

Permanent Diaconate Formation Program Retreat by Rich Dizon

The Permanent Diaconate Formation Classes and wives gathered at the beautiful Vallombrosa Retreat Center in Menlo Park from July 5th through July 7th for our annual retreat. The theme of the retreat was "Discipleship". Most Reverend John Wester, former Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of San Francisco and the current Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe led our retreat. Deacon Fred Totah, his wife Dorothy, Deacon Mike Ghiorso and his wife Carolynn assisted. The retreat consisted of Morning and Evening Prayer in community, daily Masses, five talks led by Archbishop Wester, a Q&A panel consisting of current Deacons and their wives and plenty of opportunity for periods of silence, prayer and meditation.

Over the course of the five talks, Archbishop Wester invited us to be present with our Lord and to allow the Holy Spirit to work in us. He said that it was less of a didactic exercise and more of a journey to the heart of Jesus Christ. The main themes of the retreat were: Mary as Disciple; the Image of God that a Disciple projects; Trust in the life of a Disciple; Suffering in the life of a Disciple; Transformation of the Disciple. Archbishop Wester was a very inspirational retreat leader and gave all of us much to reflect upon. He gave us many quotes, scripture passages, thoughts and phrases to provide us with what he referred to as a palette - various hues and tints to help us with our retreat journey.

We found the retreat and especially Archbishop Wester to be very spiritually uplifting. It was a true bonding experience with our fellow candidates and wives. The grounds of Vallombrosa provided many wonderful natural areas to walk through and relax. I would be remiss if I left out mention of the great meals provided by the attentive and dedicated staff. We left Vallombrosa physically and mentally well rested and are reenergized in our continuing discernment and formation to the Permanent Diaconate.