



Dear Friends in Christ:

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTORAL COORDINATOR

*May Christ's peace, joy and hope be with you all!*

In 2002, I attended an 8-day silent retreat at St. Ignatius Center (which unfortunately closed and was sold in 2013 as the Jesuits were spending more time and energy on trying to raise money than breaking even), on Long Island in New York in Manhasset. I am certain that experience of silence, prayer and daily dialogue with my spiritual director changed my life. It was then, at the beginning of the retreat, that I came to know a profound healing which I sorely needed, experienced a closeness to Jesus, St. Thérèse of Lisieux, and our Blessed Mother, that has stayed with me and sustained me ever since.

My next experience with quality time away like that happened over a 4-month period in preparation for my diaconate ordination in 2012. I traveled with my spiritual director to the New Camaldoli Hermitage about 25 miles south of Big Sur on the Central California coast. We spent 5 days with the monks there to pray with them through the liturgy of the hours and daily mass. It was a wonderful time of silence and contemplation with Jesus for the two of us while on spring break.

Later in July, we both traveled to one of my favorite monasteries, the Trappist Abbey dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe near Carlton, Oregon. We spent 5 days there as well praying with the monks spending time in silence and walking in their forest reserve. Being able to pray and listen was a great blessing.

Annually I make a retreat - usually at a monastery. I like to try to get 3-5 days away to slow down, rest, pray, cycle on my road bike, and walk in the forests (whether big or small) of the monastery land. I think it is an essential aspect of our life as disciples of Jesus. We read in the gospels that Our Lord Jesus spent daily time in prayer. He went on a 40-day retreat prior to his public ministry preparing for his mission even facing His temptations buoyed by the strength of the Holy Spirit.

We may not all have the opportunity to attend lengthy retreats for all kinds of personal reasons. However, our devotional time in daily prayer can be that oasis that we need to be on "retreat" in daily life. If you make the practice of a "holy hour," that's awesome - thanks for your dedication to spending quality time with Jesus. If you don't spend daily time in prayer, I urge you to consider making it one of the highest priorities in your life. We need Jesus and he wants to be with us, certainly at Mass through the Eucharist but just as important is our time alone with him to allow Him to be with us. Prayer has far more to do with what we allow the Holy Spirit to do with us than it does with our doing prayer for God.

Since I knew of my appointment to Holy Rosary and Visitation parishes, I've been praying for you all. It is my greatest hope that what we will be doing together will lead us to a much greater love for Jesus and our neighbors, whether they be members of our parishes or not, disciples or unbelievers.

In God's great love, hope, and mercy,

*Deacon Jim*