



A Unique Vantage Point

Sr Bernadette Pike MG


On the way to Rome from Washington DC, I stopped over in London. It was the day of the Royal Wedding. At the airport, small groups gathered near screens displaying the wedding, some even took photos of the screen to get a memento of the occasion. Much of the enthusiasm I encountered seemed to arise not from the event of the marriage, but from being associated with or near the event, for example: *“I can’t wait to tell people I was actually in town at the time”*. Hours later, the atmosphere in Rome seemed to me to be quite different. It was a city also inundated with people for a significant event, but many of the people this time seemed to have been touched personally by Pope JP II in some way and continued to feel a strong connection with him.

I’m sure I was not the only one in Rome who had a strong sense that the Pope was very much present

with us for the weekend of his Beatification. For me, this feeling didn’t just come from the posters marking many of the streets and the airport, or the singing or chanting of pilgrim groups or even the many people speaking Polish (and waving red and white flags) who had come from JP II’s ‘far away country’. No, it felt like, the now Blessed, John Paul II was actually present with us and was enjoying the chance to be together to worship God, to pray and to celebrate the great marvels God had worked in his life.

Perhaps you will allow me to share a couple of personal experiences of my time in Rome. Before the ceremony had begun, I was walking behind the altar when I noticed that the doors to St Peter’s were open. I asked a Monsignor if I could go in. He told me that I could try! I was soon stopped by someone from security who asked if I knew where I was





going. I replied confidently, “Oh Yes”, and proceeded to walk into the Basilica. Walking straight down the centre of St Peter’s on the inside of the railings, I half expected to be stopped and told that I was in a prohibited area and needed to leave. To my delight, I reached the coffin of our late Holy Father, knelt and prayed and took some photos. I then began to retrace my steps until it dawned on me that I still had not been stopped. I returned to JP II’s coffin a second time and remained there with him for some time. I am so grateful to the Holy Spirit who I believe was the hand of Providence facilitating such a wonderful encounter.

It was also a tremendous privilege and gift for me to be asked to do the second reading at the Beatification of JP II. I have never been so nervous and so excited at the same time! As I looked into the crowd from my seat, I thought, wow, there are so many other people who were touched by Christ through JP II—so many people who are probably already living some aspect of his charism within the Church. Seeing such a significant ground swell, reinforced my hope that the work the Holy Spirit began in JP II would continue. It was also an honour to represent Australia and the JP II Sisters. I could imagine JP II Sisters, 50 years down the track, watching the footage and being excited that we were blessed to take part in the celebrations. I lost track of time during the ceremony, and by the end, I had sore cheeks from smiling so much. When I reflect now on the blessings poured out at the Beatification, I recall the Scripture ‘to those whom much is given, much will be expected’ (Luke 12:58). With the intercession of Blessed JP II and our Blessed Mother, I look forward to the next stage of the journey with great hope.

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Sr Bernadette Pike is a member of the Missionaries of the Gospel (MG’s).

They were officially established on 23rd June 2007 under the guidance of Perth Archbishop Barry James Hickey. At that time two young women, including Sr Bernadette, were accepted. A week later, they left Perth to complete the first part of their formation in Poland. The idea for the John Paul II Sisters (which later included the Missionaries of the Gospel) was revealed in March 2004. The Missionaries of the Gospel are called to be contemplative active missionaries who through being a sincere gift of self, strive to help others to encounter Christ (Evangelisation), realise (that is, to recognise and bring to fruition) their dignity (Formation) and, develop their relationships with God and others (Build Community).

The community lives on providence and does not receive any form of regular income. This means that they trust that God will provide for all their needs (food, bills, petrol etc.). Donations are needed at the moment to help Sr. Bernadette complete her studies in the USA. She is completing a Masters in Clinical Psychology at the Institute for the Psychological Sciences (www.ipsciences.edu). Your contribution will pay for her course fees and accommodation expenses in the USA for next year. If you would like to make a donation to the community you can send a cheque or money order to:

*‘Missionaries of the Gospel’
PO Box 8171
Perth Business Centre WA 6849*

Or make a donation directly into the MG account:

*National Australia Bank
Missionaries of the Gospel
086006 867962392*

