

**At Mount Saint Mary's Abbey (Wrentham, MA), from January 26th to February 16th, 2014**

Silence touches the heart…reveals the self. It was a life-giving experience, a journey that started with fear and hesitation, but allowing the Spirit to take control made a difference; a total surrender of myself to God to entrust everything to His grace. Silence taught me to value every word that comes out of my mouth, to be vigilant at all times in what I say:  is it a message that gives life or that destroys? It was a time to pick up the pieces of my life and continue the journey, appreciating and thanking God for His grace and enlightenment. (Brother Leo Divinagracia)

I had three weeks of desert retreat together with my community at Mount St. Mary's Abbey, Wrentham, Massachusetts. I went there with a fear of not knowing how I might use these three weeks time. But when I started my retreat, God showed the way. The liturgy, which I attended in the Abbey Church, and the chanting of the Psalms by the sisters helped me to be in the presence of God. God gave me so much time to praise him for the wonders he has been doing in my life through silence, through writing, through daily two hour walks, through spiritual reading, in many discoveries and insights... Overall, I had a blessed and grace-filled time. Now I take this opportunity to express my heartfelt appreciation and thanks to so many who made it possible. (Sagar)

At the personal level, the retreat was a new experience, full of discoveries for my life. Prayer, silence, confronting reality…none of this was easy, but fruitful. It showed the way to greater attentiveness, to be ready at all times to learn something new, always with God's help. (Manuel)

The desert´s experience was a time to encounter myself, my personal history, and the challenges before me. I was able to discover the way God was intervening in my life, principally in my vocation. I discovered the meaning of silence. It helped me listen to God in the pleas of His suffering people. It was enriching to live in silence and solitude, and I'll try to continue with this practice, remembering Father d'Alzon's words: "The more we are required to live in the world, the more necessary it becomes for us to be alone from time to time". (Marciano)

The retreat was for me a moment of grace… In the first place, because I didn't think I'd be able to live without talking for three weeks! But with God's help, everything is possible. Silence and sound… I was able to hear the sound of God's voice, inviting me to reflect more deeply on the way God was at work in my life. It was a time to meditate, to pray, a time of solitude to encounter myself and set for myself certain challenges and goals. It was a good opportunity, also, for meditating some of the key documents of the Congregation. (Wilder)