldarola
Turning Off The Noise
To Listen To God

I sit at the desk in my little home office. A fall sun streams through the window, pouring brilliant light on my plant. If a plant could speak, I know it would tell me how happy it is.

It's a perfect Monday -- comfortable temperatures, no wind, a cloudless blue sky. My window is open wide, facing the usually quiet neighborhood street. Kids are at school, parents at work. What a day to write.

Across the street, the house painter is back. This man has been meticulously transforming our neighbor's tall, two-story home with rollers and brushes. No spray paint on this house, which is morphing from boring beige to a deep, resonant forest green.

As he paints, he listens to talk radio. The morning's stillness is pierced by a man's belligerent voice asking whether we shouldn't be concerned that a couple of minor state officials' names appeared on the Ashley Madison website, where married people pursue clandestine affairs.

To write, I block out noise. But closing the window is unthinkable on a beautiful day like this. I search my cabinet for some instrumental music but instead I pick up one that makes me want to sing. I can't write so I might as well sing along. I hear the lawn mower and I can hardly hear the words. I turn off the music and resolve to find the steady drone of the mower as a good accompaniment to writing.

But the painter has carefully drawn a huge extension ladder to its full height and he's climbing up to the tall peak of a very steeply slanted second story roof. All this to reach a narrow patch of wood that divides one part of the roof from a slightly taller one. Then I think, where's my cellphone? I may need to call 911. At one point, the painter lies flat on his back to get the proper stroke marks in. I know I should be writing, but I'm mesmerized.

The mowing is done, the music has gone silent, and the painter is now painting something so low he's sitting on the ground. Finally. But now, the radio has my attention.

As I reflect on it, I realize I've described not just my effort to write through distractions, but a pretty telling synopsis of my prayer life as well. Earlier this morning, sitting at a quiet kitchen table, my mind wandered everywhere but toward the relative silence.

In a world beset by noise, news, information and distractions, it's hard to focus. How do we make room for the quiet, whispered voice of God? It's difficult, but it's important to try. And how often we discover that right there in the midst of our crazy daily life, God is waiting to engage us?

In a world beset by noise, news, information and distractions, it's hard to focus. How do we make room for the quiet, whispered voice of God? It's difficult, but it's important to try. And how often we discover that right there in the midst of our crazy daily life, God is waiting to engage us?

Blessed Marie - Rose
Durocher
1811 - 1849
Feast - October 6



Eulalie Durocher was the youngest of 10 children in a pious Quebec family; three brothers became priests and two sisters also became nuns. Because of ill health, Eulalie attended school sporadically and was rejected by several religious orders. For 12 years she helped one of her priest-brothers in his parish, organizing charitable works and the first Confraternity of Mary in Canada. In 1843, with two friends and episcopal permission, she founded the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary to educate poor youths, especially in the countryside. As Mother Marie-Rose, she led the congregation until her early death; she was beatified in 1982. Holy Names' sisters serve today in Canada, the United States, Lesotho, Peru and Brazil.

Diocesan Pilgrims Stirred By Encounter With Pope

Photos And Text
By Msgr. Timothy P. Stein

“It seemed like we had guardian angels with us, everywhere we went.”

Kathie Spargo of Saint John the Evangelist Parish in Everett spoke for the over 100 pilgrims from the Diocese of Altoona - Johnstown who traveled to Philadelphia Friday, September 25 - Monday, September 28, to join Pope Francis in the closing events of the World Meeting of Families. “I prayed that all would go well, and it did,” said Spargo.

The diocesan pilgrims traveled on two busses, one departing from Bishop Carroll Catholic High School in Ebensburg and the other from the Blair County Convention Center in Altoona on Friday, September 25. Lodging at the Comfort Inn and Suites in Exton, the pilgrims went to center city Philadelphia on Saturday and Sunday mornings, and spent the day in the city taking part in the special events connected with the Holy Father’s visit to the City of Brotherly Love.

That traditional description of Philadelphia was borne out in the interactions the pilgrims had during their stay.

“We met so many nice people,” said Spargo, whose thoughts were echoed by Mary Ann Zanghi of Transfiguration Parish in Conemaugh.

