

Pope's U.S. trip inspires Ohioans to travel to East Coast

Archbishop Schnurr: "Proud to be Catholics... proud to be Americans."

By Meredith Moss - Staff Writer

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At 10 p.m. next Saturday, Elizabeth Clark will board a bus to Philadelphia along with more than 100 other University of Dayton students to become part of history.

They will be among the 1.5 million people expected to hear Pope Francis celebrate the closing Mass on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway marking the end of his historic papal visit to the United States.

"Pope Francis gives me hope, hope for the future of our world and hope for the Catholic Church," Clarke said. "Since the moment Pope Francis was elected, when he chose to wear black shoes instead of red ones, he has challenged people around the world to fully live their call as Catholics to actively live out the church's message."

Clarke, a senior majoring in religious studies with a graduate certificate in non-profit and community leadership, said her faith teaches her how to live. Pope Francis's witness of servant leadership, she believes, exemplifies what she's been learning at UD. "As students we are asked to 'learn, lead, and serve,' words that have taught me the importance of leading through service to others."

Pope Francis's first ever visit to the United States has inspired and energized other Americans as well, including many in our region. His five-day trip begins Tuesday in Washington, D.C., where House Speaker John Boehner, R-West Chester Twp., has invited him as the first Catholic pope to address Congress on Thursday. The pope will also address the United Nations General Assembly on Friday, and celebrate two Masses on Saturday and Sunday while attending the World Meeting of Families Congress in Philadelphia.

'Reaching everybody'

A send-off for local people attending the weeklong World Meeting of Families leaves from Monroe on Monday morning; four bus loads will leave Needmore Road in Dayton on Saturday night for Sunday's Papal Mass in Philadelphia. Carroll High School in Riverside is sending 48 students, while a number of students and their families from Archbishop Alter High School in Kettering and Bishop Fenwick High School in Franklin are traveling to see the pope.

"The guy's arms are spread out and he's reaching out to everybody!" said The Rev. John MacQuarrie, pastor of St. Bernard's and St. Teresa parishes in Springfield. "I always like to say that one of the pope's jobs is as a unifier, and Francis is trying hard to be a unifier. He's an inspiring person."

MacQuarrie, who has been incorporating the pope's basic teachings in his recent homilies, said he has seen people come back to the church because of Pope Francis's openness and hopes this week's visit will encourage others to return as well. "They are fascinated by him, and I think this visit is going to inspire young men to come to the priesthood," he said.

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Cincinnati is the 38th largest Catholic diocese in the country, with almost 500,000 Catholics, and has the sixth largest network of Catholic schools in terms of enrollment. The 19-county territory in Southwest Ohio includes 211 parishes and 111 Catholic primary and secondary schools.

"Whenever a pope visits the United States, it is a great joy and a special time for Catholics," said Archbishop Dennis M. Schnurr, one of 40 bishops who will welcome the pope to Washington and will also attend the World Meeting of Families meeting. "It reminds us that we are part of a universal church with a 2,000-year history. We are proud to be Catholics, just as we are proud to be Americans."

Schnurr said as one of 400 bishops in the United States, being with the pope "reminds me that our communion with the Holy Father is a visible sign of the unity of the church."

Local influence on charity campaigns

In response to Pope Francis's challenge to eradicate systemic hunger by 2025, the Archdiocese of Cincinnati has created the "Food for All: Be Multiplied Campaign."

"The food drive is an Archdiocese-wide way to welcome Pope Francis to the U.S. by showing how inspired we have been by him and responding to his challenge to end hunger by 2025," said Sean Ater of the Office of the New Evangelization. He said the goals of the campaign include 1,000,000 food items pledged to local food pantries and 5,000 letters to Congress to advocate for life-giving nutritional programs in the federal budget.

The local effort also includes social media under the hashtag #bemultiplied, which consists of donating five items to feed one person for one day and challenging five friends to do the same. Donations go to local food pantries, or can be dropped off at any Catholic school in the Archdiocese. To date, more than 100 parishes, schools, businesses and organizations have pledged over 540,000 items of food.

Two "Pope Francis Houses" for needy area families are underway — one in Trotwood, one in Cincinnati. They're being built by Habitat for Humanity, a joint project designed to unify both Catholics and non-Catholics. At the Aug. 7 kickoff for the Trotwood home — being built for Volanda Brice and her three sons — Bishop Joseph Binzer spoke about the qualities of Pope Francis and encouraged the local Catholic community to support the ideals of the pope, though "volunteerism and donations of time, talent, treasure, and prayer."

