

Yearning to see pope is a family tradition

By Scott Sainz

Special to the Review

Editor's note: Scott Sainz is among six members of the Life Teen group at St. John Parish in Westminster joining the Pilgrimage of Love of Mercy, the Sept. 20-27 walk from Baltimore to Philadelphia being sponsored by the Archdiocese of Baltimore and Catholic Review Media.

✖ I am a senior at North Carroll High School in Hampstead. As a junior I began taking college classes at Carroll Community College. Its dual enrollment program allowed me to take four classes at the community college last year, one during the summer. This semester I am taking three classes at the community college and only one at my high school. I am 17 years old, the youngest in a family of six.

The short story of why I am walking is, I heard about the pilgrimage through some friends. My youth minister at St. John Parish in Westminster, Kevin Brown, talked to Father Jack Lombardi to see if he had more spots. Sure enough, he did, but the reason I am walking going well beyond that.

My grandfather is Deacon Miguel Sainz. As a kid I always heard the stories from my grandparents and my parents about when Pope John Paul II, now a saint, came to Baltimore in 1995. My parents got tickets to the Mass at Oriole Park at Camden Yards, and every time we go there my mom shares the story about where the altar was located and how many people were there. It's a beautiful memory of ours. My grandparents met John Paul II directly, and my grandmother, Isabel, shook his hand.

Growing up with those memories and knowing how important they are to both my parents and grandparents, I put seeing the pope on my bucket list. I wasn't sure when, but before I die, I knew I would go to see the current pope.

When I heard about Pope Francis' visit to America, I obsessed over why it couldn't happen, thinking about how I wouldn't have a group, don't know who to go with, I didn't know how to get tickets, and so on.



Scott Sainz was baptized by his grandfather, Deacon Miguel Sainz. (Courtesy Sainz family)

I was at a Ruby Tuesday in Pennsylvania about a month ago when my youth minister called and told me about how Father Jack was looking for people to walk to Philadelphia. I hesitated. The college classes are a lot harder to miss than high school, and maybe that would cause me to fail my classes or get behind on my work. On the phone with Kevin, telling myself all kinds of reason why I shouldn't go, eventually something flipped and I started to focus on the reason why I should go. I would finally get to fulfill my goal of seeing the pope. I would spend a week with great people growing in friendship and prayer. I was still nervous, this being my first pilgrimage and not knowing if I will be able to walk the whole 100 miles, but I confidently and excitedly told Kevin: Yes, I really want to go.

Now that I finally said yes and my classes started, there couldn't have been a better week. I told all my professors I would be gone for that week and they told me it would not be any trouble. It will mean more work, but it won't mean the end of the world. I know that God will provide for me to get ahead on my school work and that God will provide for me walking. I am very excited and I can't wait for the next week to pass so I can start this lifelong memory. I'm making sure I dig out my camera and pack it.



Deacon Miguel Sainz and his wife, Isabel, met St. John Paul II in October 1995, when the pope visited the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland. (Olivia Obineme/Special to the Review)

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