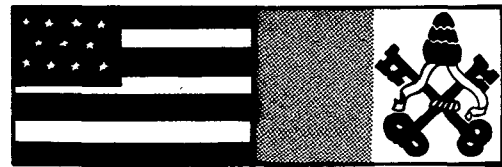


Retreats offer an opportunity to renew spiritual life

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

From a person who just took a retreat: "I have just returned from retreat and am sky high. It is 20 years since I made a retreat, a little after college, and recently I realized I had become spiritually dulled. The retreat master was not an exceptional speaker, but his simplicity was more effective than eloquence, and the conferences were real Catholicism instead of sociology. (T)he quiet time to think, to pray, to examine my soul was a revelation to me. In your column, why not recommend retreats?"

My response: Your recommendation came at an appropriate time. I have just returned from a three-day retreat at Stella Maris, the retreat center in Skaneateles run by the Sisters of St. Francis. This is the same order which worked in Molakai with Father Damien's lepers under a remarkable Mother Marianne Koppe. Her cause for



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

canonization is now being promoted.

Each year, Father John Roach of Clifton Springs arranges what is humorously called "The Geriatric Retreat." It brings together senior priests — from age 88 through the 60s — for a few days of spirituality.

Father Joseph Testagrossa, a Capuchin, gave the conferences that had nothing to do with stiffened knees or creaking bones, but all to do with Our Blessed Lord and His love for us, and our love for Him whom we

are so privileged to serve in our priesthood despite our weaknesses and failures. He also dealt extensively with Mary Our Blessed Mother.

Father Testagrossa started off each conference with a little joke. This technique prepares listeners to open their hearts as well as their minds. You may remember Archbishop Sheen did the same. After his introduction, he gave us the solid messages so masterfully and movingly. I am still an agent for Sheen tapes — I have 21 of them in my possession — and am glad for a frequent order.

When he introduced one conference, Father Testagrossa smiled and said: "There is a legend in the Holy Land that the donkey which carried Jesus in the procession on Palm Sunday thought the crowd was cheering for him."

Isn't that a neat way to prick the balloon of self-centeredness. I have always loved

the verse from psalms: 'Not to us, O Lord, but to Your name give glory.' I have always dreaded taking on the mentality of the Palm Sunday donkey.

So many of our priests have served in so many parishes — and continue to do so despite the edict of retirement at age 70 in our diocese — that readers will recognize several. The oldest priest was Father George Vogt, followed by Father Joseph McDonnell and myself. Then came Fathers Ray Heisel, Gene McFarland, Elmer McNamara, Francis Vogt, Paul Wohlrab, Charles Adams, O.F.M., Joseph Gaynor, John Roach, John Patrick O'Malley (who was our organist) and Richard Nangle. And the junior seniors who are still active as pastors were Fathers Robert Downs, Andrew Teuschel, Robert Meng, Bernie Dollen, Charles McCarthy, Norbert Nolan and John Steger.

The Franciscan staff, headed by a capable Sister John Olivia, was assisted by Sisters Jackie, Bernadette, Rita Bernadette and a Julie Flihasn. Their helpers took good care of the meals. They wear the Franciscan religious habit, which adds to the devotional atmosphere of Stella Maris.

You are right. We should talk more about retreats. Notre Dame Retreat House at Canandaigua, the Cenacle Center in Rochester, Trappists at Piffard and Mt. Saviour near Elmira offer much. Family Camp at Kamp Koinonia and teen retreats under the direction of Father Charles Manning have good reports.

The best retreat I ever made was at Auriesville in 1940. I was never so close to God than after that retreat, which was given by a Jesuit priest named Father McFarland. I have often said, "It's a pity I did not die right after that." But God had other plans, and perhaps one of them is to encourage others to avail themselves of retreat opportunities.

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Jesus bids his friends farewell for a second time

By Cindy Bassett
Courier columnist

"Peter, I think we should head in now. Even the fish must be sleeping tonight along with these others," Andrew said drowsily to his brother as he pointed to the sleeping apostles in the boat.

"Tonight reminds me of the first time I met Jesus," Peter said. "I was in such a mood when I came to shore. And there was Jesus standing next to you."

"You thought Jesus was crazy when he told you to cast your net down again," Andrew said. "If I remember correctly, that was the biggest catch of your life!"

"And that day was probably the most important in my entire life," Peter said as he positioned the sails on his fishing vessel.

The boat had nearly reached the shore of Lake Tiberias when the two brothers noticed the stranger standing on the beach alone. "Have you caught anything yet?"



THE BIBLE CORNER

the man called out to them.

"Not a one," Andrew yelled back.

"There's plenty of fish on the right side of the boat," the stranger said. "Why don't you cast your net there?"

Peter didn't even have to wait to see the net so laden with fish that it was nearly torn with the catch. He leaped into the water and swam to shore.

A short time later, all of the apostles had joined Jesus for a meal on the beach.

"I just knew we'd all be together again," Peter said. "This is just like old times!"

"Are we finally going to overthrow our Roman rulers and restore the kingdom to Israel?" asked Simon, who was known as the Zealot.

"Only my Father knows when this will happen," Jesus replied. "But that's not what's important right now. All that you saw happen to me was part of my Father's plan. That was only the beginning. There is much work to be done — the good news must be brought before all nations."

"And we are ready to do that, Lord," Peter said eagerly. "With you here with us again, I feel like we can conquer the world!"

"Peter, I have completed all that my Father sent me to do," Jesus said slowly, looking from one apostle to the other. "The rest is up to you now."

"Jesus, it sounds like you are leaving us again," Peter cried. "Losing you a second time would be more than any of us could bear."

Jesus put his hand on Peter's shoulder. "All of you here, my special friends, have been with me from the very beginning. Now you will be my witnesses."

No one said anything for a long time. Finally, Peter, as usual, voiced the feelings of everyone else. "I feel as if my heart is breaking all over again, Lord. It won't be the same without you here to help us. How will we know what to say and do?"

"This time my leaving will be different," Jesus said. "In a special way, I will still be here with you all. I am going to send my Spirit to guide you. The Spirit will help you remember all that I taught you. And when you pray, I promise that I will answer you."

Jesus embraced each one of his apostles as he said goodbye. Just before he left, he told them, "I am leaving you with another promise, too. Someday, I will be back for all of my followers. On that day, I will take everyone with me to live in the kingdom that will never end."

Scripture reference: John, 21:1-14; Acts, 1:1-11.

Meditation: "When I go, you will not be left alone; I will come back to you" (John, 14:18).

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