



Wednesday, June 28

Since today is a day without any particular commitments, I took the morning to go again to the general audience of the Holy Father, mixed in with the crowd. It gave me great pleasure to feel myself just another one of the Christians who come from different parts of the world and wait with such longing to see the pope. As it is the eve of St. Peter's feast day, it was a very meaningful, very joyous audience. Before the arrival of the pope, there were some songs in all the different languages and, when the pope arrived, the sound of the applause was enormous. The pope spoke of St. Peter, of his tomb, of his basilica and of how all of us Christians there are very close to the rock that is the foundation of the Church. He invited us to be faithful to that Church.

I took with me the things I had bought to take home as souvenirs with the blessing of the pope.

In the afternoon, a visit from Mother María Castro Llerena, who assured me that my petition to start a branch of her order in El Salvador was progressing and that, possibly, after the founding of the one in Panamá that was already taking place, it would be El Salvador's turn next.

After the visit of Mother Llerena and the Mother General of the Oblates, I went to St. Peter's when they were singing the vespers of the patron saints, Sts. Peter and Paul. Both of them are patron saints of Rome. I also heard here the solemn vesper song in a festive atmosphere, with people from all over the world filling the choir area of the basilica, which brought me many memories. And there, near St. Peter's tomb, I recited the Apostles' Creed, asking the Lord for the faithfulness and clarity to believe and preach the same faith as the apostle St. Peter.

In the evening, on our nightly walk that we take with Father Juan Bosco Estrada, we again went around St. Peter's Square, remembering there so many historical things that are evoked by the names of Peter and Paul in Rome.



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Preparations for the return trip. Visit to St. Peter's. The solemn Mass in the morning is impressive. Many people come and go, filling the square and the adjacent streets—a true patronal feast, but with a universal implication. In the same way that in our towns the patronal feast days bring in all the people from all the neighboring villages and towns,

St. Peter's feast is ecumenical. Instead of villages and towns, we see here people from all nations of the world. But the spirit is the same: a popular celebration, a joyous occasion inspired by Christian faith and hope. Some selling, some buying, people coming and going, joy: This is the result of being in contact with those heroes who have conquered and reign in eternity, while we are pilgrims in this life trying to follow their examples.

In the evening, departure for the airport and return to my country. In spite of the fact that I am going home, back to my country, I am sad to leave Rome. Rome is the home of everyone who has faith and a true sense of Church. Rome is the homeland for all Christians. The pope is there, who is the father of us all. I have felt him so close. I leave very grateful to him because my heart, faith and spirit continue to be nourished by this rock where the unity of the Church is felt so palpably.

Tomorrow, June 30, the fifteenth anniversary of the pope's coronation, we will be busy with our trip, in getting home, unpacking, etc. Rome will always be mother, teacher, homeland in our hearts.