

Good afternoon, my name is Lindy Kubic.

I work at St. Elizabeth Heath Center main campus as a certified Histotechnician. I prepare the biopsies for the doctors to read in the pathology lab. Working for a Catholic hospital is rewarding for me because I enjoy helping others, and Catholicism has always been apart of my life.

I grew up Catholic in the Diocese of Steubenville, and have attended parochial schools. During high school, we were taught to have community service hours in order to graduate. This was my first step of learning about small and large communities.

A few years later, I attended college at Youngstown State University. For the most part, I did participate at the Newman Center on campus for mass, and also explored St. Columba Cathedral. At this point in my life, God had always been there, but he wasn't the center of my life. During my winter break, Sister Luke, from my hometown parish, asked me to join a group to go to New Orleans. This would be an eye opening experience for me. In January of 2007, was my first mission trip, and airplane ride! Sister Luke, who is a Sister of Charity of Nazareth, Kentucky, prepared me of what to expect. After a hurricane like Katrina, nobody prepares you to see the devastation, misfortune and loss of a city. Our group, formed of college students from across the states, came together to clean up the mess of elderly apartments, and

guttered a house. I will never forget the stories or images as I walked through the ninth ward where the levee broke. In these moments, God became alive to me.

A couple years later, I was asked by Sister Luke to go to New Orleans for another mission trip. I accepted with pleasure, and was excited to see the city come back to life.

A few years down the road, Sister Luke was at it again. This time, out of the country; Belize City, Belize, Central America. So, I had to get a passport. Our goal was to build a house. Our group worked with a local company, called Hand in Hand Ministries, who guided us, on exactly what to do.

My first mission trip to New Orleans was all about cleansing material items. My second trip was all about cleansing the soul – my soul to be exact. Did you know the name Katrina means cleansing? I was cleansed by experiencing the southern hospitality with Miss Joyce and her wonderful family. She talked about the book of Job and how it impacted her life by what God was saying to her through the Bible. Although it seems like they have lost everything, they have it all: faith. Many people in New Orleans, including Miss Joyce, have prayer corners or rooms filled with religious pictures, rosaries, statues, and more.

As I reminisce about my mission trips, I see all of these faces, surroundings, and images come back to life as if it were yesterday. Each time I came back from a mission trip, I would go through my own belongings. I felt guilty of how much material possessions I owned.

It's amazing how opened my eyes were each time I went on an adventure with God.

I have learned God comes from all walks of life. Going on a mission trip is an amazing gift you could ever give yourself or someone you love. As you put yourself in their shoes, you take a step back from life, and examine the world in a different light. Here I was helping them, but in return, filled with gratitude, they helped me deepen my faith.

I have been a parishioner at St. Michael, Canfield for about 5 years. Starting out not knowing a soul, I signed up for Women's Renewal, which is called, "Christ Renews His Parish". It's a wonderful retreat weekend your parish puts on for men and women separately. For me, renewal was a seed. I wanted to be a part of more, and became more confident. Lent is my favorite time of year. I decided to help out at the fish fries, and have met such wonderful people in the kitchen. I also teach Generations of Faith for the second graders, learning about Reconciliation and First Communion. Seeing the Eucharist through the eyes of a child experiencing the cup of salvation for the first time is truly the heart of Catholicism for me. They teach me about the Bread of Life.

Currently, I am active on Stewardship committee, and have participated in the Women's Spirituality Day. From these experiences, I came familiar with the Ursuline Sisters and have become an Ursuline Associate.

I have spent time at the Labyrinth, served at the Dorothy Day house, prayed and reflected on retreat days, and gladly dined with the Sisters after a weekday mass. Just this past year, I journeyed on my first pilgrimage to Rome and the Vatican. Talk about a trip of a lifetime! I listen to the Catholic Channel 129 on Sirius XM (the satellite radio). It all started when I listened to an episode of the "Catholic Guy" show with Lino Rulli. You have one day to sign up for the trip because so many people respond. Literally, out of a hat, they pull 30 names, email you, and make sure you're available. I got an email from Mountain, the Catholic Traveler, our tour guide, saying, "You're going to Italy!" Wow! I couldn't believe it.

