

“Am I Giving Life?”

Over the course of the past month, we at the Benedict XVI internship got our hands deeper and deeper into the work of assisting in volunteer coordinating for Pope Francis’ visit to Canada. Our work bore fruit as the Holy Father landed for his penitential visit. The planning was a flurry of activity ranging from leisurely waiting for phone calls to the panic of having to reply to multiple pages of emails before the day’s work was done. But then the Holy Father came, and the reason for our labours became personal and apparent. During the visit I attended two of the events: I got involved at Maskwacis mostly in a supporting role for any tasks needed, and as a seminarian, I had the blessing of serving Mass at Commonwealth Stadium.

From these two different perspectives and locations I gained a lot of insight into the grace that God bestowed upon us as a culture, both for the Indigenous Peoples of Canada and for the broader Catholic community here. Firstly, I remember the crowds of Indigenous elders after the Holy Father spoke at Maskwacis. I took part in some overseeing and coordinating, but I also got very involved with the more concrete work needed: driving golf carts, directing participants, helping unload and load busses. The elders largely embraced the logistical craziness of reboarding their busses with an adventurous smile, and through the conversations I had in the front of my golf cart I quickly learned how important the act of physical presence and accompaniment was to them, as they were overjoyed and very thankful of the Pope for choosing to visit them personally as a community.

Secondly, I have a bit of a biased view at Commonwealth Stadium in Edmonton, as my perspective was from the back sacristies and on the sanctuary during the Mass. I learned just how particular the Vatican Monsignors in charge of the liturgy can get: the rehearsal was slotted for an hour and a half but reached nearly three hours! The guiding corrections were done with a

smile on their faces, a glint in their eye, and often a joke on their lips. The efforts to revere Christ properly in the Eucharist were, as they always are, rewarded a hundredfold: at the Mass you could palpably feel the local Church uniting together with each other and with the universal Church, but more importantly under Christ and His vicar on earth. The Pope was very personally present: moving throughout the crowd in his popemobile and blessing the people. All in all, the Mass was a success in that we revered Christ, and He blessed us with His grace in return. From my perspective as the boat bearer, it was a grace to be so actively involved in the event, even though I unfortunately cannot speak much into the volunteer coordinating that the other interns were doing behind the scenes, in the stands, and everywhere else.

With memories fresh in our minds and hearts, the internship is now changing its focus from receiving grace from the Holy Father and our involvement in his visit instead towards living out our strengthened faith as examples to the youth in summer camps throughout August. Pope Francis spoke directly of this “passing on” during his homily at the public Mass: “As part of the history of salvation, in the light of those who went before me and loved me, what is it that I must now do? I have a unique and irreplaceable role in history, but what mark will I leave behind me? What am I passing on to those who will come after me? What am I giving of myself? Often we measure our lives on the basis of our income, our type of career, our degree of success and how others perceive us. Yet these are not life-giving criteria. The real question is: am I giving life?”.

We at the internship, college, and seminary continue to rely on your prayers for God’s continual blessing of our vocations and lives.

Submitted by Marc Berube.