Jana Bennett, who writes on a wide range of issues in contemporary Catholic life as co-editor of the blog — catholicmoralthology.com — believes the discussions will get more interesting after the Pope's visit.

Bennett, associate professor of religious studies at UD, said locally many people are aware that Pope Francis is coming, but some are waiting to see what he will say and how will it impact them personally.

"The Pope has been popular and well liked and across the board people of all ages are excited about his visit, but he has also been very pointed in his remarks, especially for American Catholics," she said. "His most recent encyclical was, I think, a pretty clear manifesto against the predominant American consumer lifestyle. So there is an air of caution. People know this pope will probably say things we may or not be prepared to hear. I think he might — in his own way — be really critical of the U.S. and American Catholics."

'Prophet of nations'

Bennett, who believes Pope Francis is hoping lives will be changed as a result of his words, said when he announced that the Vatican had taken in Syrian refugees recently, people in her own local parish began talking about how they might be able to help, asking what it would look like to host refugee families in their own homes. "He's trying to live out the Papacy in a way we haven't seen before," she said. "His actions have sparked the imagination of so many Catholics."

Sister Dorothy Schmitmeyer, a Sister of the Precious Blood who lives in Trotwood, believes that the pope's visit to America and his address to the United Nations is fulfilling his call as a "prophet of nations." She just read the Pope's encyclical on the environment and senses when he speaks to the members of the United Nations he will talk about how the people of the world must change the way they are living, especially as it relates to the environment. "If



Top, VIDEO: To hear University of Dayton senior Elizabeth Clarke talk about her upcoming visit to Philadelphia to see Pope Francis, click [here](#). Second, Archbishop of Cincinnati Dennis M. Schnurr will be one of 40 bishops who will welcome the pope to Washington, D.C., and also attend the World Meeting of Families Congress in Philadelphia, NICK DAGGY / STAFF. Third, Elizabeth Clark, a senior at the University of Dayton majoring in religious studies, will travel with over 100 of her fellow students to Philadelphia to see Pope Francis, LISA POWELL / STAFF. Fourth, Habitat for Humanity is building a house in Trotwood in honor of Pope Francis, LISA POWELL / STAFF. Fifth, Volanda Brice and her three sons will be the first family to move into a new home in Trotwood built by Habitat for Humanity of Greater Dayton to honor Pope Francis. The family will move in December, CONTRIBUTED. Bottom, Pope Francis is cheered by faithful as he arrives for the weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican, Wednesday, Sept. 16, 2015. GREGORIO BORGIA / ASSOCIATED PRESS

we destroy part of life," she said, "we are destroying part of ourselves."

The Rev. Geoff Drew of St. Maximilian Kolbe in Liberty Twp. said members from his parish will attend the World Meeting of Families meeting and the pope's Sunday Mass.

"We are going to be praying in a special way for his safety and well-being," Drew said. "In our bulletins we're encouraging people to be attentive to all of the wonderful things that will be occurring during his visit. It's the first time a pope has ever addressed a joint session of Congress, for instance, and it will be the first canonization on United States soil. I think the very fact that he wants to be here and be close to people is a powerful witness that he cares about individuals."

Mary Lou Baker, who oversees religious education for youth at St. Max, will attend the week-long World Meeting of Families. She considers this a lifetime opportunity.

"I believe that none of us who are going have ever been in the presence of the pope. It's almost surreal," said Baker of Hamilton. "We are overwhelmed."

Complete coverage

Today: Local Catholics are preparing to celebrate Pope Francis's trip to the United States.

Monday: Pope Francis is uniquely prepared about the divided political nature of Washington, D.C.

Tuesday: The journey Pope Francis is leading the church.

Key events during Pope Francis's U.S. visit

Tuesday: Arrives in Washington, D.C., at Joint Base Andrews at 4 p.m.

Wednesday: Meets with President Barak Obama; leads prayer with U.S. bishops at Saint Matthew's Cathedral in D.C. at 11:30 p.m.

Thursday: Speech to joint session of Congress at 9:20 a.m.; prayer at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York at 6:45 p.m.

Friday: Speech to United Nations General Assembly at 8:30 a.m.; mass at Madison Square Garden at 6 p.m.

Saturday: Mass at Cathedral Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul in Philadelphia at 10:30 a.m.

Sunday: Papal Mass for World Meeting of Families Congress on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway at 4 p.m.