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Companions on the Journey

August 25, 2019

Dear Friends,

Today I leave on my annual Retreat. The Code of Canon Law mandates that each priest is to make an annual Retreat. Usually it begins Sunday evening and lasts until Friday evening or Saturday morning. There are several kinds of Retreat experiences available to choose from. There are preached retreats. This is when the Retreat Master is scheduled to give two Conferences each day on various aspects of the spiritual life. Sometimes there are themes that the Retreat Master will pursue. One might be on the Eucharist in the priest's life and the lives of his people. Another might be the Lord's presence in parish and relationships. Another might be on various dimensions of prayer and the importance of daily prayer and spiritual reading. Another might be on the Works of Justice and Mercy in the priest's life and how he lives these out in parish life.

Sometimes the Retreat Master will examine the place of Scripture in the priest's life. Another might be the Gifts of the Holy Spirit as they unfold in parish ministry. There are many kinds of preached retreats. I listen. I take notes. I pray about what I have heard and perhaps I write in my Journal about what I sense is going on inside of me.

The annual Retreat is a time apart to help the priest reflect and process all that is going on in his ministry and his personal life. They are not the same but they are vitally connected. Sometimes instead of a preached retreat there is a Directed retreat where the priest will meet one on one with a Spiritual Director for about a half hour daily. The Director often suggests certain Scripture passages for the priest to reflect on and journal about. They meet the next day and share on what has been uncovered or learned.

Another form of Retreat is what is called a Quiet Retreat where the Priest gets quiet, turns off all media—TV, Cell phone, Social Media and just prays and reads the Scriptures or other spiritual materials and reflects and journals and prays some more. Taking walks. Taking naps (The Lord gives to his beloved in sleep!) Taking time to mull. Then praying some more. Fasting. Celebrating Eucharist or going to a parish celebration of Eucharist. This is typically what I do each year. I do a lot of praying each day, every day all throughout the year. A Holy Hour before the Blessed Sacrament. The Rosary. The Eucharist (often two Masses). The Liturgy of Hours. Preparing a homily for Daily Mass. On Retreat I do the same but can add some more especially the Journaling which I find is very helpful because it opens up to me what is going on a little deeper inside of me but which I am not always aware of.

One of the most important things for me to do on my annual Retreat is to pray for all of you with your personal situations and special intentions. I cannot be with all of you very often at all. But I can be there for you and lift you and your need up to Our Lord. I love to do that. I do that all the time but on retreat I can do that a bit more leisurely and on retreat I do try to enjoy a bit the leisurely pace very different from the pace of ordinary parish life. Please pray for me this week as I will for thee.

Peace,

Msgr. McHenry

