

5 Minutes with...

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You met Pope Francis in May. How did this opportunity come about?

I was going to the Union of International Superiors General, which meets every three years in Rome and is comprised of the Leaders of Religious Congregations of Women from around the world. I got a call from a friend of mine, Sister Patricia Eck of the Sisters of Bon Secours. We were both headed to Rome for this meeting. She told me that she had received a special gift from a bishop in Peru, where the Bon Secours Health System does some work. It was an invitation to a morning mass with Pope Francis in his residence. She asked if I would like to come—but warned me I’d have to get up early.

Safe to assume that was not a deal-breaker?

I told her, “I don’t care if I don’t even go to bed!” So we showed up at 6:30 a.m. with about 30 people—some families, some young people and a few priests. The Swiss Guards let us into the residence and we entered a lovely, simple chapel. It had a glass wall on one side that opened onto Roman ruins. It was just beautiful. Suddenly Pope Francis came out all by himself. He said the mass in a very simple manner with no assistants. It was absolutely wonderful. And then he left.

Was that the end of the visit?

You know, I was thinking, *Well that was great to have been so close to him.* But he came back out and finished prayers after mass with all of us. Then he left again, and they came and touched each of us on the shoulder to leave—and there was Pope Francis waiting out at the door to engage each person as they came out. To me, it felt like meeting St. Peter. He was very warm and unassuming, and looked you right in the eye. It was intimate and extremely touching. I told him I was

a Sister of Charity at Saint Elizabeth, from New Jersey, and how much of an inspiration he’s been to our community—to our families and friends and our ministries. He said, “Things can be difficult. Pray for me.” It was such a special experience. Very informal but very personal.

When you entered the church, is an experience like this something that’s even on your radar?

No. It would never have occurred to me that I would ever have an opportunity to meet a Pope. And to meet someone like Pope Francis...what do you even say to someone like him? He has put his whole life aside and assumed responsibility for the world, really.

Did you take anything away from this interaction that you perhaps hadn’t known or appreciated before?

It deepened what I knew about how committed he is to the Gospel of Jesus, and how much he truly cares for and loves people. He is a very humble, bright man who has given his life to bring God’s love into the world. **EDGE**

Editor’s Note: The Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth was formed in 1859 following the example of Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton, the first U.S.-born citizen to be canonized by the Roman Catholic Church. The Sisters opened Saint Elizabeth hospital in 1905. In 2000, it consolidated with Elizabeth General Medical Center to become Trinitas Regional Medical Center. Sister Rosemary Moynihan is the vice chair of the Trinitas Board of Directors.



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