

Pope and youth

4) to keep diaries of their impressions and take some photographs. Below are excerpts from journals of: Sue Drexel, youth ministry coordinator, St. Joseph Immeny (21), also of St. Joseph/St. William; and Christine Iwanski (16), of St. Ann's, Hornell.

Friday, Aug 21

were to Champs de Mars, located at the foot of the Eiffel Tower, to meet the pope. A great deal of patience was needed when we learned that the Eiffel Tower had closed. Thousands of hot, sweaty people were stuck underground, pushing and shoving and frantically trying to figure out how to get to Champs de Mars. The Eiffel Tower was closed. The Champs de Mars we learned was to walk 5-6 miles in the hot afternoon sun. The journey turned into a treat because we were able to walk through a residential area of Paris, getting a clear picture of how the ordinary Parisians live. What a relief it was to arrive at Champs de Mars. Fresh cold water and portapotties awaited us. The atmosphere at Champs de Mars was very festive. People sang songs in their own languages as they waited for the pope to arrive. We were a good distance from the stage where Pope John Paul would greet everyone. A huge television screen was set up next to

ge, but where at it still difficult to see anything. The of iv- s. d



Katie Drexel walks down Champs de Mars in Paris. Delegates gathered there to welcome Pope John Paul II.

Saturday, Aug 23

So here we are at Longchamp. We walked here after the Chain of Brotherhood this morning. The Chain of Brotherhood was an event in which everyone involved with World Youth Day held hands around the City of Paris. To get to Longchamp, I'm guessing we walked at least two hours. I am so excited to be here right now. Seeing the pope, or even getting the chance to catch just a glimpse of him would be very cool.

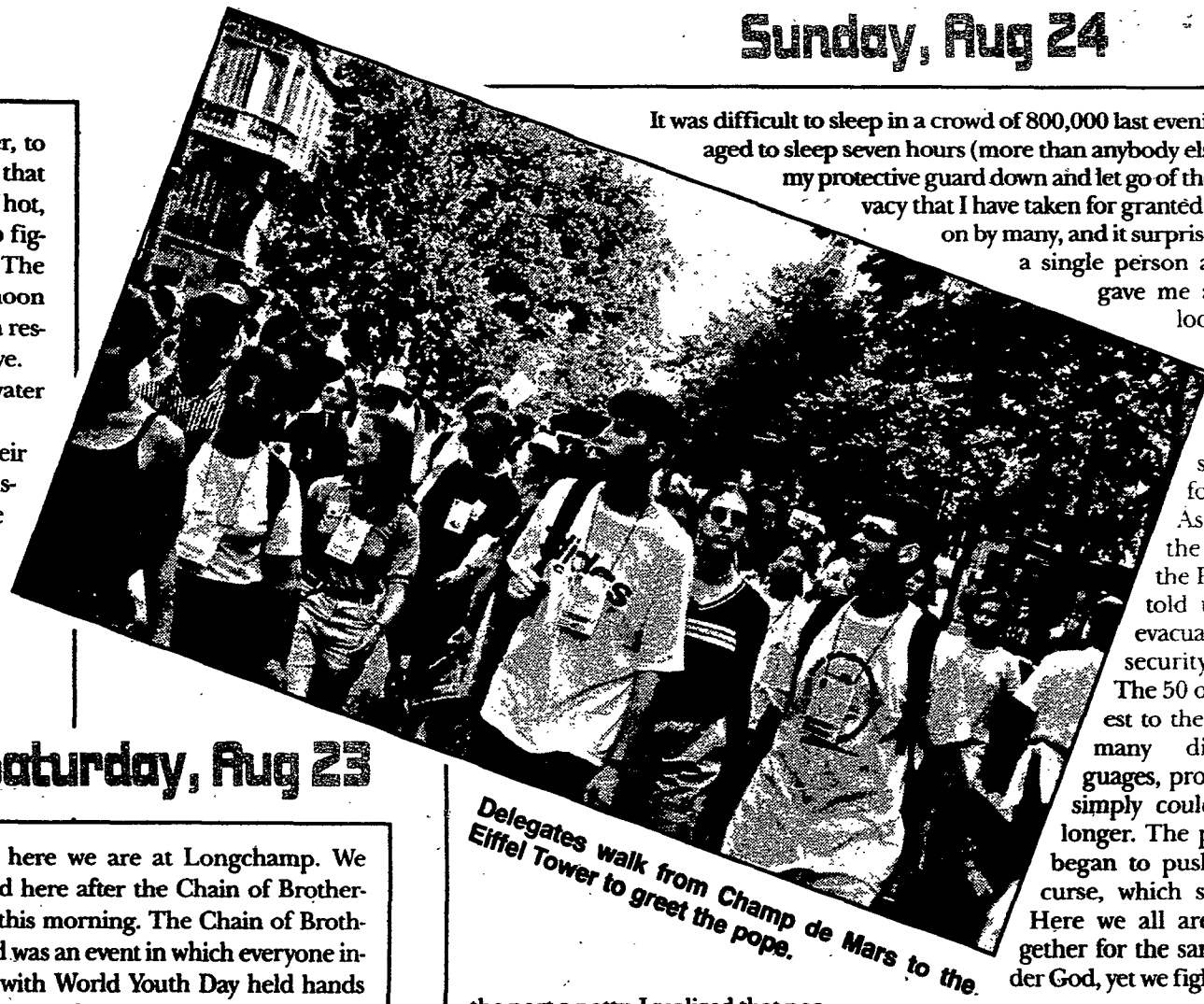
I got to see him. It was so — there's not even a word to describe how I felt at that moment. I took a picture, too. It's not the greatest, but I wouldn't have cared if I didn't get a picture. It was just so — amazing, and so awesome.