“It was overwhelming!,” she enthused. “Everyone was nice and so friendly. Everyone I met displayed Christ’s characteristics. They were all so kind and loving.” And of waiting in long lines for everything from transportation to center city to access to ticketed areas for the main events, Zanghi said “Everyone was very patient.”

Upon arrival in Exton the pilgrims gathered for dinner at the Wyndham Hotel. The next morning they were transported to the Sports Complex parking lots in South Philadelphia and traveled by subway to the heart of the city.



PILGRIMS PRAY: Pilgrims from the Altoona - Johnstown Diocese gathered at Saint John the Evangelist Church in downtown Philadelphia on Saturday, September 26, to celebrate Mass with Bishop Mark L. Bartchak, before heading out to see Pope Francis at the Festival of Families on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway.



FIRST GLIMPSE: Most pilgrims got their first glimpse of Pope Francis as he made a giant loop of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in a parade on Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon. This is a photo of an image of the Holy Father projected on a jumbotron showing the proceedings to the crowd of thousands gathered for the event.

Philadelphia was transformed into a huge pedestrian mall during the papal visit, with most streets closed to vehicular traffic, allowing streams of pilgrims to move unimpeded through the metropolis.

“I never saw so many smiling, happy people - - hundreds of thousands of them - - all together in one place,” said Dick Krumenacker of Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, Johnstown. His wife, Gayle, added “I had a great time! I was not concerned about my security or safety. I felt very welcome and very safe.”

On Saturday afternoon the local pilgrims gathered with Bishop Mark L. Bartchak at Saint John the Evangelist Church, near City Hall, to celebrate Mass. They were joined by several dozen young pilgrims from Saint Francis University in Loretto and Saint Vincent Col-

lege in Latrobe. All were served a box lunch after the liturgy, before making their way to the Benjamin Franklin Parkway to await the Holy Father’s arrival for the Festival of Families.

Roseann Bennett of Seven Dolores of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Bean’s Cove was thrilled at seeing the pontiff, for the second time in her life.

“This was an experience I’ll never forget! I saw Pope Francis in Rome, last year, but I got much closer to him this time, than I did then.”

The pilgrims got their first glimpse of Pope Francis as he traveled the Parkway in his Popemobile, waving to and blessing the crowd.

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They saw the pontiff again the next day when he repeated his parade route on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, before celebrating Mass on a giant stage set up before the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Seeing the Pope as he passed by warmed Bennett's heart.

"Pope Francis reminds me of my grandfather," she reflected. "I love his smile. He's as

genuine as anyone can be. He's a real people person."

And, Bennett added, "I wasn't going to come on this trip. I almost backed out. Now, I'm so glad that I came!"

Kathie Spargo's husband, Bob, was also impressed by the Holy Father's demeanor.

"He's sincere," Spargo said. "Very sincere and very humble. And I like how he reaches out to young people. They are the future of the Church. They're the

SO MUCH TO EXPERIENCE: (Counterclockwise from lower right) As pilgrims from the Altoona - Johnstown Diocese waited to enter Saint John the Evangelist Church for Mass, there was much for them to experience, including a Bishop dancing in the street, and a nun entertaining the crowd by juggling. Following the Mass, they received a box lunch. Shown here, distributing lunch is diocesan staff member Dotty Caminiti.

ones who are going to keep the Church going."

One of the younger pilgrims on the Altoona bus was Sarah Steinbugl, a member of Saint Mary Parish in Altoona, and a teacher at Saint Michael School in Loretto. She too appreciates

the interest the Pope takes in people of her generation.

"I really wanted to see the Pope, because he's such a great role model," she explained. "I really want to grow in my faith. As a young person, I still have so much to learn. As a Catholic

school teacher, there is so much I can share with the children.

"I want to get my students enthused about their faith. Pope Francis said we should share our faith and we should serve.

"That's what I want to do."

(Continued On Page 13.)

Bishop Says Pope Came With Message Of Encouragement

Photos And Text
By Msgr. Timothy P. Stein

As Pope Francis traveled from Washington DC, to New York City, to Philadelphia, Bishop Mark L. Bartchak was hot on his heels!

