Opinion
NCR Voices



Youth gather in St. Peter's Square the evening of April 26, hours after hundreds of thousands of Catholics, leaders and diplomats crammed into St. Peter's Square to mourn the death of Pope Francis. (NCR photo/Olivia Bardo)



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In the early hours of April 26, hundreds of thousands of Catholics, leaders and diplomats crammed into St. Peter's Square to mourn the death of Pope Francis. Despite an immense crowd that featured dignitaries and world leaders, the scene outside St. Peter's Basilica looked vastly different by evening.

Around 6 p.m., St. Peter's Square was dotted with radiant youth: singing songs, dancing and laughing. Families walked their dogs and cyclists passed by. A toddler kicked a soccer ball through the square, the grand Basilica dome behind him.

We read in Psalm 30:5 that "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." Yet at St. Peter's Square it seemed that while we wept in the morning, joy came in the evening. Verse 11 continues, "You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy." I bore witness to this transformation, as sorrow turned to dancing.

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Rays of sunlight peeked through clouds behind St. Peter's Basilica as the sun made its dizzy return below the horizon. There was a lightness in the air. It was hard to believe that this was the same square that grieved the death of the Holy Father just hours prior.

The air was peaceful. Many spoke of *esperanza*, hope.

Three young girls linked arms and twirled each other around. A toddler tripped and passersby clapped so that the child would not cry.

The loss of Francis is heavy indeed, yet his message of hope for young people continues to shine.

Everything turns over, as we read in Ecclesiastes. There's a time for weeping and a time for laughing, and the residents and pilgrims to Rome did both that day. There's always something new the sun will rise and fall upon. There will always be another foamy wave of ocean to wash away, more dirt to till.

This task is left to the youth, with their hope, their hairclips and untied shoelaces.

This story appears in the **The Funeral of Pope Francis** and **The Legacy of Pope Francis** feature series.