

Days before his visit to the United States, Pope Francis sent a video message to the people of Philadelphia, and the participants of the World Meeting of Families, on his upcoming visit. He invited everyone by saying: “I will be there, because you will be there”!

Well, I can proudly say that “I was there”! I came with the group from the Filipino Apostolate, and Couples for Christ, of the Archdiocese of Boston.

Aside from the activities of the World Meeting of Families at the Pennsylvania Convention Center, and concelebrating at the Papal Mass at the Benjamin Franklin Parkway as the main highlights of my stay in Philadelphia, the following are, what I would say, my personal highlights:

- I was able to visit, and stay for a while at the Bayard Publications booth at the convention center during the World Meeting of Families. It was the first time that all the Bayard affiliated publications were gathered under one name. It was nice to meet some of the people involved in those publications.

- I was able to concelebrate with Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, the Archbishop of Manila, for the Filipino participants, and the Filipino communities from, and around the Philadelphia area, for the Feast Day of Saint Lorenzo Ruiz, the First Filipino Saint. It was a joyful celebration with a jam-packed crowd of Filipinos coming from all over the US, and some coming directly from the Philippines.

- I was able to celebrate mass for the group from the Assumption Alumni Association Abroad (AAAA) who had their retreat that same weekend as their simultaneous activity in conjunction with the Papal Visit. It was sort of a Homecoming since I am an alumnus of one of the Assumption Schools in the Philippines, and a recipient of their generosity when I was still a student. I was happy to connect with them.

As a whole, this Philadelphia experience is, quoting what one of the priests commented: “a joyful celebration of being a Christian”! Indeed, it was a joyful, grace filled celebration of people coming from all walks of life, coming from different cultures, and nationalities, to celebrate and express their faith. I was glad that “I was there”!

Fr. Alex, A.A.
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