

SIUE students travel to see Pope Francis in Philadelphia

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Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Catholic Campus Minister Samantha Kennedy and seven SIUE students joined a contingent of Eastern Illinois University students in a pilgrimage to see Pope Francis during his visit to Philadelphia the weekend of Sept. 26-27.

The SIUE group joined 49 EIU students Friday, Sept. 25, for a 12-hour bus ride from Charleston to Philadelphia. Kennedy said the EIU connection came from being in the same Diocese of Springfield and having worked closely with them in the past.

“We saw Pope Francis both Saturday and Sunday,” Kennedy said. “On Saturday, he celebrated mass at the Cathedral, spoke at a local prison, gave a speech at Independence Hall and made an address at the Festival of Families. We saw Pope Francis twice up close during his parade.

“On Sunday, he celebrated mass in the afternoon with thousands of people in attendance - one of the largest masses on U.S. soil. Before mass, he did another parade, and we saw him in his Pope mobile again.”

The SIUE group included sophomore Emma Bevis, freshman Hannah Carroll, sophomore Delaney Dodson, junior Emma McCann, freshman Jared Riemenschneider, and sophomores Almina Rosalem and Rachel Warden.

“The amount of people there was incredible,” said St. Louis native McCann, a psychology major in the School of Education, Health and Human Behavior. “Getting to see all the different types of people, whether Catholic or not, meeting in one place to see The Holy Father was an unforgettable experience. Pope Francis is such an amazing human being and getting to see him and be a part of a mass that he led, was an experience that I will forever hold close to my heart.”

“The greatest impression I had in Philadelphia was how Pope Francis is really a Pope of the people, more specifically the less fortunate,” said Rosalem, a nursing major from Peoria. “He focuses on giving to the poor and helping immigrants. Also, he centers on the importance of family and children.

“This trip has reminded me how the church really is universal. I was in awe of how many people of all ages were there for the same reason. It was truly an amazing experience to see millions of people of all different cultures celebrating the mass together in one place.”

“My motivation for going on the trip to Philadelphia was to give me a chance to get away from all the stressors of college, and focus my time and attention on something spiritual,” said Riemenschneider, a business economics and finance major. “This trip showed me just how powerful the church and its followers can be.”

The SIUE group returned to campus Monday, Sept. 28.