



The Daughters
OF CHARITY
EMMITSBURG PROVINCE

The Pope Visits the USA Sister Carol Keehan

In October, 2007, the papal nuncio, Archbishop Sambini asked me to coordinate the health protection of the Holy Father while he was in the USA. It was the beginning of one of the most interesting activities of my life and was a privilege to serve the Church this way. In November, President Bush offered to have the White House medical team support this effort. This was a wonderful gesture that has not been offered before to other heads of State. It made my work so much simpler as they are not only competent in every way but used to working with the Secret Service.

The effort to integrate this aspect of the trip with the main purpose led me to work closely with the officials from the Vatican, the USCCB, Archdioceses, the White House and the Secret Service. It was a very interesting experience and certainly a learning experience. I also met with the Holy Father's physician in the Vatican when I was in Rome last November to be sure I understood exactly what he wanted.

Whether they were Catholic or not the Secret service personnel and the medical team members all continually said what an honor it was to be asked to help protect the Pope and how privileged they felt.

For me, the opportunity to be at every event and in every motorcade gave me a rare view of how warmly the Pope was received by so many. Following him down 5th Ave. in a city considered as worldly as New York and seeing thousands who had stood for hours just for a glimpse and their reaction was wonderful.

Seeing the Holy Father with the disabled children and the young people was a real grace. It was also a unique experience to go to Mass sitting in the Yankees' dugout. I had the privilege of being presented to the Pope twice and having dinner at the White House and being presented to the President and First Lady. More important was the opportunity to watch the Vicar of Christ come to this country and shepherd the People of God so beautifully.