

Away from the Business of Life To Rediscover the Source of Life Itself

What can a retreat do for you?

Participants in the Easter Triduum retreat, held in April at the Catholic School of Evangelization (CSE) in St. Malo, testify to the power of pulling oneself away from the various activities of daily life in order to rediscover the Lord.



Bishop Noël Delaquis celebrates the Easter Vigil at the Catholic School of Evangelization chapel.

Religious retreats come in all sizes, but have one element in common. Participants “pull away” (from the Latin verb “retrecto”) from their usual routine to draw closer to God.

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For Anita Vander Aa, executive director of the CSE, the answer is abundantly clear. “I’ve participated in many retreats, at the CSE and elsewhere, and no matter whether they are large or small, they all have one great benefit: they help us reconnect with Jesus. He’s always there, of course, but are we always mindful of him?”

“That’s why we pull away for a time, to discern the paths that lead us closer to God. Our diocesan priests recently met to deepen their vocation. Mothers and daughters held a retreat in early May to rediscover their relationships in the context of faith. Fathers and sons are invited to do the same at the end of the month (1). Husbands and wives, too, are often invited to retreats to deepen their relationships and their walk with Jesus. A parish can also spend a weekend as a community of faith to reflect on and rediscover a particular aspect of Christian life. Still others, challenged with difficult life experiences, can gather to seek the healing and understanding that comes with being ever closer to Jesus.

“Plus, they’re fun!”

Dawn Kautz, the busy mother of the CSE’s current missionary family, is in complete agreement. “In 2018, our Easter Triduum experience, while moving, was quite different than our recent one. We attended masses at Holy Cross Parish, as parishioners do. So, naturally, when the services were over, we went home, to the chaos that our happy brood of kids can produce! But since we currently live at the CSE itself, the Triduum was a deeper, richer, more intentional experience. As a family, we entered into the paschal celebration in a more profound way, with few distractions. From Holy Thursday to Easter Sunday, we were plunged in an atmosphere of a continuing liturgy.”

Jesus as Servant

A little over a dozen people, along with organizers and the Kautz family, attended the Triduum retreat proper. Bishop Noël Delaquis served as both celebrant and guide to the various liturgies.

“Together, before and after our eucharistic celebrations, we discussed various aspects of the liturgy, as well as the Gospel readings. All this so we could delve, as a group, into the meaning of our celebrations. In my preparations, I felt it important to bring out a particular aspect of Christ: Jesus as Servant.

“On Holy Thursday, Jesus is a Faithful and Humble Servant. He shows his love by taking care of others and responding to their needs. He washes the disciples’ feet, he gives of himself in the Eucharist, which he institutes that night. Together with the retreatants, we read the day’s readings and discussed. Intellectually, to be sure, but more to better understand Christ’s gift of himself for our lives.

“And since we lived under the same roof during the Triduum, we also held a Seder meal, just as Jesus and the disciples did on Holy Thursday.”

Somber Silence

On Holy Friday, Jesus becomes the Suffering Servant. His gift of self is total, as he suffers for us and with us.

James Kautz explains how Holy Friday became “a day of somber silence”. “Inspired by our study of the Suffering Servant, we avoided extraneous conversations. And the cell phone. We held the Veneration of the Cross, studied the Passion narrative, and watched the *Passion of the Christ* movie. Later, we listened to a talk by bishop Fulton Sheen. We also did traditional egg dyeing and decorating, which is an activity conducive to silence.

“And in the evening, the retreatants did the Stations of the Cross, while meditating on social justice themes from Pope Francis. At sunset, our family walked to the St. Malo grotto and did the Stations of the Cross.”



Dawn Kautz notes that “living near the chapel added an extra dimension to the retreat”. “The sense that God is near was always with us. And Kevin Prada, the associate director of the CSE, did a magnificent job in preparing our space of worship. Every time we came to a celebration, we didn’t know what the chapel would look like. For Good Friday, he emptied the chapel. He removed the statues, put dry rope in the baptismal font, and of course, the tabernacle was empty too. All this to prepare us for the Crucifixion.”

“What a beautiful response to the Gospel readings, adds Bishop Noël Delaquis. Kevin emphasized every phase of the Triduum. On Holy Saturday and Easter, it was physically evident that Jesus had become a Joyful Servant, come to give life in abundance, and to restore life to it’s fullness.”



A very special moment

The retreatants were joined by a good 50 more people on Easter Sunday for a particularly significant event: the baptism of Raphael, the newest addition to the Kautz family, born on March 30th.

For James Kautz, the experience was “simply amazing”. “Raphael is our eighth child. We wondered if we were done, but we were ready, and praying for another. In fact

Raphael's name came to us in prayer. The name was often invoked in our personal readings and experiences. We have a sense that Raphael is called to something special."

Adds Dawn Kautz: "Certainly he was given an incredible start for his life in the Church! We give baptismal formation at Holy Cross, and I can truly say that not one second of our Easter liturgy was wasted. Normally, baptism takes place on Holy Saturday, at the Paschal Vigil. But most of our guests could only attend on the Sunday. For us, this changed the tone of the baptism. You could truly sense the meaning of being reborn in the Risen Christ.



Little Raphael Kautz' baptism, Easter morning at the Catholic School of Evangelization chapel.

"And of course, as parents, we were fully present, fully involved. But I think it was meaningful to all the retreatants, as well as our family and friends who were there."

Bishop Noël Delaquis agrees. "What a joy that was, to baptise Raphael. The sacrament takes on a particular significance on Easter morning. We all become aware that this

mystery was being celebrated for us as well, because through baptism, we all became participants in the life of the Risen Lord. And we all rediscovered the Source of Life itself.”

(1) Father – Son Retreat – May 31st to June 2nd

Come out to this amazing camping weekend! Boys only! Beautiful weekend of bonding, activity, and prayer between fathers and sons. Dad can't make it? God-fathers, uncles or male role models are welcome! Download the registration form by clicking [here](#).

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