

A Camp Weed & Cervený Conference Center Parish Retreat Continued

Each parish retreat has provided deeper connections to my faith. The focus of our retreat this year was “Lord Teach us to Pray” and we explored why we pray, different types of prayer, and listening as prayer. Through our learning, sharing, and doing, we deepened our connections to one another. We shared our perspectives and broke up in small groups to try out a type of prayer that we may not be as familiar with. Fr. Wiley’s words that “Praying is not for God’s sake; it is for ours.” still resonates in me. Certainly, exploring prayer more deeply, but also through shared morning prayer and nightly compline all provided opportunities for introspection. The tradition of Sunday worship in beautiful Mandi’s Chapel is such a special gift. The scenic surroundings and feeling the connection of all those celebrating in the Chapel before me comes up through my stocking feet and fills my soul each time I celebrate there. Intertwining this with the people, sharing their hearts and experiencing worship together, is both moving and impactful each time I get to experience it. I once again left the retreat feeling a deeper connection to God.

Camp Weed is such a magnificent retreat center. The peaceful setting, the water and all the mossy live oaks, sets the tone to be able to take a deep breath and relax. It has been fun for me to walk Camp and discover sections I have not seen yet and to hear stories of former participants and special events. And frankly, there is not a better sunset around than that of a sunset from the courtyard over the water. It is a sight that reminds me just how artistic our God is. Each time I come to Camp, I feel a stronger affinity and connection to it, because beautiful things happen here. Spirits move and hearts are opened, all year around and for all ages.

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When you take a faith-filled learning opportunity, add in the serenity of Camp Weed, and combine them together with Godly people, that is when the true magic happens. A retreat is an amazing way to make deeper connections with the people from your parish. During our first year attending, my personal intention was to get to know some of the people we saw each week at church. This year I was asked to be the activities organizer for the retreat. I really considered how to have fun with each other, while also balancing that with allowing for gentle vulnerability so we could open up to each other in a way that isn’t always possible in our normal church activities. We played games that made us giggle, learn more about each other, and kept our hearts light. Nothing gives the opportunity to create a deeper connection with others like a weekend away where you pray together, eat

together, laugh and cry together. We learn, share, and love together. Each aspect of the weekend and each activity that you participate in makes a stronger bond. These are the opportunities that allow us to make deeper connections with one another. And for that, I am grateful.

Geriann Friday

Faithful member of Redeemer and life-long learner