



MY THIRTY DAY RETREAT

Fr Denis Ryan recently attending a Thirty Day Retreat at Largs Bay, South Australia, from May 12 - June 12, 2019. You can read his reflection on this experience below:

Dear Friends

At 73 years of age I wish to write this article about my Thirty Day Retreat, based on the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola. These exercises were done in light of the special insights of a Jesuit Priest by the name of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin who died in 1955. de Chardin did not directly write any new insights into the Spiritual Exercises. The new insights are by Louis M Savary in his book, "The New Spiritual Exercises in the Spirit of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin" which he wrote in 2010. Savary has been a Jesuit priest for thirty years and he adapted a number of de Chardin's insights from science.



Savary believed and wanted to help people see that science and religious dogma, plus religious experience, could/is complimentary to one another. It is through my retreat experience I hope to inspire others to also do a Thirty Day Retreat as part of their desire to know Jesus Christ more personally and intimately. This can help a retreatant to come to know the Cosmic Christ who was a transformed person after his resurrection. This Cosmic Christ who sent the Advocate, the Holy Spirit to us, did not do so to save human beings only, but to save all animal life, all of creation and all of the galaxies as well. This is what many have called the Christ Project, meaning all the baptised are to see God in all things. Once that is seen, a whole new world view comes alive for the believer and all such people feel the call to do what they can to make this world a better place for everyone.

Before I go any further I realise that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to take thirty days off work but many people now are embracing what the Jesuits offer which is a Thirty Day Retreat in Daily Life. In this style of retreat people can carry it out while engaged in their day-to-day life. The key thing here in both styles of retreat, is to be able to get protracted times of silence that helps participants deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ and then be effective witnesses to others. This will also entail that those who work for/with Christ will be people of justice, people who reach out to the poor and needy, who have a deep love for all of creation, all animal and plant life, all the fish in the oceans and all the oceans themselves, all medicines, etc., as they are created through the Risen Christ in all things in our world and all the galaxies. Nothing is exempt. This was the view of de Chardin - that God is in all things.

I will now move onto the four week period of the retreat I did with a 67 year old woman who was my companion over these days. This woman is married with three adult children. She was a good companion even in silence! We had three rest days during the retreat when we could talk. It is not possible to share everything for an article like this, but here we go.

In the first week of our retreat we looked at God's unconditional love for us and in that light looked at how, by our sin, we block God's love for us. By that choice we block out seeing God's love at work in others and in creation, which hinders God's work for unity in our world. The good that we block off from God can be recovered by reconciliation - the gracious gift that God has given us for recovery. If the matter is really serious, sacramental reconciliation can be very helpful or by simply seeking forgiveness from anyone you may have hurt.

As we moved on in our retreat, we looked at the two realities or the two standards. Those standards being:

1. God's Standard;
2. The World's Standard.

The World's Standard is about dominating others to get what you want, because it is all about you and having power over others. God's standard is to love your neighbour as yourself so it is not about the "I", it is about the "we". Simply put, God's standard is to look after others and look after creation. This means each believer plays their part in turning the world upside down to call people to be sacrificial, to be people who are servants of others and to never dominate them. Our work for justice is to be assertive so justice can be done, but it is also absolutely crucial that any work done for justice be non-violent.

The person we are called to act like is Jesus Christ, who suffered so deeply and maliciously. This was all because he was trying to show the ways of God to others. For simply wanting to show humankind the way of love for living life, he was betrayed and deserted by his own followers. He was crucified by people for doing nothing wrong, but betrayal and desertion by his own followers was a lot for Jesus to bear. Yet we know that Jesus forgave his Disciples and called them after his resurrection to be his first Apostles and leaders of the Church. It was only a group of women travelling with him who stuck by him. It seems to me women usually handle grave problems better than men. These women, it would seem to me, shared significantly in what we call the Christ Project.

In my retreat and in my call to follow Jesus Christ, I was given the opportunity to make a recommitment of myself to him, promising to follow him as closely as possible. This was born out of a deeper personal love I found for Jesus during my retreat and not just by having faith, but also by my opening up and my feelings and thoughts to him as well. It was a real call to intimacy for me.

Finally, the retreat opened me up to not just believe in the Jesus from Nazareth, but know to focus on the Jesus of the resurrection, whose followers could not recognise him as he was transformed after he rose from the dead. One of these examples was the two Disciples on the Road to Emmaus. This is the Jesus we follow, the transformed Jesus who helps us evolve in our living for him, for others, for the animals, for all plant life, for the oceans, for creation, medicines, the galaxies and for every living thing. God is in all of it. Nothing escapes the Cosmic Christ and the two other members of the Holy Trinity.

As I said at the start of this article, I would recommend a Thirty Day Retreat to you in the two ways I mentioned.

*May God bless you all
Fr Denis Ryan*