



BY SR. CAROL KEEHAN, DC

Only slightly over a year ago, about an hour after white smoke had appeared over Saint Peter's, a diminutive figure in white walked out onto the balcony. He appeared somewhat dazed and very gently said "Good evening" to the thousands in the square.

The new pope seemed to be the least excited person there, and, after telling the crowd that the cardinals had gone to the ends of the earth for a new pope, he asked the crowd to pray for him. He bowed his head for their blessing.

Such a simple and humble beginning, and this past year has been a profound proof of how captivating and effective simplicity and humility can be.

What a gift to the church this pope is — what a gift to the world he is. What an example he is to each of us. I often reflect on how deep his faith must be. Pope Francis knows full well the serious wounds of the church, the suffering of so many and our failures to respect the dignity of our brothers and sisters. He has shown clear intent to deal with them as priorities, yet he has written and spoken so clearly on the joy of the Gospel.

His radiant smile and obvious delight to be with people confirm how deeply he believes and lives this joy. Watching him with any group, be they kings or prisoners, soccer stars or the severely handicapped, is a grace in itself. Equally inspiring is watching their response to him.

In my lifetime, I do not believe I have seen a clearer sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit acting in our church. I am so pleased that *Health Progress* has assembled a team of authors to help us all reflect on the messages and example of Pope Francis. This gift from God must be appreciated, protected and prayed for. We know how much our world needs the joy of the Gospel, and we have a privileged opportunity in Catholic health care to be a significant part of that, working side by side with the pope who speaks of rushing to the aid of our neighbor as though in a "field hospital."

May God bless and protect this great servant of the church.

SR. CAROL KEEHAN, DC, is president and chief executive officer of the Catholic Health Association, Washington, D.C.

JOURNAL OF THE CATHOLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES

www.chausa.org

HEALTH PROGRESS®

Reprinted from *Health Progress*, September - October 2014
Copyright © 2014 by The Catholic Health Association of the United States