Bishop Mark arrived in Philadelphia on Monday, September 21, to take part in the World Meeting of Families. He traveled to Washington on Wednesday, September 23, for the Pope's address to the nation's Bishops at Saint Matthew Cathedral, and to concelebrate the canonization Mass of Saint Junipero Serra at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

Returning to Philadelphia for the World Meeting of Families, Bishop Mark joined the Holy Father for Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul on Saturday morning. On Sunday, he took part in the Pope's meeting at Morning Prayer with the U.S. Bishops at Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary, and that afternoon concelebrated, with Pope Francis, the closing Mass of the World Meetings on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway.

The whirlwind nature of the week left Bishop Mark energized and enthused as he reflected on all he had experienced.

"The Pope's address to the Bishops at Saint Matthew's was awesome," he said in a Saturday, September 26 interview at Saint John the Evangelist Church in Philadelphia, where he had celebrated Mass for diocesan pilgrims. "Pope Francis told us he had come to the United States to offer us ideas and encouragement. He challenged us to move forward and to not be afraid. His message was very positive."

The canonization Mass on the steps of the National Shrine Basilica was like a homecoming from Bishop Mark, calling to mind his days as a student at The Catholic University of America,



HOLY COMMUNION: Bob Spargo of Saint John the Evangelist Parish in Everett, receives Holy Communion from Bishop Mark L. Bartchak at a Mass for pilgrims celebrated Saturday, September 26 at Saint John the Evangelist Church in Philadelphia.

which shares a campus with the National Shrine.

"On the one side of the campus mall bleachers had been set up, and they were full of students cheering and clapping," said the Bishop. "Pope Francis isn't quite the 'rock star' that Pope John Paul II was, but it was still pretty exciting. It was something to see that very familiar space packed with thousands of people."

When interviewed, Bishop Mark had just come from the Mass at the Philadelphia basilica, and the impressions of that event were vivid.

"The Pope's homily was excellent," Bishop Mark said, noting that it touched upon a subject that is dear to his own heart: the encouragement of religious vocations.

"Pope Francis spoke to us of Saint Katharine Drexel," Bishop Mark explained.

Saint Katharine was born in Philadelphia in 1858 and died there in 1955. She was the foundress of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, a religious community dedicated to working with African-American and Native-American people.

Pope Francis, in his homily, spoke of Katharine's meeting, as a young lay woman, with Pope Leo XIII. Heiress to the Drexel banking fortune, Katharine was supporting several mission schools for Native-Americans, and asked Pope Leo to send more missionaries to serve that population.

"Why don't you become a missionary yourself?" Pope Leo asked her. Pope Francis said no one should be afraid to ask young people to think of a vocation to ordained ministry or consecrated life.

Bishop Mark greeted the diocesan pilgrims in a church connected to another canonized Philadelphian: Saint John Neumann, fourth Bishop of Philadelphia, who employed the original Saint John the Evangelist Church as his Pro-Cathedral during his tenure as ordinary. The saint was buried from the church in 1861 and his mitre is displayed there.

(Continued On Page 13.)



Photo By Bishop Mark L. Bartchak

BASILICA MASS: Bishop Mark L. Bartchak took this photo of Pope Francis as he concelebrated Mass with the pontiff at Philadelphia's Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul, Saturday, September 26.



YOUNG PILGRIMS: Following Mass at Saint John the Evangelist Church in Philadelphia, Bishop Mark joined young pilgrims from Saint Francis University in Loretto and Saint Vincent College in Latrobe, for a group photo on the steps of the historic church, once the Pro-Cathedral of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, and the setting for the 1860 funeral Mass for Saint John Neumann, fourth Bishop of Philadelphia.



Photos By Monsignor Timothy P. Stein (left) and Tony DeGol (right)

DID THEY OR DIDN'T THEY ?: (Left photo) Did diocesan staffers (left to right) Dotty Caminiti, Teresa Stayer, Francine Swope and Tony DeGol really get to have their picture taken with Pope Francis? The answer is no; the group posed for a photo with a cutout figure of the Pope on a Philadelphia street, but got much closer to the real thing when the Holy Father drove up and down the Benjamin Franklin Parkway before Mass on Sunday, September 27.

