

UNL students make pilgrimage to pope

John Paul II's St. Louis visit described as 'electric,' 'incredible'

By ERIC RINEER
Staff writer

For some university students, the arrival of Pope John Paul II in St. Louis was an opportunity of a lifetime to see the pontiff.

"It was tremendous," said Karen Benes, a senior secondary education English major. Benes and about 20 other members of St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Lincoln packed inside the Kiel Center, a St. Louis sports arena, Tuesday evening to pay tribute to the 78-year-old pontiff as he spoke at the Light of the World Papal Youth Gathering.

Members of the church also watched the pope celebrate Mass on Wednesday before a crowd of more than 100,000 at the Trans World Dome in St. Louis.

Tuesday night at the Kiel Center, the frail-looking pontiff touched a crowd of more than 20,000 youngsters with his message about Christian teachings and their relevance to the modern generation.

The youth rally marked the second time Benes had seen the pope speak - she also saw the pontiff in Denver at World Youth Day in 1993.

But this time was more special, she said.

"With the condition he's in and the fact that he still makes these journeys, it just shows a strong example for all Christians and everyone," Benes said.

She said the pope urged

Christians to continue defending the gospel and reminded youth that the Christian faith was a constant training.

The core of the pope's message, she said, was for Christians to uphold their moral values despite all the temptations lurking in today's society.

Inside the arena, Benes said, was the place to be. Benes described the crowd as "electric."

"It was incredible to see the thousands of people united for the same reason," she said.

Though seated in the "nosebleed section," it wasn't too difficult to hear people cheering for the pope, she said.

The crowd at the Kiel Center welcomed the pontiff like a rock star as thousands of people were screaming: "John Paul II - We love you."

Ryan Shea, a junior mechanical engineering major, who also made the trip, said he was in awe as the pontiff rode through St. Louis in his Popemobile upon arriving in the city.

"When he started to break a smile, you knew it was an effort for him - that makes it so much more sincere," Shea said.

He said he watched the day's events, which included a welcoming ceremony and the youth gathering, on two jumbo television screens outside the Kiel Center.

Shea said the pontiff touched on the abortion issue.

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"He's not afraid to voice his opinion. We look to him for a lot of guidance. He's touched a lot of hearts here today."

RYAN SHEA
junior mechanical engineering major

hearts here today."

After arriving at the St. Louis Arch early Tuesday morning, Shea and the rest of the group marched about a mile to the Kiel Center with thousands of other enthusiastic people.

At the Kiel Center, he said, musical performers "got everyone excited."

"When the pope came in, it erupted," Shea said.

Sam Manzitto, a junior biology major, said he was fascinated with the tight security for the pope in St. Louis.

"Security there was huge," he said. "It's quite a sight to see all the policemen at the arena. (The pope's) got his own little secret service outfit."

Manzitto said it was only appropriate that the "greatest man in the Catholic faith" be so protected.

"The chance to hear him speak was few and far between."

So long, Vince and Larry; crash-test dummies retired

The 15-year advertising campaign advocating seat-belt use will be replaced next month with a series of harder-hitting TV spots.

WASHINGTON (AP) - The TV ads with the lovable-but-ill-fated crash test dummies Vince and Larry will be replaced next month with more shocking spots aimed at breaking through the recent plateau in seat belt usage.

Instead of seeing lifelike dummies dust themselves off after a crash, viewers will see human actors engaged in common moments that are cut short by an automobile accident.

In one spot, titled "Ice Cream," a husband out buying ice cream to satisfy his pregnant wife's midnight craving has his car hit as he backs out of the driveway. In a second ad, titled "Cruising," teen-agers in two cars cruising down a street giggle until one of the cars is smashed by a speeding van.

After each scene, the caption on the screen asks, "Didn't see that coming? No one ever does. Buckle up."

"The idea behind the campaign was to really take a bold step and change our direction to reach those users who are taking short trips but not wearing their seat belts," said Ken Ulmer, spokesman for the Advertising Council. It is marketing the spots, made by the Chicago ad agency Leo Burnett, for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

"We are not reaching part-time users, people who take trips to the store or out to pick up their kids. The statistics show they are at risk, too," Ulmer said.

Vince and Larry have been successful seat belt salesmen for 15

years. With their gray jumpsuits and revolving heads, they have an appeal similar to that of the hapless but durable "Star Wars" tin man, C-3PO. Today a rock group goes by the same name and children line up when the dummies make mall appearances.

Beyond their public appeal, Vince and Larry have gotten results. In 1985, about 21 percent of the driving population wore seat belts; in 1996, the figure was up to 68 percent.

That, however, is about where it has stayed.

President Clinton has announced a goal of getting seat belt usage up to 85 percent by the end of the year, but traffic safety experts concede there are some high-risk drivers who will never wear seat belts. The new campaign is focusing on the casual wearer - someone who is not against buckling up, but who does not do so on every trip.

Dr. Ricardo Martinez, head of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and a former emergency room doctor, pushed for the new advertising approach after watching a series of gruesome traffic commercials aired in Australia.

The challenge for the U.S. ad-makers was to walk the fine line between spurring people to action and repulsing them into disbelief.

"What will inhibit people is if they say, 'Yes, but that's not really me,'" said Emily Soell, a member of the Advertising Council's advertising review committee.

"What was most important was the line afterwards, because that implies that the people survived and gets people to say, 'Yes, with an accident, you never see it coming, so I better buckle up.'"

Ulmer, the Advertising Council spokesman, said the crash test dummies are in "semi-retirement." He expects them to be used again in children's programming.

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