

In The Presence of the Pope



Daughters of Wisdom, USA Provincial Leader, Sr. Catherine Sheehan was at the Eucharistic Celebration at the Immaculate Conception Basilica in Washington, DC on 9/23/15 during which Pope Francis presided. Sr. Marie José Seide and Sr. Evelyn Lamoureux attended the Vesper Service with Pope Francis at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City on Thursday (9/24/15) and Sr. Fabiola Louise-Jean was in the presence of the Pope while at the first World Meeting for Young Consecrated Men and Women, inaugurated in Rome, Italy on 9/15/15. They share their experiences in the following reflections.

By Sr. Catherine Sheehan, DW

The Eucharistic Celebration at the Immaculate Conception Basilica

I had the opportunity to be at the Eucharistic Celebration at the Immaculate Conception Basilica in Washington, DC on September 23, 2015 during which Pope Francis presided. Thirty-six years before in 1979 I was in the very same place during the visit of Pope John Paul II. Many may remember that Sister Theresa Kane, RSM, then serving as President of the LCWR, addressed Pope John Paul II. On that day in 1979 Sister Theresa Kane challenged Pope John Paul II to include women in all ministries within the Catholic Church. This was a notable encounter since women religious publicly addressing the Pope was not a common occurrence. In a way, Sister Theresa Kane became a role model for women religious.

Recently, women religious in the United States have again experienced significant media coverage. First there was the Apostolic Visitation of Institutes of Women Religious in 2009 which was meant "*to look into the quality of the life of religious women in the United States,*" by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL). More recently the three-year doctrinal assessment by the



Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of the Leadership Conference of Woman Religious concluded in April 2015. At the conclusion of the CDF mandate, Pope Francis a 50-minute meeting with the leadership of LCWR. The LCWR leadership was "deeply heartened" by Pope Francis' expression of appreciation for the lives and ministry of the Sisters in the United States.

Given this past and recent history, I went to the Washington with an enthusiasm for what Pope Francis brings to the church of today. His outreach to people on the margins evident by his meeting with prisoners and visiting soup kitchens is inspiring and encouraging. I find myself relating to Pope Francis when he humbly asks for prayer. These are challenging times and we need leaders who are willing to lead by example and ask for the collaboration and support of others. As President Obama said to Pope Francis, "In your humility, your embrace of simplicity, in the gentleness of your words and the generosity of your spirit, we see a living example of Jesus' teachings, a leader whose moral authority comes not just through words but also through deeds." As women religious we have many role models ... Sr. Theresa Kane who continues to work for the dignity of all women and Pope Francis just to name a few. Each of us has what it takes to work for the good of all and to ultimately be role models for others to do the same. - **Sr. Catherine Sheehan, DW**

By Sr. Marie José Seide, DW

... This Time...It Was "The Time."

It was the first time I was able to approach a Pope so close. When St Pope John Paul II visited Haiti in 1984 the Principal of the Commercial School I attended took my class to the airport. I saw Pope John II then, close when he got off the plane and kissed the ground, but I did not get a chance to approach him close enough to get a hand shake; when Pope Benedict visited the US, I attended the Mass at Yankee stadium and saw the Pope from afar, but this time, it was "THE TIME." I said to myself, I don't know if this opportunity will repeat, so any chance I have to get close and get, a huggy, or a hand shake I will; so, I made my way through the crowd while Pope Francis was coming out of the Sacristy and started shaking hands and hugging people. I made my way up and got close enough through the 6 feet tall men standing there as a "barricade" waiting to get their share of blessing.

Thank God I did get to shake Pope Francis' hands, not once, but twice. At the moment I could not express my feelings. One thing I knew, it was a "Jubilee" moment for me. Pope Francis has such a peaceful way of looking at you and such a gentle smile. It was amazing to see how selfless he is; because the fatigue of the journey did not alter his eagerness to give as many as possible special attention, for it meant so much to each one.

I thanked Heaven for giving me to be daring at the right time.

God bless Pope Francis and God bless the Leadership team for these awesome moments I lived at St. Patrick's. - **Sr. Marie José Seide**

By Sr. Fabiola Louis-Jean, DW

WAKE UP THE WORLD!