Bishop Says Pope Came To Encourage Us

(Continued From Page 12.)

In his homily, Bishop Mark touched upon a theme he would repeat when interviewed. "Pope Francis' visit is all about encouragement - - encouraging us to live the joy of the Gospel."

The Bishop went on, "You pilgrims will not be disappointed. You will see Pope Francis, and you will hear him ask you to pray for him."

"When he was in the Philippines in January, Pope Francis spoke about prayer, and reminded us that when we pray when celebrating the Holy Eucharist, we are standing at the foot of the cross. We are never alone when we stand there, because we meet Mary standing there with us, and she is a true mother to us all."

Bishop Mark cautioned the pilgrims that it would be easy for them "to be caught up in the excitement of this event.

"So make this a true pilgrimage, an intentional prayer that you want to place before God.

"Ask His Mother to help you with that prayer.

"If you leave this Church having done that, you will not go home disappointed," he concluded.

One couple who did not leave the church disappointed was Steve and Karen Martynuska, members of Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament Parish in Altoona, who celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary on Sunday, September 27. When Mass was drawing to a close, Bishop Mark invited them to come forward for a blessing.

"Go figure!," the Bishop laughed. "Pope Francis is in town and the World Meeting of Families is going on!

"What a place for a second honeymoon!"

That sentiment was seconded by the Martynuskas, who thanked Bishop Mark for his kindness in remembering them on their special day.

Pilgrims Impressed By Pope

(Continued From Page 11.)

The Pope's own effort to share and to serve made a great impression on Karen Martynuska of Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament Parish, Altoona.

"The pilgrimage was enlightening," she said. "It was really something to see the most important man in the world, and to realize that he's achieved his position through peace and prayer, not through war and aggression."

The Pope as a peacemaker also impressed Dave Zeak of Saint Mary Parish in Altoona.

As the bus was leaving Exton to return to Altoona on Monday, September 28, he said "It just dawned on me that during his visit to the United States Pope Francis visited three places - - Washington DC, New York City, and Pennsylvania - - that share a common bond.

"They are all places where a great evil struck us 14 years

ago," when on September 11, 2001, terrorists crashed planes into the Pentagon, the twin towers of the World Trade Center, and a field in Shanksville, with

thousands of lives lost and the world's security shaken.

"Pope Francis came to bring love and light to those places," said Zeak.



Photo By Monsignor Timothy P. Stein

POPE FRANCIS SMILES: Seen on a jumbotron screen, Pope Francis smiles warmly as he arrives for the Festival of Families, Saturday, September 26 in Philadelphia.

Now Showing

Pope's Patron Popular Subject For Movies

By Joseph McAleer
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK (CNS) -- Among the many hundreds of canonized saints recognized by the Catholic Church, few if any enjoy the popularity of Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone, the man better known as St. Francis of Assisi.

Born around 1181, Francis was a radical follower of Gospel values, the founder of what would ultimately become an entire family of religious orders, a mystic and an advocate of church reform. He was also uninhibited enough to preach to birds and zealous enough to risk

his life in an attempt to convert the Sultan of Egypt.

The widespread esteem in which Francis is held -- both within and beyond the confines of the church -- has been expressed through everything from fervent prayers for his intercession to sometimes tacky lawn ornaments. The prominence of Francis' legacy was dramatically underlined when the current occupant of the chair of Peter chose the "Poor Man of Assisi" for his primary namesake.

Long before that signal honor, however, Francis' intriguing life and enduring fame had won him the attention of Hollywood. Indeed, along with St. Joan of Arc, Francis has become some-

thing of a sanctified staple on the big screen.

Following Pope Francis' first visit to the U.S., here's a brief roundup of some of the films that have profiled his patron over the years. The movies are listed in chronological order:

"The Flowers of St. Francis" (1950)

Remarkable Italian production about the beginnings of the Franciscan Order as its founder sets the example of humility, simplicity and obedience for his first followers at Portiuncula, a little chapel near Assisi, Italy, from which they depart into the world to preach peace. Directed by Roberto Rossellini from a script co-written with Federico Fellini, the movie's form is as simple and sincere as the subject of the narrative. Its series of little incidents is related realistically, yet marvelously conveyed with an infectious sense of joy by an anonymous cast of monks from a Roman monastery. Subtitles. The Catholic News Service classification is A-I -- general patronage. Not rated by the Motion Picture Association of America.

