

Pilgrimage of Brotherly Love to See Pope Francis

By: Rita Schmid

After a Saturday filled with anticipation (and one bout of heat exhaustion), our group of 33 pilgrims saw Pope Francis pass 50 feet in front of us in the streets of Philadelphia. It was shortly after 7 PM when we heard cheers rise from a distance. They grew louder and closer, then rippled with a wave effect as his Holiness drew near. When his motorcade passed us, the cheers were deafening. His presence was awesome and deepened our group's desire to strive for holiness.

On Sunday, what stood out was the compassion our group showed to one another, the exuberance of the crowds, and the quiet respect and prayers of the thousands in the streets watching Pope Francis say Mass on the jumbotrons in downtown Philadelphia.

Banners with various messages from the Pope flew throughout the downtown area. One especially struck me: "It is the duty of everyone to do good." That sentiment was repeated in every speech he made while in the U.S. - *we all need to work for the common good. Not only the common good of all people, but for the common good of God's creation.*

I reflected prayerfully on this great lifetime experience—a real pilgrimage to see the Holy Father. Not a dream, but reality. All the way from Adam and Eve, to the Sermon on the Mount, to the great new commandments, to the installation of Peter as the first Pope. Jesus, God the Father, and the Holy Spirit were there—outpouring Their Love on everyone. We were all filled with the Spirit. And, I'm sure always will be.

I could say more about the camaraderie, prayers and singing on the bus, how a priest and a Franciscan Brother of Peace rounded out our group of 33 perfectly, but that is a parallel story. I loved that a mother and son organized the trip. I loved the strength of God's love among us, which added to the great feeling of love as we joined the masses in Philadelphia with the same feeling. Talk about the City of Brotherly Love. I don't think that city ever had so much Love as it had that weekend.