

My Reflections of WYD 2011

by Jorie Roldan

Imagine yourself surrounded by waves upon waves of people – everywhere you turn you encounter eager, excited, and jubilant young faces. Anywhere you go you meet countries that make up the world – flags of Germany, Italia, Australia, the US, Canada, Brazil, the UK, Mexico, all soar in the air like one giant parade. And among the shouts and cheers, one phrase sounds clear: “¡Esta es la juventud del Papa!” (These are the young people of the Pope!)

It was my first time to attend a World Youth Day, as it was for the group I went with – 18 high-school seminarians of the Seminary of Christ the King in Mission, B.C. The whole experience was like nothing we have ever dreamed of before.

Before there under the heat of the Spanish sun (going nearly to the 40°C!) was not as bad as we thought, probably since we were all energized by the excitement of the events taking place. There are so many places to go and so many things to see that the best one can do was to soak it all in. This was what it meant to be a pilgrim, yes for WYD is a pilgrimage.

The difference between a “tourist” and a “pilgrim” was that a “tourist” grabs and takes while a “pilgrim” gives and receives (as one of the speakers there told us).

It was amazing how this pilgrimage had brought people from all over the world so that their identity now only became “The young people of the Pope (and the Church)!” We truly are the future of the Church!

And, one event stays with me from that trip, one of the bigger highlights for me among many, that helps me realize the greatness and the beauty of the family of the Catholic Church.

We, the 18 seminarians, were fortunate enough to attend the Mass for Seminarians with the Holy Father. This for everyone, I think, was the most anticipated event. We knew that in order to be at the very front, we had to be determined to fight for it. And so, with the help of the Spanish speakers in our group as well as some ninja skills, we were able to direct all 18 of our Seminarians to the front rails – the very location where the Pope would get off

his Popemobile and walk onto the red carpet into the Cathedral. We knew we had to persevere in order to secure our spot, for no sooner had we done this when we felt other bodies crowding behind us. But persevere we did – for nearly 2 hours of standing and waiting – and we were not left unrewarded. The Popemobile stopped about 3-5 feet in front of us, and the Pope himself, when he got off, as a near 5-10 feet. But that was not all for us. Before he got off, he was giving his characteristic wave/blessing in the Popemobile. He was scanning over the crowds until he got to us...and he looked at us for a good 5 seconds! We don't know how we caught his attention, maybe it was our ordinary white dress shirts we were in contrast to the other seminarians wearing black cassocks or suit jackets, or very front (with our white dress shirts), we don't know. But we knew that the Pope looked at us and perhaps gave us a small blessing/wave.

From then on, I knew and felt something I had taken for granted. I always saw the Pope on TV or on pictures, but I never thought much of him. But then, seeing him in person made me realize, "Yes, he is real! This is the Vicar of Christ, the successor of St. Peter!" From him emanated an aura which felt as if he was my father. But he is, isn't he? Christ appointed him to be the Father of the Church so that God the Father's own love might flow through him. That is why we call him Papa! On him rests the stamp of Christ, on him lies so much love and so much responsibility, which is why I realized that we must support our Papa with our prayers and sacrifices! And, we must support each other with that same love and affection, for we are truly the family of the Church.