"Francis of Assisi" (1961)

Uneven dramatization of the life of the 13th-century saint (Bradford Dillman) who founds a religious community based on absolute poverty, seeks its approval by the pope (Finlay Currie), encourages longtime friend Clare (Dolores Hart) to head a similar women's order, then journeys to the Holy Land, preaches to the Sultan (Pedro Armendariz) and returns to find his order spreading but changing. Directed by Michael Curtiz, the production is well-mounted and well-intended but the script is a muddle of historical fact and dramatic fiction, with results



Photo By Monsignor Timothy P. Stein

that barely scratch the surface of Franciscan spirituality. The Catholic News Service classification is A-I -- general patronage. Not rated by the Motion Picture Association of America.

"Brother Sun, Sister Moon" (1972)

Director Franco Zeffirelli's version of the oft-told story of Francis of Assisi (Graham Faulkner) treats him as secular saint and social heretic, emphasizing parallels between his age and our own. The strength of the movie lies in its rich visualization of the natural beauties of the Umbrian hills and the Romanesque architecture of medieval Assisi. While the lush and lavish production has nothing to do with the Franciscan spirit of poverty and simplicity, it is a pictorially beautiful movie which succeeds quite well in celebrating nature and the quest for finding more to life than accumulating material goods. The Catholic News Service classification is A-II -- adults and

adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG -- parental guidance suggested. Some material may not be suitable for children.

"Francesco" (1989)

Overwrought Italian production portrays St. Francis of Assisi (Mickey Rourke) as a spiritual agitator challenging the accepted values of his 13th-century contemporaries by embracing a life of utter poverty and simplicity. Director Liliana Cavani builds an elaborate picture of the period's social injustices but fails to evoke any convincing sense of religious conviction from Rourke's embarrassingly vacuous performance. English-language version. Occasional scenes of violence, desperate poverty and brief nudity. The Catholic News Service classification is A-III -- adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 -- parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

Coming Up On 'Proclaim!'

Upcoming guests on "Keeping The Faith," Bishop Mark L. Bartchak's segment of "Proclaim!" will include:

October 11 -- Judy Wahl of Sacred Heart Parish in Altoona and Mary Lou Custer of Our Lady of the Alleghenies Parish in Lilly, talk about their recent certification through the Diocesan Lay Ecclesial Ministry/Adult Education programs.

October 18 -- In honor of the Year of Consecrated Life, Bishop Mark welcomes Holy Family of Nazareth Sister Cynthia Meyer, Executive Director of Saint Leonard's Home in Hollidaysburg. Sister Cynthia discusses her community's service in the Diocese, including the sisters' role in the former Mercy Hospital/Bon Secours Hospital in Altoona.

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Pope Addresses Congress

(Continued From Page 16.)

Holy Father said he would like to address not only the members of Congress but also the entire people of the United States - people who strive each day to do an honest day's work, to bring home their daily bread, to save money, and to build a better life for their families. He noted both our elderly members and our young people who continue to be involved members of our society.

Pope Francis cited four Americans who shaped fundamental values that ground us in our day. Abraham Lincoln, on the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of his assassination, was the guardian of liberty. We are challenged to continue to work for this liberty in our day. Hatred and violence must be met with hope, healing, peace, and justice. Martin Luther King, who led from Selma to Montgomery fifty years ago, encouraged us to dream of full rights for all brothers and sisters. In light of a refugee crisis of a magnitude



CNS Photo/Jim Bourg, Reuters

not seen since the Second World War, Holiness encourages us to invite brothers and sisters, who have a dream, into our borders. Servant of God Dorothy Day, who founded the Catholic Worker Movement, strove for justice and the cause of the oppressed. Pope Francis challenges us to fight against poverty and hunger in our midst and in the world. Thomas Merton, a Cistercian monk, was a man of prayer, a thinker who challenged the certitudes of his time and opened new horizons for souls and for the Church. We need to want to

dialogue and be open to God in our day, among ourselves and in the world community.