11 p.m.: The Vigil just ended with John Paul II baptizing and confirming 10 teenagers. ... I finally realized just how fragile John Paul II is during the vigil. I got scared every time he coughed. I hope he makes it to the next World Youth Day. I feel so special to be here, to get to spend time with the

pope. Not to mention getting a close up view. This is certainly a once-in-a-lifetime event. I may go to other World Youth Days, but they may not be with John Paul II.

The other reason this means so much to me is because my mother saw the pope in New York City just a few months before I was born. My aunt told me that John Paul II looked right at my mom (and me) and blessed her.

Christine Iwanski



Delegates walk from Champ de Mars to the Eiffel Tower to greet the pope.

Sunday, Aug 24

It was difficult to sleep in a crowd of 800,000 last evening, but I managed to sleep seven hours (more than anybody else). I had to let my protective guard down and let go of the luxury of privacy that I have taken for granted. I was stepped on by many, and it surprised me that not a single person apologized or gave me an apologetic look.

I went to the bathroom this morning and stood in line for two hours. As I got close to the port-a-potty the Pope's security told us we had to evacuate the area for security purposes. The 50 or so of us closest to the bathroom, in many different languages, protested that we simply couldn't wait any longer. The people in line began to push, shove, and curse, which surprised me. Here we all are, coming together for the same reason under God, yet we fight like dogs for

the port-a-potty. I realized that people can't always put into practice what they stand for, or say they stand for.

After the bathroom ordeal I swiftly returned to my seat to find it overtaken by strangers, but I decided it's not important and any attempt to re-territory would fail due to the apparent linguistic gap. The Archbishop of Paris introduced John Paul II by thanking him for bringing us all together John Paul's homily began with gratitude for the people who made today possible. After the reading of John 1:35-45, John Paul II encouraged us to ask our Lord, "Where do you live?" in order to seek God. He said that young people especially have to realize our "quest." The "quest is to see God face to face."

John Paul II wisely said that we must follow God in order to discover the mystery of the cross. He reminded us that journey doesn't end at this race track, that time never halts, and thus we should go down life's roads seeking our individual and unique answers to the question, "Rabbi, where do you live?" Through this we can build a civilization of love and be witnesses and disciples to the giver of life.

Before I can figure out this message's meaning for me, I realize the Pope isn't such a bad guy and that his sincerity and love of the people is admirable, worthy of everyone's respect. Even if, like me, they don't agree with his opinions sometimes.

Katie Drexel

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