

The Mercy Centre: A journalist's haven

By Maureen Cromer

Looking back on my time in Poland, I can honestly say it was one of the most rewarding and exciting experiences of my life. I was truly awestruck by the amount of young people in the church who made the pilgrimage to Kraków for World Youth Day.

That said, my time there was the most physically demanding assignment I've had since last September, when I shuttled between D.C. and Philadelphia on the trail of Pope Francis and our Feet for Francis pilgrims. WYD meant extremely long walks, blistering heat and sleepless nights. Through it all, however, there was a haven for both pilgrims and journalists alike: The Knights of Columbus Mercy Centre.



Archbishop William E. Lori addresses media during a press conference held at the Knights of Columbus Mercy Centre in Kraków, Poland July 27. (Maureen Cromer | CR Staff)

The Mercy Centre was the international English-language catechetical and youth festival site at the re-branded Tauron Arena, the largest sports arena in Poland. From July 26 to 31, tens of thousands of pilgrims would gather together for morning catechesis, confession, adoration and Mass.



(Courtesy Knights of Columbus)

For the pilgrims from the Archdiocese of Baltimore, there was an even greater sense of home at the Mercy Centre, as Archbishop William E. Lori is the Supreme Chaplain for the Knights of Columbus.

There was signing and dancing to the morning's playlist, pilgrims intently listening to testimonies from keynote speakers, and the viewing (on a screen seemingly as large as the ones at M&T Bank Stadium) of Pope Francis landing in Poland. There

was an overwhelming feeling of excitement and faith in the air around us.



Archbishop William E. Lori greets pilgrims from the Archdiocese of Baltimore in the Vocations Cafe at the Knights of Columbus Mercy Centre in Kraków, Poland.

(Maureen Cromer | CR Staff)

Fellow sponsors of the Mercy Centre included the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy and the Sisters of Life. Salt + Light Television, Holy Cross Family Ministries, the Dominican Liturgical Institute, the National Conference of Religious Vocations Directors (NCRVD) and the National Council of Diocesan Vocations Directors (NCDVD) were also a large part of the amazing effort put forth.

Whether it was a place of celebration or simply a quiet place to reflect and pray, you could find exactly what you needed at the Knights of Columbus Mercy Centre. For myself, it was the internet and a water bottle. Thanks to the amazing staff at the Centre, it was all there!



The Blessed Sacrament is processed through the Knights of Columbus Mercy Centre during World Youth Day events July 27. (CNS photo/Jaclyn Lippelmann, Catholic Standard)

To the many Knights and volunteers who made the Mercy Centre such a welcoming place in Kraków - **THANK YOU!**