

Retreat leaves cherished memories

Father Tom Caserta, priest of Brooklyn, offered us, a group of bishops from the dioceses of New York state, a very kind service this week. He did the favor of leading nine of us in the retreat we made together at the Don Bosco Retreat Center in West Haverstraw, N.Y.

The theme around which Tom organized his conferences was stewardship, our honest respect for and generous, loving use of the wonderful gifts with which God entrusts every one of us. He had some wonderful insights about the theme and I appreciated the ways in which he called us to a renewed awareness of its importance in our lives.

A special gift Tom brought to his task was the ability to share substantial insights in very inviting ways. These he developed and illustrated by the use of stories and experiences with which we could all identify. His approach blended his presentation of something important about which to think and pray and his ability to leave us free to pursue the themes as we wished. I left the retreat grateful for many things, especially for the kind gift of his ministry.

My gratitude for those special days extends also to the other bishops who were present for all or part of the retreat: Tom Daily and Jerry Barbarito from Brooklyn; Tony Mestice, Ed O'Brien and Frank Garmendia from New York; Jim Daly from Rockville Centre; Paul Loverde from Ogdensburg; and our own Jim Moynihan from Syracuse. Cardinal O'Connor also had planned to be with us part of the time

along the way



By BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

but unforeseen circumstances made that impossible.

The days were peaceful and unhurried. Each day we met for morning prayer followed by a conference at 9 a.m., for the Eucharist at 11, for prayer followed by a conference at 3:30 p.m. We met each evening at 7:30 for different purposes — a holy hour one evening, a penance service on another.

On Thursday, the last evening of the retreat, we met for informal conversations about what we had experienced on retreat, about our ministry in the church, about ways in which we might be able to support one another through the year as we had been able to support one another during the days of our retreat.

Meals were good times. We enjoyed the food so kindly provided for us by the staff at the Don Bosco Center. And we enjoyed the opportunity just to sit around the table to tell stories, share experiences, laugh and carry on as any group of friends carry on as they share a meal at table. Most other times of the day we were quiet.

I got out to run a few times and others pursued their own forms of recreation. I enjoyed the opportunity to snooze after lunch and have the strong sense that I was not the only one who enjoyed that noble pursuit. It a joy to be free to turn in early each night.

Now it is over. I said to you last week that I looked forward to the retreat. I had no specific or detailed agenda. I went only to spend time with the Lord and to reflect on what had been happening in my life and ministry. The retreat offered a privileged opportunity to do that and I am grateful for every minute of it. I am also grateful for your prayerful support and for that of the people I work with every day. Their generosity and competence allow me to enjoy such moments without ever fretting about how things are going back home.

Although we have all left the retreat center, the experience of retreat is not yet over, nor will it be over for some time. Such experiences tend to become part of us. I am sure I will see some things and do some things a little differently because I was there. I may even see new possibilities in routines that long have been familiar. You just never know for sure.

I close by saying that you and all of the people of our local church were in my prayers every day. It was often a prayer of gratitude to God for allowing me to minister among a people who are themselves a superb retreat conference for me every day of the year.

Peace to all.

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