How does a moment become an experience? How does an encounter with a person create change in us that lasts? The visit of Pope Francis stirred immense energy in our Philadelphia Community. Cranaleith’s mission committee was determined to find a way that this energy wouldn’t dissipate, but instead would seep into a deeper place where we could imagine and create a different, more merciful world for our brothers and sisters.

On October 24th, a diverse community gathered to dip into the experience of Pope Francis’ presence, and pour that energy into the wounds of our time. We began replicating the compelling devotion to “Mary, Undoer of Knots.” In communion with the 10,000 ribbons fastened in Medjugorje’s inspired work of art outside of the cathedral, we wrote the knots that tangled and bound us on strips of fabric, and admired our “family tree.” We drank in the images of Francis, uniquely touching persons converging in the sanctuaries and historic sites, the graveyard and the prison. We contemplated the fears transfigured by his presence, and recognized who we can be for one another. We told our own “stories around the family table” of the memories that seared us.

In the afternoon, we focused on the vision awakened in us for the critical concerns of the Mercy Community... racism, violence, immigration, earth, and the oppression of women. A closing ritual called “La Cena della Famiglia” of the memories that seared us.

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In this jubilee year of mercy, we ask the courage to be shaped by such encounters. We ask to shape a world resilient, suffering and grace, darkness and impossible wisdom? Each shape a wonder, just as it is...each one greeting that announces their dignity? What about the souls shaped by their stories...stories of fragility and joy? What about their bearing, bent under their own burden and longing, lifted toward a

And what about their own beauty...the curve of their cheeks, lined by years of hardship, widened into smiles of kinship that discovered them.

Come to think of it, what about the maple trees?

What about the blue sky?

What about all the little stars, sitting alone in the moonlight?

What about rows, and leaves, and their shining leaves?

What about the ground?

"Some Questions You Might Ask" by Mary Oliver

Is the soul solid, like iron?

Is it tender and breakable, like the wings of a moth in the book of the dead?

Who has it, and who doesn't?

I keep looking around me.

One question leads to another.

Who has it, and who doesn't?

I keep looking around me.

"Some Questions You Might Ask" by Mary Oliver

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