

# St. Ursula, the Knights of Columbus and Wile E. Coyote

Random thoughts from day two of the Pilgrimage of Love and Mercy, AKA Feet for Francis:

It was a most interesting morning of Sept. 21 in Parkville. Climbed out of my sleeping bag at 6 a.m. and shuffled a few steps in the dark to the edge of the choir loft at St. Ursula Church. The only light came from two sets of prayer candles, in front of statues, that barely illuminated the pilgrims sleeping on the floor. Downstairs in the parish spiritual center, Deacon Mike Baxter kept providing, breakfast of a French toast casserole. I needed fortification for what came next.

## **View the video here!**

After Mass, Debbie Glinowiecki, the first-year principal of St. Ursula School, had her entire student body waiting in the school gym.

Walking into that sea of smiling faces and energy, I was overwhelmed by emotion, a depth of which I had not experienced since Sept. 30, 2012, when my daughter, Kate, married Micah. Told Glinowiecki as much. That was before Father Jack Lombardi asked if anyone was born in Peru, and a young hand shot up, and our representatives of Hispanic Ministry, Karen Fiallos and Egma Liliana Jimenez Abril, told the children about their homelands, Honduras and Colombia, respectively; and before the fourth-graders gifted us prayer cards and some older students gave us trail mix, all hand made. Check out the video of the send-off they gave us up Harford Road.

A camera crew from WMAR-TV Ch. 2 was there, which brings us to Wile E. Coyote, since I kept hearing the Road Runner all day.



Because of all the play the pilgrimage and Feet for Francis got from the four network affiliates in Baltimore Sunday, we rarely went more than a quarter-mile of the day's 16.2 miles without hearing a gentle horn beep of recognition or a yell out the window of "We saw you, good luck." Somewhere south of Fallston, a woman in a van pulled over and gave Father Jack a \$50 bill for gas money. Jo Brandenburg, a parishioner of St. Joseph in Fullerton, had her husband drop her off on Belair Road so she could join us for a few miles.

In need of a pit stop in Perry Hall, we stopped at Schimunek Funeral Home to use the facilities. The manager who let us in looked at me and said, "Paul?" It was Tim Burdyck. His father-in-law was the late Bob Doerfler, an old friend and mentor from

my St. Francis of Assisi Parish days. Sure enough, we were both wearing our “Doerfler Strong” bracelets.

You can’t make this stuff up. I am convinced Bob asked God for the fortuitous bump. The Knights of Columbus Council 9729 from St. Ignatius Parish in Hickory were there with us every step of the way from Parkville to Bel Air. Tom Ryan and Denny Beyer were at St. Ursula as the coffee was brewing, and Ryan, a retired Baltimore County homicide detective, drove one of our support vans to the Big Gunpowder Falls, where a team of some 10 Knights had set up tables and chairs and a buffet of fried chicken, salads and cold drinks. And it was good.

It is amazing, the road kill on the next stretch up Route 1, through Bradshaw and on to Fallston.



We enjoyed quite the welcoming committee at The John Carroll School in Bel Air, where principal Madelyn Ball and campus minister Gary Meyerl have the place fitted out like a 4-star hotel. We dined on tilapia, crab cakes and barbecue in the cafeteria with the 13 international male students who reside on campus in the former Sisters of St. Joseph rectory with Meyerl. Our pilgrims prepared their trays and sat with each other, which led to some aggressive counseling (thank you, Skip Prosser) on my part. I told pilgrims to spread out and invite a JC student to sit with them. Thus we had home-schoolers from Carroll and Frederick and Washington counties sharing dinner conversation with boys from China and South Korea.

John Carroll supplied hot showers, clean towels, use of the washer and dryer for our T-shirts, and some inventive signage that reminds us of the reason we are walking: Pope Francis.

It’s 10 p.m. I am working from the Brown Room, and the view out of the window is down to the lower gym, where air mattresses are inflated and Father Jack has had the pilgrims in a circle, continuing the prayer and exercise, spiritual now and physical earlier, that has marked our day.

St. James, pray for us.