

In the Heartland With Bishop Pates

Pope Francis, International Priests Merry Christmas

Meeting Pope Francis

As you can well imagine, it was a great thrill to meet Pope Francis when I was at the Vatican to participate in a seminar sponsored by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences entitled: “Less nuclear stockpiles and more development.” (See page one – story on nuclear seminar)

Pope Francis exudes great warmth and wears a broad smile as he greets you. He radiates light and is very inviting in his manner. The Pope, as I understand, has never been to the United States and thus reference to Des Moines and Iowa does not necessarily strike a chord with him. Nonetheless, he is very interested and sends his warmest wishes to all in our diocesan community.

The group who participated in the nuclear seminar spent two nights in the guest house where the Pope resides, Casa Sanctae Marthae. His quarters, like all in the facility are two small rooms. He eats in the dining hall and conducts some business in the house. Thus, he moves about simply and without fanfare.

The Holy Father has announced formally that he is coming to the United States to participate in the World Meeting of the Families, Sept. 22-27, 2015 in Philadelphia. Joining in this gathering will be people from throughout the world. Adam Storey, director of the Diocesan Office of

Marriage and Family Life, is organizing trips both by bus and air for any in our diocesan community to attend. If you have interest, contact Adam at astorey@dmdiocese.org or 515-237-5056.

Thanksgiving with international priests

These past two years, on Thanksgiving Day, I have had the pleasure to gather for Mass and join together for a Thanksgiving meal at a local restaurant with the international priests who serve the Diocese of Des Moines.

In addition to the built-in opportunity to thank these generous missionaries for their service in our midst, it affords all of us, in a relaxed setting, to come to know each other and our various cultures better.

Like all missionaries, these individuals make significant sacrifices, leaving home, families, friends, and the familiar to enable us in Iowa to participate in the sacraments and to grow in our faith with relative convenience. A particular challenge in many cases is that of language and accent particularly among the elderly who have impaired hearing. I am grateful that the priests often print their homilies to be followed in Church when delivered and reflected upon thereafter at home in the course of the week. It is a great aid to comprehension.

I am most grateful for all of the parishioners who go the extra distance with great generosity in welcoming the international priests and then facilitating their ministries in our parishes. Both parties benefit. Growth in appreciation of the Church universal and embracing different cultures

are positive gains for all involved. For decades, American clergy and religious went abroad in service to countries calling for our outreach. Today, this sacrificial ministry is being reciprocated resulting in remarkable blessings for us.

Merry Christmas!

I extend to all in our diocesan community heartfelt, best wishes for a Merry Christmas and abundant blessings in 2015.

We are blessed to have a vital, vibrant Church in the Diocese of Des Moines. As we move forward, inspired especially by Pope Francis, may we continue to emphasize our call to be evangelizers. We are the Body of Christ and our attentive care to render mercy, extend warm welcome, and assure inclusion in our communities, especially to those who are hurting, enables Christ to be born again and again.