



To stand alongside the Pope during the Angelus prayer is something to remember for a lifetime however it is not only that. The Pope's openness makes it possible to talk with him as you would with a friend and for young people this is of particular importance.

It was a typically hot Roman afternoon when my boss, Father Grzegorz Suchodolski, called to ask me an extraordinary question. "How would you like to accompany the Holy Father during registration to the World's Youth Days(WYD)?" he said and in that very moment I went speechless. Two days later I was wandering along the cool corridors of the Apostolic Palace with Father João of the Pontifical Council for the Laity. An Italian Youth's representative, Pierangelo Dorno, who was also sent to witness the Holy Father during the registration.

"It has happened on a few occasions" said Father João "that the Pope Francis has tried to enrol electronically but this is the very first time that Pope has done it publicly and the first time amongst the representative of the World Youth Days." I suddenly felt the uniqueness of the whole situation even more. However I would never have imagined how very special this moment would be.

The famous window, recognised by the whole of the world, is situated in the office, where Benedict XVI, John Paul II and previous popes have worked on new Church documents. Since Pope Francis has chosen to live in the House of St. Martha things are run a little bit differently. Shelves once filled with books are now completely empty. The present Pope spends most of his time in a very modest room consisting of a desk on which there is only a crucifix and an old fashioned telephone, similar to the one that our grandparents used.

When we arrived, the CTV crew was there already and the photographer from L'Osservatore Romano was awaiting us. They were also excited. "We almost never come in here because all transmissions are filmed only from the outside, but in such special cases everyone pulls out all the stops" joked the cameraman. After a little while the Pope's secretary came along and briefed us on the protocol.

Finally, the Holy Father joined us. He was smiling as usual and he greeted each person with a hand shake. We could only say our name in that brief moment. However the time for a real conversation was still to come. The Secretary asked the Holy Father to test the registration button, so he pressed the icon on a tablet, but it didn't quite work. He had to repeat it several times and then laughing said: "It would be much easier to sign up for the WYD manually."

Moments later, shortly before noon, the Pope began a weekly ritual. Curtains were open and the long piece of fabric with the embroidered emblem of the pope was released. It's a well-known sight we all have see on TV and from St.Peter's Square. When Pope Francis approached the window, the congregated crowd in the square gave a loud cheer at the very first glimpse of him. When the Holy Father led the Angelus, everyone in the room gathered around the microphone and answered to the

call. "Now, I think I know how all those voices are generated during the Angelus prayer on TV" I thought and smiled to myself to think that that it is extremely rare to hear a female voice.

Then the moment we had eagerly awaited was about to happen. The Pope's secretary invited Pierangelo and myself to come forward to where Pope Francis was standing. He was just given a tablet with the website for WYD registration. We approached the window, I looked ahead at the square. The view from this window was just breathtaking. The square was surrounded by a colonnade full of people who all at once at the sight of us started to cheer with a renewed enthusiasm. I could not believe this. "They are also experiencing this moment as much as we do. They are happy for us and at one with us." I thought. I began to comprehend of how those participating in the WYD are going to feel in the coming year. What an amazing feeling that is. Despite the big crowds and the fact that we didn't know each other, there is something special that unites us all. People from different countries and cultures can relate to each other through Jesus and His visible sign is the Holy Father Francis. In such moments you can experience somewhat of a metaphysical thrill. I do not know how many people, if any, managed to get to see what I have other than the Pope himself! I felt as if I was participating in a historic moment.

"Hereby I am registered" Pope Francis announced, officially inviting all young pilgrims to gather at Cracow's biggest event so far. After the prayer, when the curtains fell again, the Pope immediately devoted some time to speak with us. You should have seen his face. He was startled when I said that I am Polish. Luckily the expression of amazement on his face was immortalized by a photographer from L'Osservatore Romano. The Pope looked as if he had just been told that I was his close cousin. Because I spoke fluent Italian, it must have not occurred to him that I was Polish. He was pleased even more when I added that I am working for WYD. "I live in Warsaw" I said "there are many people awaiting you, Holy Father." The Pope kept on joking "I hear that Cracow is the bigger part of Poland." When Pierangelo added that "Two hours was enough for me to read the last encyclical", Pope Francis said laughing, that "The writing took a little while longer". The Pope took his time, made many jokes and spend time with everyone including the cameraman. We felt completely at ease with him. You can not feel any other way when someone's eyes clearly express, "I want to know about you, my friend". I looked at him and pondered , one must have a young spirit to be able to give so much of themselves to others.

At the end of our meeting, Pope present us with rosaries and with a humble tone asked us to pray for him often. The tone in which he stressed the word "often" has hit me. It soon became clear to me that the papacy is not the path scattered with cheers and smiles of enthusiastic crowds. It's a hardship. I cannot even begin to imagine how tremendous it must be. It makes you wonder though that despite all this hardship he can give so much joy to others. May all young people who plan on meeting the Pope in 2016 take heed of his message and follow it through.

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