Our plans were to visit Assisi for two days and then head to Rome. But, God had other plans. A whole week of daily mass, many churches, relics, historical sites, and all the wine and water you could drink. This was a complete package deal. Around February 2013, one month before our trip, Pope Benedict resigned. My fellow pilgrims and I were shocked. We thought our trip was ruined. Would we even get to have an audience with the Pope?

March 8, 2013, my foot touched the old country. I still couldn't believe it. To make things more interesting, the conclave was happening that same week. Wow! Who would of thought? By Day 4 into our pilgrimage, the conclave started with the Installation of the Cardinal mass. We stood in line early in the morning so we could get a good seat inside the Vatican.

It was such a beautiful sight watching the procession come down the aisle with the cardinals dressed in vibrant red right in front of me. To think, one of them would become the next Pope. One of the highlights was to hear Latin during mass.

How amazing to follow along, and even participate during this Holy occasion. I must say it was remarkable watching how many different languages were being used during the sign of peace or seeing the media off to the side, while nuns prayed below them. All this happened within one church, during one mass.

As late afternoon approached, we pilgrims stood huddled together in the damp, wet air at St. Peter's square, watching the Cardinals on a giant TV screen walk into the Sistine Chapel. The Cardinals started prayers at 5pm, while stating their name and oath. We watched the Cardinals take their seats, with a small book and pencil at each place setting. Then we watched the Sistine Chapel wooden doors slowly close. We waited and waited, and still no smoke.

Finally, at 7:45pm, it appeared: black smoke. We cheered because we saw some type of smoke, and that meant we could go to dinner.

The next day, March 13, 2013, our group of pilgrims walked quickly to St. Peter's Square to get a good standing spot. The Cardinals gathered at 10am for the second round of voting.

As we waited, we decided to pray the rosary. How special it was for us pilgrims to be united together at St. Peter's Square, as the Cardinals were voting for our next Pope. As we finished the rosary, looking up all you seen were media surrounding us. What a bizarre moment. After feeling a deep, spiritual prayer, cameras and news anchors from around the world asking questions about what were we doing, and who would be the next Pope. Talk about spreading the Gospel. By 11:15am black smoke had appeared again.

As evening approached, we flexible pilgrims, as we called ourselves, stood in the rain with umbrellas, watching and praying. At 7:05pm, white smoke appeared, and the rain had stopped. We couldn't believe it. It's really happening. We were astonished and filled with the Holy Spirit as my roommate and I jumped and screamed. We knew we were making history.

After all those hours of waiting at the square, looking at the marvelous church that stood before us never looked so beautiful and elegant. About a half hour later, we heard the bells chime, and band play.

Then the second floor of the Vatican lit up. The banner was hung, and the future Pope was about to greet his people. Jorge Mario Bergoglio stepped onto the middle balcony, with cardinals on either side of the other balconies.

What a beautiful sight! I took a breath, because I knew exactly where I was at that moment. It truly was an amazing place to be, standing almost 3 rows back from the Vatican. Looking around, different flags from different countries blew in the wind, as the world came together on that special night. For a split second, you might of thought the world was at peace. Pope Francis chose his name, and gave his first blessing to the crowd. The next morning I like to call a spiritual hangover. I still couldn't believe what just happened.

Multiple people have asked me what my favorite part of the pilgrimage was for me. Finally, after much thought, I knew it was the history. History of our Catholic faith, history of the Romans, knowing Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither was the Vatican.

How fortunate to know that our church history can go back all the way to Jesus. From Pope Francis, the successor of St. Peter to the successor of Jesus.

For me, this pilgrimage brought the Bible to life. Everything had a meaning, and everything has a purpose. My faith and spirituality are a journey. God draws me nearer to him, especially when I'm faced with an obstacle. No matter how rough it seems to be at the moment, I have faith that I am apart of God's plan. I am his daughter, and He is my best friend.

Thank you!