

Seeing the pope for the first time

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KRAKOW, Poland - The day started as planned at the Mercy Centre for catechesis, Mass, and meeting Archbishop Lori. Mixed in there was a shared testimony from a couple who met while part of the famous youth group started by St. John Paul II. They shared how they called him "Uncle," which he took to affectionately. Even after he was elected to the papacy, he continued to refer to himself as Uncle in correspondence.

Following lunch at the Mercy Centre, I headed into town with fellow pilgrim Matt Schnepfer, but we took the wrong train. Perhaps by divine providence, as we backtracked, we found a church with relics from Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati. One of my favorite prayers is the Frassati prayer for courage, which was so cool to pray in front of the relics. We finally made our way to the city center, and after tooling around a bit, we made plans to attend the evening activities at the Mercy Centre, which included a talk by Los Angeles Bishop Robert Barron, followed by a concert featuring Matt Maher and Audrey Assad.

Our plans were derailed when we learned that the Mercy Centre had reached capacity. As we were grasping that, Matt happened to check out the news section of the "Pilgrim" app, and saw that Pope Francis was at the Wawel Cathedral. We figured, why not? Maybe we could see him. It looked like people were gathering, but not at critical mass, so we first got some yummy lamb sausage. After that we joined the others near the cathedral, hoping for a glimpse.