The Pope spoke of the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Matthew 7:12). Legislators and people are called to treat others with the same compassion with which we want to be treated. Holy Father challenges us to seek for others the same possibilities which we seek for ourselves. We help others to grow, as we would like to be helped ourselves. If we want security, let us give security; if we want life, let us give life, if we want opportunities, let us provide opportunities. The Golden Rule also reminds us of our responsibility to protect and defend life at every stage of development. The human dignity of each person is always before us.

Pope Francis acknowledged the richness of our cultural heritage, of the spirit of the American people. He prays for this American spirit to continue to develop and grow. He encourages us to never stop dreaming. Holy Father ended his address with "God bless America!"

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Altoona Cathedral Rector Present In House Chamber As Pope Francis Addressed United States Congress

Monsignor Robert C. Mazur, rector of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Altoona, and director of the Liturgy Office of the Diocese of Altoona - Johnstown, was present in the gallery of the House of Representative's Chamber on Thursday, September 24 when Pope Francis addressed a joint session of the Congress of the United States of America.

Monsignor Mazur's personal reflections are reprinted, with permission, from the parish bulletin of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament Parish for Sunday, September 27.

Thanks to Congressman Bill Shuster and Sean Joyce, a legislative director, I received an invitation to be in the gallery as Pope Francis addressed the joint session of Congress this past Thursday. Never before had the Bishop of Rome addressed our Congress. This was an historic moment for our country, for our church, and for me.

Security was intensified throughout Washington, D.C. and, most certainly, in and near the Capitol Building. There was an air of excitement throughout the city. And among the Catholics gathered, our pride was evident. Pope Francis spoke at 10:00 a.m. Thousands of people, myself one of them, gathered hours before.

I arrived in the gallery a good hour prior to the Pope's address. The floor of Congress was busy with standing legislators and assistants scurrying about with last minute details. Once seated, I got to meet people from Florida, Arkansas, Colorado, and California. Everyone was filled with anticipation to see the

Pontiff and hear his message to the United States.

From the outset of his address, the Pastor of the Church, Francis, identified himself as an American. Pope Francis is our first Pontiff from the Americas; he called himself a son of this great continent. In his opening sentence when he identified us as "the land of the free and the home of brave," the entire chamber rose and gave a prolonged applause which I sensed as national satisfaction and joy. I was certainly proud.

In my perception, Pope Francis presented himself as a humble shepherd. He was certain of his message to the legislatures of the most powerful nation in the world. And he presented his words as a pastor, a spiritual guide amid the turbulence of political life. He humbly identified himself as a son of an immigrant from this continent. He challenged but never chided. He encouraged our country to continue in our pursuit of liberty, to never stop dreaming for justice, to always



CNS Photo/Paul Haring

POPE ADDRESSES JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS: Pope Francis addresses a joint meeting of the U.S. Congress as Vice President Joe Biden (left) and Speaker of the House John Boehner look on in the House of Representatives Chamber at the U.S. Capitol in Washington Thursday, September 24.

care for the poor, and always to be open to dialogue.

This was one of the most memorable experiences of my life. I was honored to be present as the Shepherd of the Church addressed Congress. An event my grandparents and their ancestors would never have imagined possible. An event our first bishops and pastors would never think could happen. And it did occur. And I was there to witness it. I am eternally grateful for my

Catholic faith, and for the gift of Pope Francis as the Vicar of Christ. I am more impelled than ever to go out and evangelize in the name of Jesus Christ.

Pope Francis told the joint session of Congress that he was grateful to address them in "the land of the free and the home of the brave." Holy Father identified himself also as a son of this great American continent.

As such both the Pope and the American people share a common responsibility - a mission of personal and social responsibility. Congress bears a responsibility to defend and preserve the dignity of fellow citizens. A political society stimulates growth among its people especially those in situations of greater vulnerability or risk.

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The Catholic Register

**Official Publication of the
Diocese of Altoona - Johnstown**