The first World Meeting for Young Consecrated Men and Women, inaugurated in Rome on September 15, 2015, started with a prayer vigil. More than 4, 000 consecrated men and women from 500 religious congregations and 125 countries across the world, came together to reflect upon the essential elements of consecrated life. There were 13 Daughters of Wisdom who participated in the meeting; they came from 11 different entities: 3 from Italy, and 1 each from, France, GBI, Madagascar, Congo, United

States, Canada, Argentina, Malawi, India, and the Philippines. An Italian sister, Antonella Daniela Prestia, was in charge of the group. She was impeccable and delightful to be with. We stayed at the casa, but the meeting was at the Vatican. We left home around 6 am and returned by 10:30 pm and sometimes after 11 pm. The workshops were excellent and very intense.

In the morning we all gathered at Paul VI Hall for morning prayer and conferences. Then in the afternoon we met in different churches and colleges in Rome. We had different language groups to share the fruits of our reflection. After, the language groups we got together for Mass and other activities such as visiting the Sistine chapel, concerts, adoration and so on. The whole gathering was a taste of heaven where all nations, various cultures, different languages will come together to give God glory. The meeting was also a sign of hope: religious life is not dying; it is alive.

Even before I went to Rome, I had a great admiration for Pope Francis. I am touched by the love he shows for the poor, his simplicity, and obviously he is not a judgmental person. He really wants people to see him just as a human being and God's servant. When I found out that we were going to have an audience with Pope Francis, I was excited about seeing him in person. However, I was not willing to go the extra mile to be near him or to shake his hand, just seeing him was enough. I have to admit that, while he was walking to the podium, my heart leapt for joy; that was an experience. I did not expect that feeling. Having seen him in person, I truly believe that Pope Francis is a man of God. He is an extraordinary gift of God not only to our church but also to our world. During, his conversation with us truly the word of God came from his mouth. It is the same way that God used the Prophets in the Bible.



When the Pope met with us, he answered three questions from the participants. He took his time to share his insights with us. I am sure, each person in that room found a message or word to hold on to. There are four points of his reflections that I would like to keep in my heart:

- 1- Pope Francis invited us to stay close to the people,

to their problems, to be human, and to be brothers and sisters to the people of God.

2- According to Pope Francis, to evangelize is not about convincing people; it is actually to witness that Jesus is alive. We can only evangelize others with our flesh, and with our life. He said that we can study theology, we can take courses on evangelization. That is good, and there is nothing wrong with it. However, he wanted us to be aware that the capacity to really warm hearts, in other words to bring others closer to Jesus, to help them experience God's love does not come from books; it comes from our hearts. **He said if our heart is burning with love for Jesus then we are a good evangelizer.** As a theology student, that is an important message for me and I need to take time to reflect on it.

3- He also talked about memory, how memory is key for consecrated life. He reminded us that the apostles never forgot their first meeting with Jesus. He invited us to do likewise especially in the dark, difficult moments of our consecrated life. He said, "Go back to the sources to remember the beginning, to remember the wonder we felt when the Lord looked at us." Based on my personal experience, I second Pope Francis, the memory of one's vocation is a great consolation. A couple of times, I had to go back to the day I received the call. That helped me regain my strength because that moment reminded me that I am not alone. God is with me.

Sisters, I have a question for those of you who have been religious for 70...60...50 years.... do you still go back to the day that you have received your call? After so many years what makes you go back? Is it in times of joy or of darkness?

4- He encouraged us not to only pray, but to adore the Lord, to be women and men of adoration. He said so many other good things but these are the points that I will continue to reflect on.

One bishop talked about authority in religious life. He advised those who are in charge "the superior" of the congregation to be brothers and sisters first; before they command and before the subjects obey. From day one, when I met those who have been in Leadership positions in the US province, I have seen that the provincial and the team, the vocation director and mistress of Postulants, mistress of the Juniorate treat each member as sisters; they don't let their authority dominate the spirit of the sisterhood. Those who are in leadership in our province command but they are open to listen, that is my view as a new member. I pray that spirit remains among us.

I want to take this occasion to thank the vocation and the formation teams for their hard work. One of the speakers stated that "We are not learning how to die or how to disappear, we need to invest in formation, otherwise we will die. We need to adapt our Charism to new circumstances."

We had different conferences and different guest speakers. All of them were outstanding. I would not be able to share everything. If anyone is interested in knowing more about the other topics please check the website www.giovaniconsacрати.chemin-neuf.fr. Once again, thank you for that great opportunity because it helps me expand my spiritual growth as well as in ministry in the Church. - **Sr.**

Fabiola D. Louis-Jean, DW