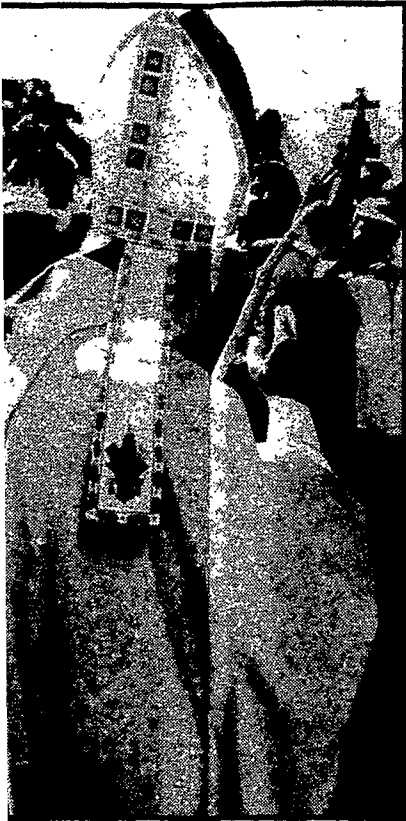


# ONE BODY



attended the Aug. 15 Mass were  
a close-up view of the pope.



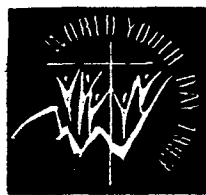
Downtown Denver was crackling with youthful enthusiasm all week. Here, a group from Italy sings its way through the streets.



Friel of Houston, Texas, during the Aug. 15 closing Mass. The pope was touched by Friel, who has n.



led less-than-luxurious sleeping facilities, but  
didn't seem to mind.



Story and photography by  
Mike Latona, staff writer

of Amarillo, Texas. He was sporting a wide grin as I walked by. I stopped to say "hi," and his friends, upon hearing I was a newspaper reporter, encouraged him to share what had happened to him earlier that day.

Frank related that he had met with the pope for two full minutes with earlier that day, during a morning Mass at Denver's Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

Frank, 25, has endured six open-heart surgeries and is not certain how long he has to live. Yet his face was positively aglow as he described his conversation with Pope John Paul II.

"I hugged him and touched his face. He said, 'Everything's going to be all right.' I just hugged him like a regular person; it's just hard to explain," recalled Frank, shaking his head. Then he proudly displayed the rosary the pope had presented him.

What a remarkable human being: so weak physically, but so powerful in spirit. We can all learn a lot about priorities from the Frank Rochas of the world.

**"I hugged him and touched his face. He said, 'Everything's going to be all right.' I just hugged him like a regular person; it's just hard to explain."**

Frank, 25

## Sunday, Aug. 15

It was a day of firsts — and probably lasts.

This once-in-a-lifetime experience officially ended with a 9:30 a.m. Mass during which the heat soared to 98 degrees.

It was the first outdoor Mass most of us had ever attended.

The first we'd seen the pope celebrate.

The first that took nearly four hours to complete.

The first in which we attended with an estimated 500,000 people. Can you imagine how many weeks it would take for everybody to exchange the sign of peace with each other?

And, without a doubt, it was the first Mass that saw 12,000 or so people treated for heat exhaustion.

Albeit unintentional, the high temperatures reminded us of these Catholic youths' willingness to sacrifice.

Many had traveled several thousand miles to attend World Youth Day. Many had worked hard on fundraising events back home so they could afford to go. Many more had walked 14 miles from downtown Denver yesterday as part of this weekend pilgrimage.

Today lacked the convenience of many earlier World Youth Day activities. No air-conditioned rooms — or even any shade, for that matter — were available to escape from the heat. Water supplies were scarce.

Yet I'd bet that if our diocesan youths were given the choice of watching the Mass on television or doing this all over again, most would opt for the latter.

As I now head back to Rochester, my head is still swirling with all that I've experienced over the past four days. One recurring theme, however, seems to keep popping up.

World Youth Day was not just for the people who attended. Half a million Roman Catholics are actually just a small fraction of the people who showed a passionate interest in this celebration. I can't even begin to count how many requests I've already received at home, in Denver, and in between for copies of the stories I'll write and photographs I've taken of the pope.

And lots of these requests came from non-Catholics. No matter what a person's religious background, the pope reflects something significant to far more people than I'd ever realized.

Many of the conversations I've overheard this week have contained complaints about the long food lines in Denver, the transportation system and the heat. But not one person has ridiculed the pope or World Youth Day.

If this kind of affirmation doesn't make Catholics more proud of their faith, I don't know what will.

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