



Pope Met With Fidel Castro Then Told Cuban Youths “Dream and dream big.”

By Patty Vila, SouthFloridaReporter.com, Cuba Expert, Sept. 21, 2015 - The Pope in Cuba-Day

2—On Sunday morning my mom and I started the day in a bit of a panic. Apparently as we were having our coffee, mom noticed that we did not have cable or internet. My brother in law called Comcast and the recorded message said “We have an outage in your neighborhood, full service will be reinstated by 1pm.”

We immediately called my cousin Clarita and asked her to please record the mass, she said she would. Twenty minutes later, voila, Pope Francis appeared on our screen, much to our relief.

A few minutes before the mass started state security was seen arresting at least three dissidents who were shouting and attempting to distribute flyers. On his way in, the pope mobile, Francis, stopped to greet some of the thousands who had come out to see him.

The pope began Mass at 8:55 a.m. Cuban government reports that 300,000 people attended. The lead up to the morning Mass was quite moving. The orchestra played traditional Cuban music. Mom and I immediately noticed flags from Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Mexico, Argentina, Vatican, rainbow, and of course the Cuban flag.

During his homily he said “Christians are constantly called to set aside their own wishes and desires, their pursuit of power, and to look instead to those who are most vulnerable.” I could clearly see the faces of those in the crowd. I even recognized quite a few people that were there. I was thinking about the heat that

ascended in Revolutionary Square. I saw people fanning themselves and I prayed that not too many would faint. I mention this because in 1998 when I covered Pope John Paul II in Cuba many people did faint because of the high temperatures in the Caribbean heat.

I just could not help but think that all this movement had a lot to do with the historic visit the John Paul II made to Cuba in 1998. The Cuban people are excited and hopeful the door will start opening more and more each day.

One note that we did find interesting is that he had a message for Colombia. He urged the Colombian government and left-wing FARC rebel group to persevere with talks being held in Havana, saying that they could not allow "another failure on the path of peace and reconciliation."

The lesson I took away was all about reconciliation. I knew this word at a very young age. Call me an old soul, but, twenty years ago I knew this was the only way to reconnect with our brothers and sisters on the island. I had a cousin die in a Cuban jail because he opposed the regime, and like the thousands of Cubans around the world that have a sad story to tell I am finally glad to see that the wave of opinion is changing. The truth is we are all getting older, it is not a good thing to live with all that hate in our hearts.

The pope's day continued with a formal meeting with Cuban President Raul Castro and a meeting with his older brother, Fidel. Francis finished his day with a service and a meeting with Cuban youth.

When I think about the events of the day, Cuba has been exceptionally welcoming. The Pope spoke to a group of young people and told them to "Dream and dream big." I truly hope that Raul Castro thinks about those words for the next generations. Why does everyone want to come to America? We can dream big!

If Cuba allowed its citizens to live out their dreams to travel, work, be free and aspire to live a better life they would not be experiencing the brain drain they have had for so many decades. Families do not want to be divided.

Pope Francis is sending a soft toned message that it is time for change. Es tiempo de cambiar.

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